

# INCHAFFRAY ABBEY AND THE MCNAUGHTONS

By Ken McNaughton

The first McNaughton family for which we have written evidence includes a patriarch Malcolm and his three sons—Gillechrist, who was married to Bethoc, Ath and Gilbert, a knight. They lived in 13<sup>th</sup> century Argyll and were so well established they donated two churches to the Inchaffray Abbey in Perthshire.

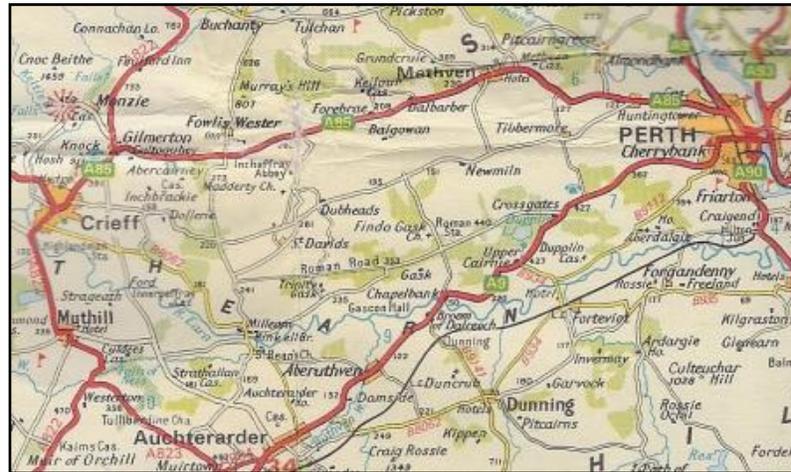


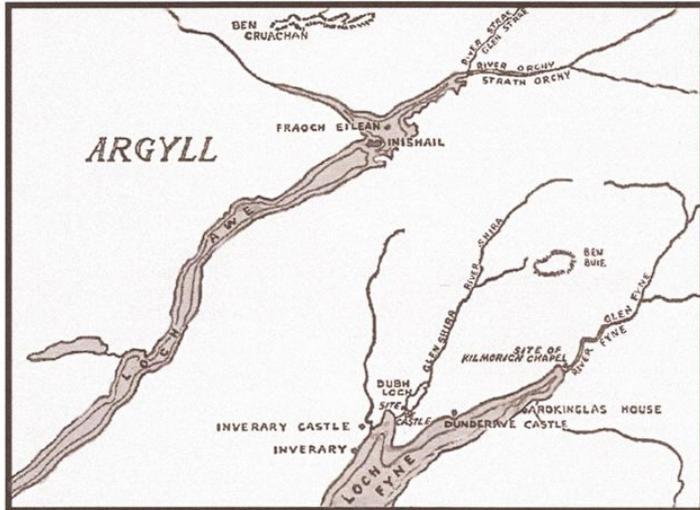
Figure 1. Inchaffray Abbey is marked on a modern map between Crieff and Perth [1].

## RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The McNaughtons were Picts when the Picts thrived in the central and north-eastern area of what we now call Scotland. We don't know much about Pictish beliefs. Presumably the people evolved a sense of where they had come from, how the universe worked and whether they could influence their own welfare by appealing to unseen forces through ritual practices. The planting of crops and domestication of animals allowed communities sufficient leisure to develop hierarchies of authority and mystic knowledge; hence the rise of kings and places of learning and worship.

In 325 A.D, Constantine the Great found it expedient to make Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and it spread as far as the province of Britain [2]. Early missionary efforts concentrated on monastic cells and the hermit's way of life, perhaps in imitation of the Essenes at the time of Jesus. The itinerant monks mostly worked alone and had little contact with one another. St. Ninian and his acolytes trained monks in Whithorn, southern Scotland, maintaining the date of Easter established by the Council of Arles in 314, even though Rome changed the calendar twice in the fifth and once in the sixth century.

