

The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland



Edited by Steve Boardman and Eila Williamson

THE CULT OF SAINTS AND THE VIRGIN MARY
IN MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND

This volume examines the phenomena of the cult of saints and Marian devotion as they were manifested in Scotland, ranging from the early medieval period to the sixteenth century. It combines general surveys of the development of the study of saints in the early and later middle ages with more focused articles on particular subjects, including St Waltheof of Melrose, the obscure early medieval origins of the cult of St Munnu, the short-lived martyr cult of David, duke of Rothesay, and the Scottish saints included in the greatest liturgical compendium produced in late medieval Scotland, the Aberdeen breviary. The way in which Marian devotion permeated late medieval Scottish society is discussed in terms of the church dedications of the twelfth and thirteenth-century aristocracy, the ecclesiastical landscape of Perth, the depiction of Mary in Gaelic poetry, and the pervasive influence of the familial bond between holy mother and son in representations of the Scottish royal family.

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Professor Dauvit Broun, Department of History (Scottish), University of Glasgow, 9 University Gardens, Glasgow G12 8QH

Dr Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP

Professor Huw Pryce, School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology, Bangor University, Gwynedd LL57 2DG

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AND THE VIRGIN MARY
IN MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND

Edited by

STEVE BOARDMAN
EILA WILLIAMSON

THE BOYDELL PRESS

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CONTRIBUTORS

HELEN BIRKETT is a Mellon Fellow at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto

STEVE BOARDMAN is a Reader in Scottish History, School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh

RACHEL BUTTER is an Honorary Research Associate, Department of Celtic and Gaelic, University of Glasgow

THOMAS OWEN CLANCY is Professor of Celtic, Department of Celtic and Gaelic, University of Glasgow

DAVID DITCHBURN is a Senior Lecturer in Medieval History, Trinity College Dublin

The late AUDREY-BETH FITCH was Associate Professor of History, California University of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, USA

MARK A. HALL is History Officer, Perth Museum & Art Gallery

MATTHEW H. HAMMOND is a Lecturer in Scottish History, School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh

SÌM R. INNES is a postgraduate student in the Department of Celtic and Gaelic, University of Glasgow

ALAN MACQUARRIE is a Research Associate in History, University of Strathclyde

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Abdn. Reg.</i>	<i>Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis</i> , ed. Cosmo Innes, Spalding and Maitland Clubs, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1845)
<i>Aberdeen Breviarium</i>	<i>Breviarium Aberdonense</i> , facsimile edition, ed. William Blew, 2 vols, Bannatyne, Maitland and Spalding Clubs (London, 1854)
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
<i>APS</i>	<i>The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland</i> , eds Thomas Thomson and Cosmo Innes, 12 vols (Edinburgh, 1814–75)
<i>BA</i>	<i>Breviarium Aberdonense</i> (Edinburgh, 1509/10)
BL	London, British Library
CDS	<i>Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London</i> , ed. Joseph Bain, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1881–8); <i>Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland preserved in the Public Record Office and the British Library</i> , vol. v, eds Grant G. Simpson and James D. Galbraith ([Edinburgh], n.d.)
<i>Chron. Bower</i>	Walter Bower, <i>Scotichronicon</i> , ed. D. E. R. Watt et al., 9 vols (Aberdeen and Edinburgh, 1987–98)
CSSR	<i>Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome</i>
<i>Dunf. Reg.</i>	<i>Registrum de Dunfermelyn</i> , ed. Cosmo Innes, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1842)
EETS	Early English Text Society
<i>ER</i>	<i>The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland</i> , eds John Stuart et al., 23 vols (Edinburgh, 1878–1908)
Forbes, <i>Kalendars</i>	Alexander Penrose Forbes, <i>Kalendars of Scottish Saints</i> (Edinburgh, 1872)
<i>Glas. Reg.</i>	<i>Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis</i> , ed. Cosmo Innes, Maitland and Bannatyne Clubs, 2 vols (Glasgow and Edinburgh, 1843)
<i>Inchaff. Chrs</i>	<i>Charters, bulls and other documents relating to the abbey of Inchaffray</i> , ed. William Alexander Lindsay et al., Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 1908)
<i>IR</i>	<i>Innes Review</i>
<i>James IV Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of James the Fourth 1505–13</i> , eds Robert Kerr Hannay and R. L. Mackie, Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 1953)
<i>James V Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of James V</i> , eds Robert Kerr Hannay and Denys Hay (Edinburgh, 1954)
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>MRHS</i>	Ian B. Cowan and David E. Easson, <i>Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland</i> (London, 1976)
NAS	Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland

