

**The Living Tradition  
of Saints  
in the British Isles**

**13 Scotland  
North and East**

Community of St Bega, St Mungo and St Herbert  
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## ST LLIOLAN



Cell of St Lliolan

St Lliolan may have been a monastic bishop in north Wales who worked with St Tysilio. He may have become a refugee from Wales after the Battle of Chester in 615 when the Anglo-Saxons slew many monks. He used Broughton in the Scottish Borders as a base for evangelism.

There is a remnant of the 12C church and a post Reformation burial chamber which was regarded as the place of his cell.

The Picts, like the British and Irish were a tribal society. Different tribes occupied southern and northern Scotland

For the south, the Irish, British, Northumbrian, and even Welsh, had their hand in their conversion. These include St Ninian, and St Mungo; St Mungo has eleven dedications in the Lothians on the eastern side of southern Scotland.

The northern Picts lived above the Clyde and Forth, mainly in the central and north east. Far from being 'barbarians', as the Romans saw them, they had a sophisticated culture which, from 500 on, began to adopt Christianity. By 700 they were predominately Christian.

By 900 AD they were absorbed into the Kingdom of Scotland.

## ST TRIDUANA



The restored Holy Well and Pool  
Restalrig, Edinburgh

It is not known where St Triduana (English: Tredwell) came from. She may have been a Pictish recluse in Angus. Her story is that of the beautiful young woman pursued by an unwanted suitor, in this case by a local prince called Nechtan. When she discovered he was attracted by her eyes she took them out and gave them to him.

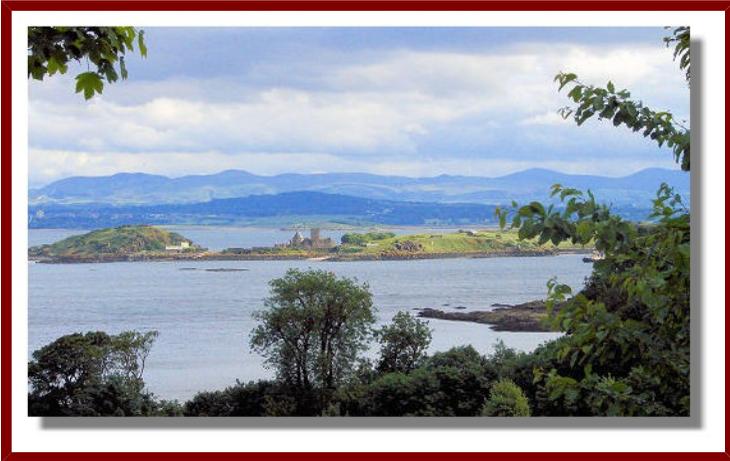
She continued to live as a virgin at the old village of Restalrig now part of Edinburgh.

Her holy well became a resort for the blind seeking healing of their eyes. Her reputation was widespread, for in the 15C King James III had a chapel built in her honour which probably included her shrine.

In 1560 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland decreed that the 'kirk of Restalrig, as a monument of idolatrie, be raysit and utterlie caste down and destroyed'. It was then used for burials - and as a result very nearly disappeared from view.

In 1907 excavations took place of what was believed to be a derelict chapter house. But when 10 or 12 foot of earth, due to the burials, had been removed, a continual water-flow made the excavators realise that they had come upon the well of St Triduana. The well house has now been beautifully restored, though without the waster and the pool.

## INCHCOLM



Inchcolm is an island in the Firth of Forth in a very strategic position off the coast of Fife. It may have been home to some early hermits.

At some point, perhaps much later on, when Iona was at its height of fame in the 12C, Columban monks took over and called it the 'Island of Columba' and rebuilt the 'cell of St Columba'.

## DYSART



We do not know much about St Serf (Servanus) (6C) but he had connections with places in Fife. He may have lived in a cave at Dysart ('desert') in Kirkcaldey on the Firth of Forth. He probably had disciples, for a monastic presence seems to have continued here for a long time.

After the Reformation the Carmelites obtained the property and continued the life of prayer and solitude.

A St Serf founded a monastery on St Serf's Island in Loch Leven but this may have been done by another Serf in the 8C.

## ST ANDREWS



The tower of St Rule

The Irish St Kenneth (6C) is said to have used the area of St Andrew's on the coast of Fife as a base to evangelise the Picts.