Patrick was sent to Ireland in 432 by Pope Germanus and he worked for thirty years to convert the Irish. In 563 Columba sailed with twelve disciples from Ireland and erected a church and monastery on the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland. Columba worked eastward and convinced King Brude that his was the true religion. Brude converted to Christianity and his Pictish subjects followed suit. Columba helped establish Argyll as a separate kingdom, which was called Dalriada after the origin of the Irish "Scoti" who took it over between 498 and 503. About 584 Columba began his mission to the people of the Tay valley.



Kentigern, son of the Pictish princess Tanew or Tannoch was sheltered at St. Ninian's chapel in Glasgow. He eventually became bishop of the city and its patron saint and laid the foundations of its great cathedral, which still stands. Kentigern expanded his ministry northwards into Stirlingshire and Perthshire.

**Figure 2. The Chapel of Kilmorich was at the head of Loch Fyne and the Isle of Inishail is at the top of Loch Awe (T. R. Holme).**

Iona became the training center for monks who took the Celtic version of Christianity as far as central Europe. Others worked among the Picts. The Celtic Church was monastic and spiritual but it lacked any real structure. After the landing of Augustine in Kent in 597 pagan England had gradually been won over to Christianity. Augustine had been sent from Rome by Pope Gregory the Great and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury (this was not Augustine of Hippo, the fourth century saint). At the Synod of Whitby in Northumbria in 664 there was a showdown between the Celtic monks and their Roman rivals, in part due to the difference in dates when Easter was celebrated. The Synod ruled in favor of Rome and the Celtic monks withdrew to Iona.

The Angles had carved out a powerful kingdom called Northumbria that stretched from the Firth of Forth to the River Tees, south of modern Newcastle. The Picts attacked from the north in 671 and in 685 the Northumbrians answered with a great expedition into southern Pictland. At Nectansmere (now Dunnichen in Angus) they met the Pictish army under Brude. The Northumbrian leader was killed and his troops were massacred. The Northumbrians never recovered. The Picts freed themselves from the shackles of the Angles, and the Scots of Dalriada and the Britons of Strathclyde regained their independence. But the influence of Northumbria continued. Brude's successor, Nectan finally made the break with the Celtic Church in 710. Iona followed and as a result Dalriada embraced the Roman faith. Only Strathclyde held out and continued for some years to adhere to the Celtic Church. The Picts were the dominant race in the eighth century. Had the battle at Nectansmere never happened, a nation known as Scotland might never have existed.

At the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Picts and the Scots came under attack from the Norse, who were attracted by the wealth of the monasteries. In 794 they raided the Hebrides and in 802 sacked Iona. By the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century they had established a Hiberno-Norse empire that stretched from Shetland and Orkney to the Isle of Man and encompassed all the western islands of Scotland as well as much of Ireland. It wasn't until 1266 that Alexander III concluded the Treaty of Perth by which the Norse ceded to Scotland all her island possessions, including the Isle of Man and the Hebrides but excluding Shetland and Orkney.

Pictish society was matriarchal and the crown passed by matriarchal descent. Alpin, King of Dalriada, married a Pictish princess and when his son Kenneth MacAlpin led an army into Pictland his claim to the throne was accepted without much opposition. He established his capital in Forteviot, Perthshire, thus uniting Scots and Picts

### INCHAFFRAY ABBEY

The Roman Church was much more organized than the Celtic Church. The Abbey was a Catholic monastery or convent for one gender only under the authority of an abbot or abbess, who served as the spiritual father or mother of the community. Inchaffray Abbey was located by the village of Madderty between Crieff and Perth, in southern Perthshire (Fig. 1). Originally it was situated on a mound surrounded by marshland and it became known as the Isle of Masses. A priory was created on an existing religious site by Gille Brigitte (Gilbert), third Earl of Strathearn and his first known wife Maud (or Matildis) d'Aubigny around 1200. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary and to John the Evangelist and designed as a family sepulcher it was granted to the Augustinians of Scone Abbey and was colonized by canons regular from Scone, becoming an abbey around 1221. It held a number of local churches and in 1275 was fourth among Augustinian houses, exceeded only by St. Andrews, Scone and Holyrood. These top four abbeys were all in central east Scotland, far from the Norse on the west coast. In time Inchaffray Abbey's lands and dependent churches stretched across Scotland as far away as Uist in the west (the central islands of the Outer Hebrides) and Balfour in the south (fourteen miles (23 km) north of Glasgow).