Abbreviations

NLS	Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland
NMS	National Museums Scotland
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , eds H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols (Oxford, 2004); also online at http://www.oxforddnb.com/
<i>Pais. Reg.</i>	<i>Registrum Monasterii de Passelet</i> , ed. Cosmo Innes, Maitland Club (Edinburgh, 1832)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completes ... series Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64)
PSAS	<i>Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland</i>
RCAHMS	The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
RMS	<i>Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum. The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland</i> , eds John Maitland Thomson et al., Scottish Record Society, 11 vols (Edinburgh, 1882–1914; reprinted 1984)
RRS	<i>Regesta Regum Scotorum</i> , eds G. W. S. Barrow et al. (Edinburgh, 1960–)
RS	Rolls Series
RSS	<i>Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum</i> , eds M. Livingstone et al. (Edinburgh, 1908–)
<i>St A. Lib.</i>	<i>Liber Cartarum Prioratus Sancti Andree in Scotia</i> , ed. Thomas Thomson, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1841)
SHR	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
SHS	Scottish History Society
STS	Scottish Text Society
TA	<i>Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland</i> , eds Thomas Dickson et al., 13 vols (1877–1978)
TNA	London, The National Archives

INTRODUCTION

This volume arises from a conference held in Edinburgh in September 2007 to mark the conclusion of an AHRC-funded project, *The Survey of Dedications to Saints in Medieval Scotland*. The publication includes chapters based on papers delivered at that conference, supplemented by a number of invited contributions. This is the second edited volume arising from the ‘Dedications to Saints’ project, the first, *Saints’ Cults in the Celtic World*, having been published by Boydell and Brewer in 2009. The database compiled by the project team can be consulted at <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/saints/>. The main aim of the project is to stimulate and facilitate research into the cult of saints and the associated themes of piety and religious enthusiasm in medieval Scotland.

The present volume contributes to this endeavour in two discrete, but interlinked, ways. First, the contributions of Clancy and Ditchburn have been designed as wide-ranging reviews, providing general comment on, and challenges to, the paradigms governing the scholarly study of saints and their cults in the early and late middle ages. Clancy’s article concentrates on the various ways in which place-name evidence has been used to trace or analyse the development of saints’ cults in early medieval Celtic societies. Clancy suggests that the investigation of place-names, church dedications, and hagiographical material relating to saints has too often been moulded to fit established scholarly paradigms, particularly through the tendency of earlier historians to treat these sources as useful guides to the ‘real’ lives and achievements of early medieval missionary saints in northern Britain or by the privileging, in both the surviving evidence and modern scholarship based on it, of those cults adopted and propagated by powerful ecclesiastical figures or institutions. While not dismissing the potential usefulness of these interpretative models in particular contexts, Clancy argues that historians should be aware of the limitations of these dominant paradigms and lays out a number of models which might provide alternative explanations for specific patterns in place-names and church dedications relating to early medieval saints. Clancy’s chapter, then, proposes a more nuanced and rounded reading of the evidence, one that might recover richer and more complex historical processes, in which cults actually, or supposedly, based on early medieval figures could grow in popularity for a variety of reasons, or decline and disappear altogether, or be rediscovered (or invented) in subsequent ages.