We know virtually nothing about St Rule, who is said to have lived in a cave by the shore; his name appears in the story of the relics of St Andrew. These relics gave rise to the future St Andrews.

The fine tower of St Rule's church stands beside St Andrew's cathedral. It was hugely popular with pilgrims.

King Constantine built a church for the Culdees at St Mary of the Rock on the edge of the sea where ruins of a 12C church can still be seen

## WEEM



### St Cuthbert's cave

In the 7C the Northumbrians gained the ascendancy over the Picts and the Columban monks were ejected from their territory

During this time St Cuthbert came to Weem, north of Fowlis Wester. The word 'weem' means cave and St Cuthbert lived in a cave behind the church now named after him. There are stones with ancient cupmarks in the area so the place has a long history.

Though the Picts in turn defeated the Northumbrians, they still accepted Northumbrian supremacy (and that of Rome) The king resigned and became a monk.

St Adomnan, the 9th abbot of Iona also evangelised this area and was buried at Dull just 2 miles away and a monastery grew up there.

The well is also called St David's well after a David Menzies who in the 15 C used it as a place of retreat and prayer, being its owner, handed it on to his son.

## THE ISLE OF MAY



The 7C Irish St Ethernan was another early missionary using the Isle of May five miles out to sea off Anstruther in Fife.

He may have been a bishop at St Andrews who used the island for solitude and prayer. He was on the island, with some others in 874, when the Vikings came and put them to the sword. There are said to have been many slain, including the abbot St Adrian, and they were buried under a very large cairn.

## ST COLUMBA'S RELIQUARY



In 730 there was an small monastery at Dunkeld in Perth. After it was rebuilt in stone in 848 St Columba's relics were brought here from Iona which was exposed to Viking attack to the relative safety of Dunkeld.

The relics were housed in the Monymusk Reliquary now in the National Museum Edinburgh.

[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

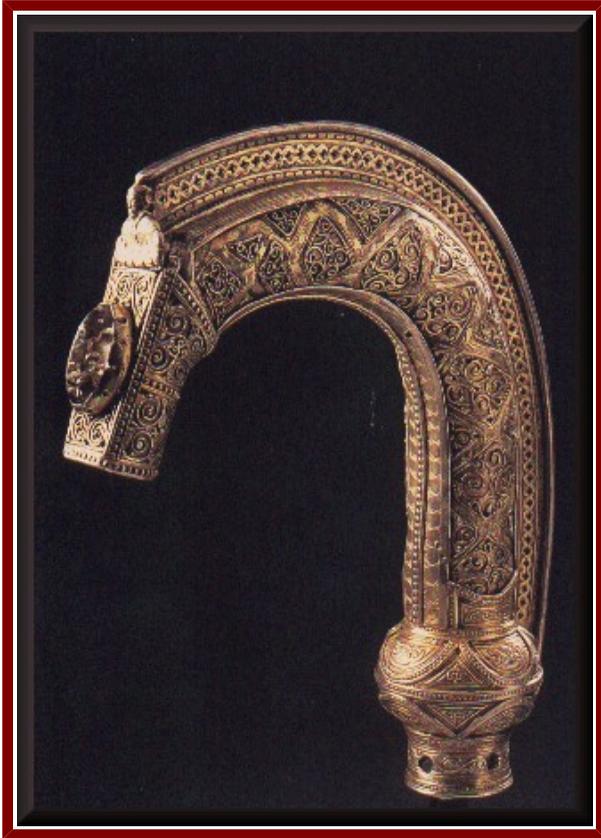
## STRATHFILLAN



St Fillan's Pool

The Irish monk St Fillan (8-9C) is said to have lived and died at Strathfillan ('valley of St Fillan') north of Loch Lomond. He had a monastery there. His famous pool was used for healing the mentally ill up to the 19C

ST FILLAN'S CROZIER.



His bell has also been found

# PITTENWEEM



St Fillan's cave

St Fillan (or was there more than one?) had a cave at Pittenweem on the coast of Fife. Caves are not as bad as we suppose: they were warm in winter and cool in summer and they were often able to make a 'door'.

Nearby Caiple caves, close to the sea, were also used by early monks. Greek and Latin crosses are found on their walls. The caves were enlarged, and had protective walls to shut out the wind off the sea.