**Figure 3. The Church of St. Findoca was at the west (right) end of the Isle of Inishail.**

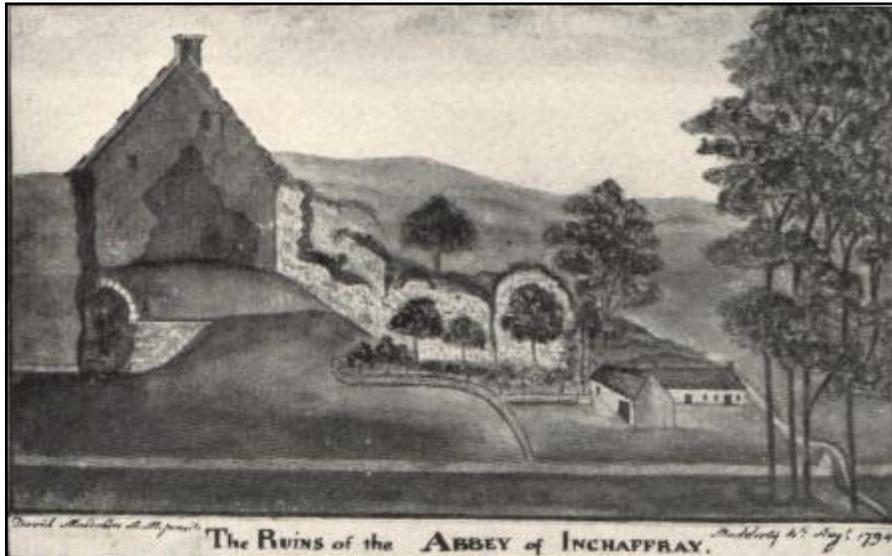


The canons regular are believed to be an ancient order based on the lives of the Apostles. Saint Augustine of Hippo promoted the order in Italy and they became

known as Augustinian (or Austin) canons, also black canons due to the color of their religious habit. In England they had their first seat in Colchester in 1105 and soon spread widely. These regular clergy held a middle position between monks and secular canons, resembling a community of parish priests living under rule with common property. Canons engaged in public ministry of liturgy and sacraments for those who visited their churches. Their abbeys had long naves to accommodate large congregations. Abbeys might include a church, cloister, chapter house, refectory, parlor, kitchen, cellars, abbot's quarters, infirmary, friars' lodgings, guest-house, lavatory, barns and stables. They depended on their congregation and the goodwill of the community.

Medieval Anglo-Saxon charters are documents that typically make a grant of land or record a privilege. The Charters of Inchaffray Abbey 1190-1609 have not only survived but have been

lovingly preserved [3]. It is here we find the first written evidence of a McNaughton family in Scotland. They are mentioned first in the Introduction, pages xli-xliii, which discusses three charters by the McNaughton family who donated two churches to the Abbey. This matter is examined further on pages lxxxiii-lxxxiv under the family heading Macnaughten. A transcript of each charter follows in Latin. The first two on pages 64 and 65 are numbered LXXIII and LXXIV and the last is LXXXV on page 75.



Abstracts in English appear for the first two on page 204 and for the third on page 209. Notes about the charters appear on pages 284 and 286 but do not add anything to the present discussion. At the end of the book there are some colored facsimiles of charters, including the McNaughton charter LXXIV. Let's look at the abstracts and then discuss the family.

