

The Adventure of the Stone of Scone - Ston
The Return of Solar Pons, 1958

Date

Copper/December 25, 1930

Patrick/December, 1935

The Case

Parker is awakened at Pons just before 4 AM on Christmas morning. Bancroft is on his way over to Praed Street. Once he arrives, he tells them that the Stone of Scone, the ancient Coronation Stone of the Scottish people has been stolen from Westminster Abbey. It is a symbolic item and the English government wants it back with a minimum of embarrassment. Pons quickly determines that it was taken by three men and a woman and goes to work.

Quotes

- *This bids fair to be the merriest of Christmases!*

Comments

- Pons tells his brother that Bancroft must have come “on a matter of the utmost gravity.” He adds that it is not connected with the Foreign Office because of the hour.

That seems a specious deduction, at best. Foreign Office affairs would certainly be likely to require immediate attention at any moment, twenty-four hours a day. Certainly, this is a police matter: the symbol of Scottish independence has been stolen. But Bancroft makes it clear that it is the government that is most concerned. Wouldn't the issue be a Foreign Office matter as well?

- The Stone of Scone's formal name is the Stone of Destiny, though the former name is used widely outside of Scotland. The kings of Scotland were crowned upon a throne built above the Stone of Destiny, which was “about twenty-six inches long and sixteen wide, and weights considerably over four hundred pounds, almost five.” Edward I conquered Scotland and took the stone back to England. Edward I was the English monarch who battled William Wallace and Robert the Bruce (made famous by the film, *Braveheart*).

Edward III promised to return the Stone, but it was never given back to Scotland. Finally, in 1996, British Prime Minister John Major returned the Stone, which was installed in Edinburgh Castle. However, it is still the property of the English monarchy and can be taken back if needed for a coronation. It should be noted that Edinburgh Castle is the military headquarters of the British Army in Scotland.

Rumors persist that the original Stone is not at Edinburgh. Among the rumors is that Edward I made off with a counterfeit stone and the real Stone has been

hidden in Scotland all these years. When the Stone was stolen in 1950 (see below), was a copy made and the original kept safely hidden?

- The Stone is taken to Arbroath Abbey. On April 6, 1320, Scottish nobility gathered at the Abbey and signed the Scottish Declaration of Independence. The proclamation given by Ian MacCormick at the Abbey is from the Declaration.

The Abbey fell into disrepair over the years and was only ruins when the famous Dr. Samuel Johnson visited in 1773.

- This story was based on a real-life theft of the Stone. On Christmas Day in 1950, Ian Hamilton, Gavin Vernon, Alan Stuart and Kay Matheson stole the Stone of Destiny from Westminster Abbey. The Stone was broken into two pieces and hidden for several weeks before the pieces were smuggled into Scotland. The Stone was repaired and left on the high altar of Arbroath Abbey on the morning of April 11, 1951, where it was found and returned to England. The police interviewed the four culprits but no charges were ever filed.
- As he did in *The Six Silver Spiders*, Pons takes the criminals out to dinner for conversation.