## FOWLIS WESTER



The Cross

The Irish St Bean (720) preached among the Picts of Strathearn ('valley of the Irish') using Fowlis Wester, east of Loch Erne as a base. Two 9C Pictish crosses have been found.

Many Pictish Crosses are found in Angus and further north around and beyond Inverness. Their style is very distinctive and much of the symbolism is not yet understood. They come mainly from the 8 & 9 centuries.

By this time several 'kingdoms' or centres of power had become Christian. The crosses show that tribal leaders and church authorities worked together. The leaders recognised the importance of the support of Christianity and the church needed their backing. The crosses demonstrate this sense of mutual worth and understanding.

This sense of mutuality was no different from, say, what the emperor Constantine the Great, king Ethelbert of Kent, the Anglo-Saxon kings of Northumbria and Mercia, other king Constantines in Scotland and the emperor Charles the Great would have believed - not to mention king David of Israel.

DUNBLANE



10C Cross

St Blane (590) was a Briton from Strathclyde; his uncle was St Catan who had a monastery at Kingarth on Bute. He was sent to Ireland for training and succeeded his uncle as Abbot at Kingarth, as well as being made bishop of the area. Several churches retain his name, not least Dunblane north of Stirling where, about 600, beehive huts were built to continue the work.

The Cathedral of Dunblane kept going through the Reformation but much of it fell into ruins. During the restoration in 19C this fine 10C Pictish cross slab was discovered

The Irish St Kessog (6C) preached at Callander, west of Dunblane, on a mound still visible today.

In the Highlands The 7C Irish bishop St Cairell and monk of Iona had a cell at Spean Bridge in the Braes of Lochaber. The 15C church survived the Reformation and was restored in 1932.

## DUNNING



The Dupplin Cross

A fine 8C High Cross from Forteviot nearly 3 metres high now stands in St Serf's church in Dunning Perthshire. Irish type High Crosses like this one are very rare in Pictish areas.

This cross honours Constantine King of the Picts at the turn of the 9 century.

The cross shows not only Irish and Northumbrian influence but also that from the continent of Europe.

# ABERNETHY



11C Round Tower

When Nechtan one of the early kings of the Picts (620) was living in exile in Ireland, he sought the prayers of St Brigid and was restored to his kingdom. Darlugdach, who was to be the second Abbess of Kildare, came to Abernethy and the king gave it 'to God and St Brigid'. The Abbess founded a monastery there and sang the alleluias at the offering of the liturgy. A very interesting and unsuspected story.

A stone church was built and, later, in 11C, one of only two round towers in Scotland when Abernethy when it was a major political and religious centre of the Picts.

## ST VIGEANS



St Vigean's 9C shrine stone.

There must have been an important monastery here near Arbroath founded by the Irish St Fechin or his disciples. There is part of a shrine and also grave cover with place for a cross and a place where relics of St Fechin could be displayed. There are also several crosses and grave slabs.

One cross 2 m high must have been an amazing sight on top of the high mound on which the church is now set. There is no doubt that the monastery was seen as a vital part of this Pictish community.

## MEIGLE



Meigle in Angus must have been an important Pictish monastery judging by the many splendid stones found here. Traces of a stone church have also been found.

Further Pictish Crosses can be found at Eassie, Glamis and Aberlemno not far from Meigle.



## GLAMIS

The Irish bishop St Fergus (730) lived in a cave at Glamis in Angus and evangelised parts of Scotland . He was buried at the monastery here and his holy well still here. The cross is a Christianised standing stone.

[en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)

## ABERLEMNO



On the other side of this cross at Aberlemno north of St Vigean is a fine battle scene denoting the victory of the Picts over the Northumbrians in 685. It also shows knotwork inspired by Northumbrian artwork

## BRECHIN



St Drostan may have evangelised in the Brechin area.

Brechin has an 11C Round Tower, one of only two in the whole of Scotland.

OLD DEER



St Drostan (6C) may have been a disciple of St Columba. When given land for a monastery at Old Deer west of Peterhead, St Columba left him in charge

The Irish St Machar (6C) evangelised round Aberdeen.

There may have been a 6C church dedicated to St Brendan at Birnie south of Elgin.

St Fumac evangelised in Moray from 572.

St Ternan (of early date) founded a monastery at Banchory. His bell may be seen in the town.

St Monir founded a church at Crathie & St Nathalan at Tullich.