**Figure 4. Ruins of Inchaffray Abbey in 1794 [3].**

*LXXIII. Grant of the church of Kilmorich in the diocese of Argyll.*

*Gillecris, son of Malcolm Macnacthan, for the weal of the souls of himself, his wife Bethoc, his parents, ancestors, and heirs, gives to Inchaffray, after the death of Maurice, clerk, in pure and perpetual alms the church of St. Mordac, of Kellemurthe [Kilmorich at the head of Loch Fyne], with all its just pertinents, to be held of him and his heirs as freely as any baron of the whole realm of Scotland can give any church. Seal of grantor. Witnesses... [c. 1246].*

*LXXIV. Another charter to the same effect as No. LXXIII.*

*Gillecris [as in No. LXXIII, omitting the words, 'after the death of Maurice, clerk.' After mention of the grantor's seal there follows:] 'together with the seal of the venerable father C[lement] by the grace of God bishop of Dunblane, and at the time of this collation having charge of the bishopric of Argyll. Witnesses ... [c. 1247].*

Figure 2 shows a map of McNaughton territory in Argyll, with the site of the Kilmorich Chapel lower right. Only the burial ground can now be seen, 300 yards west of the main road. A level area near the center indicates the site of the chapel. The dates of these two charters, 1246 and 1247 have been estimated from the names and events of church officials mentioned.

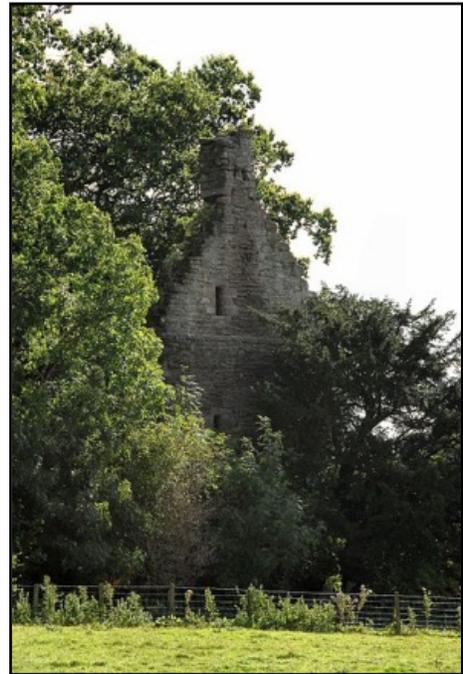
*LXXXV. Grant of the church of Inishail.*

*Ath, son of Malcolm Macnaughtan, makes known that out of charity, with the assent of Sir Gilbert, knight, his brother, and for the weal of their souls and the souls of their ancestors and heirs, he has given to the abbot and canons of Inchaffray the church of St. Findoca, of Inchalt*

*[Inishail, Loch Awe], in the diocese of Argyll, with all its just pertinents, with tithes, oblations, common pasture, and other easements pertaining to the church, together with all the rights he has in the same church. To be held in free and perpetual alms, as freely as any church in Scotland is held by the gift of any nobleman. Seals of grantor and his brother G[ilbert]. 29 June 1257.*

Inishail is a wooded island in the northern part of Loch Awe (Figs. 2 & 3). The remains of an old parish church stand within a burial ground near the west end of the island, where services were conducted regularly until 1736. There is evidence for the possible existence of a church in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A medieval church here was described as ruinous in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Figure 5. Ruins of Inchaffray Abbey in 2007, opposite view from Fig. 4.**



These three charters were made by the three sons of Malcolm McNaughton between 1246 and 1257. Gillecrisp was married to Bethoc and bestows the church of Kilmorich at the head of Loch Fyne. His brother Ath donates the church of St. Findoca on the island of Inishail in Loch Awe with the assent of his brother, Sir Gilbert, a knight. This is a well-landed family. On 12 February 1267 King Alexander III gave a charter to Gillecrisp Macnachdan and his heirs for the keeping of his castle and island of Frechelan in Loch Awe [4]. The three transactions took place in Argyll, while Inchaffray was in Perthshire, the traditional home of the McNaughton Clan, more than sixty miles (97 km) to the east as the crow flies. We don't know why these McNaughtons moved west, nor how they became so well established, but we are grateful that the charters of Inchaffray Abbey opened a window onto the life of the McNaughton Clan in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Their faith would have been Roman Catholic, but after the Protestant Reformation of 1561, the faith of the Clan fluctuated through the years, depending on politics and alliances.

