The Queen's War (754–755)

The Queen's War, also known as the Dael Riatan Civil War, was a significant military conflict fought between the Regency Council (supporting the infant King Alasdair V) and the Loyalist coalition (supporting the deposed Queen Caoimhe).

Origins and Strategic Context

The conflict was triggered in 754 when a coalition of powerful nobles—primarily the Murchadh, Alpin, and Aonghus families—forced the abdication of Queen Caoimhe. The official justification was her scandalous relationship with a Skyssian merchant and her attempts to re-introduce Skyssian gods to Dael Riata, which the nobility feared would lead to foreign domination.

While Parliament declared her infant son King, Caoimhe fled to Bernicia to seek aid from her cousin, King Edmund IV. She returned with Bernician support, launching an invasion to reclaim her throne.

The Belligerents

The war was notable for dividing families and testing loyalties across the 14 great houses.

The King's Side (Regency Council)

Lead Houses:

- Sean Alpin (Earl of Ardmor),
- Domnhall Murchadh (5th Earl of Uisdean), and
- the Earl of Aonghus.

Supporters:

- Gilruary,
- Giluilleam, and
- the major burghs (though many supported the King half-heartedly).

Military Focus: Primarily heavy infantry and regional levies.

The Queen's Side (Loyalists)

Lead Houses:

- Sioltach,
- Suibhne,
- Ahearn, and

- Gilranald.

Elite Units: The Unicorn Troop, featuring second-generation riders like Cornet Iain Suibhne and Agitant Diarmid Murchadh.

Bernician Elements: Mercenaries and household troops provided by King Edmund IV.

Notable Individuals: Iain Alpin (who fought against his father), the Duke of Glasholm, and Diarmid Murchadh (serving as an agitant in the Unicorn Troop) who fought against his Uncle.

Major Campaigns and Engagements

The Loyalist army advanced from the south along the North Way, aiming for the capital at Dalreoch.

Skirmishes in the South

The early campaign saw initial successes for the Queen’s forces in the southern lowlands. Iain Alpin distinguished himself during these engagements, reportedly fighting in every battle of the war.

The Battle of Drumfada Ridge (754)

The war’s decisive and bloodiest engagement occurred approximately twenty miles south of Dalreoch.

The Regency forces took a defensive position on Drumfada Ridge to block the North Way.

- **The Right Flank**: The Duke of Glasholm, leading the Queen's cavalry, won a decisive victory against the Regency horse. He then launched a charge into the Murchadh infantry who were pressing the Suibhne contingent hard, causing them to rout. The Queen's Unicorn Troop exploited the routing Murchadh infantry but became dangerously overextended.
- The Centre: A spirited engagement took place with many casualties in both contingents, neither side gaining an advantage until the Ahearn Horse Lords swept round having broken the right flank and made the Regency forces withdraw to avoid being cut down from behind.
- The Left Flank: The Earl of Aifric (Sithech), fighting for the Queen, was defeated and killed in a cavalry melee. The small Aonghus cavalry successfully bypassed the front lines and mounted a direct assault on the Queen’s command post.

Outcome: The battle ended in disarray for both sides.

While the Queen's right flank was victorious, the attack on her position and the death of her close friend, the Duke of Glasholm, caused her to lose the will to fight.

Casualties and Aftermath

The war resulted in heavy losses among the nobility:

- House Suibhne: The house suffered a “decapitation” of its leadership. The 6th Earl (Cinead Ranald), his son Malcolm Ruaridh, and his grandson Iain Edmund Suibhne (Cornet of the Unicorn Troop) were all killed in 754.
- Commanders: The Duke of Glasholm and the Earl of Aifric were among the fallen.
- The Alpins: Niamh Eubha Alpin and Aodh Ivor Alpin were also killed during the fighting.

Conclusion of the War

Following the carnage at Drumfada Ridge,

- Queen Caoimhe surrendered her claim to the throne and returned to Bernicia.
- The Unicorn Troop dispersed for a year before returning to their quarters in Dalreoch, and the surviving rebels were eventually brought back into the King's peace.
- The war left a legacy of bitter feuds, including the estrangement between Iain Alpin and his father, Sean Alpin.

Skyss - Story Background	Characters	Skyss - Places	Pantheons of the World	Other Background

fantasy, world-building, Skyss, skyss chars, Daels, Queen's, War, 2026, Player: James

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Last update: **15 Apr 2026 10:59**