



St Andrew

The union flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is sometimes referred to as the Union Jack and is made up of three overlaid crosses. One of these crosses is the flag of the Patron Saint of Scotland, Saint Andrew, although he was not actually born in Scotland.

Andrew's home was the village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee, and like his brother Simon Peter, he was a fisherman.

Andrew, along with Peter, James and John formed the inner circle of Jesus' 12 apostles. Andrew was however a disciple of St. John the Baptist prior to becoming a follower of Christ.

Not a great deal is known about his early life other than he is mentioned in the Bible as taking part in the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand'. It is not absolutely certain where he preached the Gospel, or where he is buried, but Patras in Achia claims to be the place where he was martyred and crucified on a cross.

Whilst it is not certain where Andrew actually preached – Scythia, Thrace and Asia Minor have all been mentioned – it appears he travelled great distances in order to spread the word, and it may be this which links him with Scotland.

One legend builds upon Andrew's extensive travels, claiming that he actually came to Scotland and built a church in Fife. This town is now called St Andrews, and the church became a centre for evangelism, and pilgrims came from all over Britain to pray there.

Another ancient legend recalls how it was after the death of Andrew, sometime in the 4th century, that several of his relics were brought to Fife by Rule, a native of Patras.

Whichever legend is closer to the truth we are unlikely to ever unravel, however it is these links that explain why Andrew is now the Patron Saint of Scotland.

It is said that he believed himself unworthy to be crucified on a cross like that of Christ, and so he met his end on a 'saltire', or X-shaped cross (*St Andrew's cross*) which became his symbol. His cross, in white on a blue background, remains the proud symbol of Scotland today and forms a central component of the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.



St. Columba

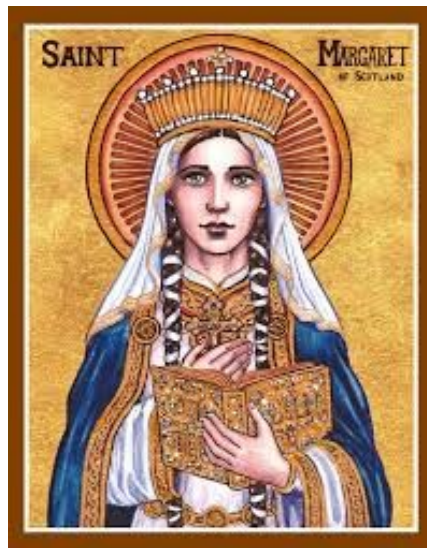
St. Columba was a sixth-century Irish monk . An Abbott by the time he was 40, he took twelve companions and set off for Scotland to convert the Picts.

Those wild, fierce people of the Scottish hills grew to love him for his zeal and generosity. In fact, they even gifted him with an island all his own — the island of Iona.

On that isle, he founded his most famous monastery of all, where in a tiny cell he lived a life of rigid self-denial. Columba slept on a slab of rock and lived on barley or oat cakes — bannocks — and water. This frugal but wholesome fare he shared with all comers, until he "sweetly slept in the Lord."

One interesting legend about St. Columba is that he had one of the first recorded sightings of what is known today as the Loch Ness Monster. According to the "Life of Columba," after the monster killed a villager in the area, St. Columba and a companion went out in search of the alleged water beast. Upon encountering it, he made the sign of the cross and banished the monster to the depths of Loch Ness, much to the locals' glee.

St. Columba continues to be one of the most celebrated saints from the Celtic Christian world.



St. Margaret of Scotland

St. Margaret was a Scottish queen. She was born in Hungary, but her father Edward the Exile was an English prince. He was called back to England in 1072, possibly to succeed the current king, King Edward the Confessor, as Edward had no children. Sadly, Margaret's father died unexpectedly upon arriving in England. With her brother Edgar too young to be crowned king, the throne went to a man named Harold Godwinson, who was brother-in-law of the previous King Edward. Shortly after Harold's coronation, England entered into a conflict with the Normans and was defeated in the Battle of Hastings. This resulted in the Norman leader William the Conqueror becoming the first Norman King of England. Due to her family ties to the previous English line, St. Margaret and her family fled north, ending up in Scotland. It is there that she eventually married Malcolm III, King of Scotland, and became queen.

As queen, St. Margaret was well-known for her piety and efforts to rejuvenate the Church throughout Scotland. Notably, the saint commissioned ferry boats to take pilgrims across the Firth of Forth so they could visit St. Andrew's Cathedral in Fife. A small chapel dedicated to St. Margaret is located in the historic Edinburgh Castle. This is only one small room consisting of an altar, a few stained-glass windows depicting St. Margaret and other saints, and a facsimile of St. Margaret's personal copy of the Gospels. (Her actual copy is kept at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.)