#### DECLINE OF CATHOLICISM

Scotland was converted from Roman Catholicism to Presbyterianism by a bloody revolution, led by a firebrand. John Knox was ordained to the Catholic priesthood in 1536 and joined a movement to reform the Scottish church. King James V of Scotland had married a second wife, Mary of Guise and they had a daughter Mary on 8 December 1542. James died six days later, making the infant Mary Queen regnant of Scotland. Mary of Guise became effective Regent and she decided to persecute the Protestant sect that had taken root in Scotland. There were murders on both sides and Knox took refuge in St. Andrews Castle. He started preaching and developing his ideas for church reform. The rebels had English support, so Mary of Guise requested French help to take the castle. Knox and the protestant nobles were forced to surrender. Knox and some others had to row to France as galley slaves. He was released after nineteen months, took refuge in England in 1549 and was licensed to work in the Church of England, eventually becoming royal chaplain to King Edward VI. When Edward died in 1553, Mary Tudor ascended the throne

and re-established Roman Catholicism. Knox was forced to leave the country. In Geneva he met and was influenced by John Calvin, the French theologian.

Knox became increasingly zealous and in 1554 published a pamphlet attacking Mary Tudor and the bishops who had brought her to the throne. Knox returned to Scotland in 1559 and gathered supporters in Perth, a walled town that could be defended in a siege. Mary of Guise gathered a small French army and some loyal supporters. She sent the Earl of Argyll (Archibald Campbell was the fifth Earl of Argyll, 1558-73) and Lord Moray to offer terms, but these two considered her subsequent actions treacherous and switched sides. The Protestant Lords of the Congregation gathered strength and Knox preached in Edinburgh. On 24 October the Scottish nobility formally deposed Mary of Guise from the regency. She died on 10 June 1560. The young Queen Mary arrived in Scotland on 19 August 1561 and in the next three or four years summoned Knox to a series of confrontations. Knox was adamant in wanting to reform the church, in at least one case reducing the queen to tears. Bloodshed continued. On 9 March 1566, Mary's secretary, David Rizzio was murdered by Protestant rebels and Mary's husband, Lord Darnley was murdered in revenge, for which Mary was a suspect. Argyll switched back to support her. Knox died on 24 November 1572. He was notable for the overthrow of Roman Catholicism in Scotland and for assuring its replacement with Presbyterianism rather than Anglicism.

By the late 15<sup>th</sup> century Inchaffray Abbey's fortunes were in decline and it was becoming secularized. In 1561 its income was the third lowest of the Augustinian abbeys in Scotland. The Catholic Church was corrupt and the mood was ripe for the Protestant Reformation, led by John Knox. Much of the walls of the abbey were standing until 1816 when a turnpike road was carried through the ruins (Fig. 4). What remains is a western gable and a single arched apartment (Fig. 5). The outline of other buildings may be seen in crop markings from the air.

#### REFERENCES

1. Central Scotland Motoring Map, John Bartholomew & Son Ltd., Edinburgh 1973.
2. Mackay, Dr. James, Pocket Scottish History, Lomond Books, 2007.
3. Lindsay, William Alexander, Dowden, John, and Thomson, John Maitland, "Charters Bulls and Other Documents Relating to the Abbey of Inchaffray 1190-1609," Edinburgh University Press for the Scottish History Society, 1908.
4. McNaughton, Ken, "[King Alexander III and the McNaughton Charter](#)," Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide.

#### NOTES

Extensive use as made of the Web to provide context for the primary references. I have chosen to spell the Clan name McNaughton unless it is spelled differently in quotes. This work is copyrighted and may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any medium without written permission from Ken McNaughton, 3778 College Avenue, Ellicott City, MD 21043; phone/fax: 410-418-9340; [kjmcn@comcast.net](mailto:kjmcn@comcast.net) (25 May 2012).

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