## PORTMAHOMACK



The east wall of the crypt is dated to 9C

St Columba (or St Colman) founded an important Pictish monastery at Portmahomack (= 'my little Colman's harbour) to the north of the Great Glen on the Tarbat peninsula on the northern shore of Moray Firth about 550.

The monks produced some amazing crosses, metalwork and vellum for books. When the Vikings burnt it the monastery recovered.

The boundary crosses of the monastery can be seen at Hilton of Cadboll, and Shandwick and Nigg.

St Duthac (1065), a bishop, evangelised Tain.

## ROSEMARKIE



St Moluag founded a monastery on a spit of land at Rosemarkie on Moray Firth in 6C. It was replaced by St Curetan (aka Boniface) in 7C.

## THE ORKNEYS BROUGH OF BIRSAY



There was an early 5C Christian settlement on the Brough of Birsay, a tidal island off the mainland. There are the remains of Pictish and Norse churches



St Magnus the Norse Earl of Orkney was slain in 1116 for refusing to solve a dispute by battle. Kirkwall Cathedral was built to house his bones.

## THE ORKNEYS BROUGH OF DEERNESS



There are several sea stacks in the Orkneys with ruins on top of them; some are fortresses with a chapel on them, some are hermitages.

The Brough of Deerness is a fortress with a 10C Norse chapel on top. The ruin can just be seen in centre and is accessible to the brave hearted

Eynhallow is a small 'Holy Island' in Eynhallow Sound of West Mainland. There may have been a monastery here before the building of the later church in 12C.

## THE ORKNEYS PAPA STRONSAY

'Papar' is a word meaning 'father' and by extension, monk. There are 8 place names of 'Papar', Pabbay etc in the Hebrides, 5 or 6 in the Orkneys, and 8 in Shetland. This is suggestive of the numbers of monks who came here

Papa Stronsay is a small island off Stronsay. A Pictish monastery was founded hereafter 650. A beautiful Irish cross was found there.



The monastery has now been settled by a Catholic monastic community.

## THE ORKNEYS STRONSAY

Stronsay itself at least three sea stacks on which there may have been hermitages. The monastery on Papa Stronsay may have supported hermits on local sea stacks.



The sea stack at 'Tam's Castle'.

There is another nearby called the 'Malme',  
and another on the Brough of Burghead

## THE ORKNEYS PAPA WESTRAY



St Curretan founded several monasteries in northern Scotland. He founded one on Papa Westray. It seems very remote to us but in reality it was on the main sea run from Ireland, Scotland to the Shetlands and beyond.

He was also called St Boniface presumably because he fell in line with Roman dating of Easter. The monastery survived Norse rule and the Reformation. The church has now been restored.

There was also a chapel nearby dedicated to St Brigid.

## THE ORKNEYS PAPA WESTRAY



The remote St Tredwell's (St Triduana's) 12C chapel occupies what is almost an island in a loch now called after her. It is a perfect icon of a remote hermitage on a remote island (Papa Westray) close to the sea at the 'ends of the earth'.

There is definitive solitude here, just the wind, the sea and the birds.

It became a great place of pilgrimage among the islands.

Getting there today is an unparalleled adventure including the shortest scheduled flight (2 mins) in Europe.

## THE SHETLANDS



Shetland Museum

This splendid stone has been interpreted as 'Christianity coming to Shetland' - the Cross, the monks and a bishop (?) on horseback. It may have been part of a shrine. It is now in Lerwick



St Ninian's disciples got as far as St Ninian's Isle in the Shetlands, The chapel is 12C. Widely known in the Orkneys he became the patron saint of the Shetlands. Access is via a tombolo of sand created by the waves.

[commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

There may have been a major Pictish monastery at Papil Burra, another on the remote site of Kame of Isbister

These are similar to the hermitages found on seastacks in the Orkney Isles



There is another equally remote site on the Birrier of Yell.

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Papey is a very small island off the south east of Iceland in the Norwegian sea. According to the the Icelandic Book of Settlements, there were 'papar' 'with their bells and croziers' in Iceland when the Norse arrived.

This church is Iceland's oldest wooden church



From 9C the Picts suffered defeats by Vikings and later by the Norse. The Northern Isles and Western isles were lost. These Norse however became Christian.

Iceland became Christian about 1000 as a result of pressure from Norway. Norway was itself Christian by 1030

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now lives and prays in the Shetlands

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