Ditchburn’s chapter, meanwhile, interrogates what he characterises as the ‘McRoberts thesis’, laid out in Monsignor David McRoberts’s influen-

tial *Innes Review* article from 1968.¹ Ditchburn takes issue with McRoberts's argument that the emergence, development and celebration of 'native' saints' cults in fifteenth-century Scotland reflected and reinforced a growing 'national', and specifically anti-English, sentiment in religious observance. Instead, Ditchburn suggests that the devotional culture of late medieval Scotland seems largely to have mirrored wider trends in Western European piety, with an increased emphasis on cosmopolitan christocentric, biblical and, especially, Marian cults developing alongside, not in opposition to, a new (or renewed) interest in the veneration of local and regional figures. For Ditchburn, enthusiasm for local, regional or 'national' cults should not be viewed as something that precluded wider attachments, but as part of a continuum of religious feeling that might embrace a saint venerated in a single parish alongside devotion to the great universal cults of late medieval Europe.² Ditchburn's analysis of ship- and peasant-naming patterns in Scotland also raises fundamental questions about how far the concerns and interests of the clerical elite, obviously heavily represented in the surviving sources, were reflected in the devotional practices and behaviour of other social groups.

The reviews provided by Clancy and Ditchburn sit alongside a number of more focused studies covering a variety of topics. In some instances these chapters reinforce, or relate to, points raised by the general surveys. Rachel Butter's study of the cult of St Munnu, for example, touches on the issues mentioned by Clancy in terms of the difficulty of understanding and interpreting the appearance of early medieval saints as the foci for late medieval cults. The importance of treating the veneration of a particular saint as a malleable and mutable social phenomenon, subject to changing economic, political and ecclesiastical conditions, but also capable of displaying considerable continuity, is made obvious in Butter's examination of St Munnu's cult in medieval Argyll. Four chapters, meanwhile, highlight aspects of devotion to the Virgin Mary in late medieval Scotland and certainly tend to confirm Ditchburn's observations on the importance of Scottish engagement with the various manifestations of the Marian cult. Matthew Hammond examines how the twelfth- and thirteenth-century monarchs and aristocrats of Scotland displayed an increasing interest in Mary, Christ and the Holy Trinity as formal dedicatees for the religious houses and churches they founded or came to be associated with. The enthusiasm for Mary, which was shared by both 'native' and 'immigrant' families (insofar as those labels were still relevant), may have partly excluded or obscured established 'insular' saints and their cults, but Hammond suggests that this disengagement was by no

¹ David McRoberts, 'The Scottish Church and nationalism in the fifteenth century', *IR* 19 (1968), 3–14.

² Here Eamon Duffy's work on the proliferation and diversity of devotions to be found in late medieval England would seem to offer a useful comparison. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1450–1580* (London, 1992).

means universal and that many of these earlier cults continued to thrive and prosper into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The late Audrey-Beth Fitch explores the portrayal of Mary's relationship to Jesus and the way in which it both reflected and shaped changing social expectations of the bond between mothers and their sons, with a particular emphasis on the significance of the Marian model as an exemplar for the conduct of Scottish queens. The chapter also traces the emergence of Mary as a source of salvation whose favour and support would be especially critical and effective on the day of judgement. The wide recognition of Mary as a type of 'super intercessor' does much to explain the intense and widespread veneration of the Virgin in Perth, highlighted in Mark Hall's survey of the religious houses founded in and around the medieval burgh. Sim Innes's sensitive exploration of the depictions of the various personas of the Virgin within the Gaidhealtachd, particularly in Gaelic poetry, similarly reinforces the powerful contemporary appeal of Mary's unparalleled intercessory powers, most evocatively as the 'Empress of Hell', capable of descending into Satan's own realm to wrest the souls of her devotees from damnation.

The remaining chapters are less obviously grouped around discrete themes, although the contributions of Birkett and Boardman both concentrate on the contentious issues surrounding the recognition and promotion of sanctity. Birkett's careful examination of the debates within the Melrose community over the posthumous standing of St Waltheof reveals the various dilemmas faced by the monks of his house and the wider Cistercian order in deciding whether to support or suppress his claims to sanctity. While Birkett's work treats of a clerical figure whose personal piety and holiness were clearly the basis of his saintly reputation, Boardman's assessment of the shadowy martyr cult that grew up around David, duke of Rothesay (*ob.* 1402) deals with a very different kind of man. Rothesay's apparently degenerate life made him an unlikely focus for veneration, but the circumstances of his death encouraged both popular piety and devotion. The emergence of the Waltheof and Rothesay cults emphasises the uncertainty and contingency that could surround the development of any particular saintly devotion in the medieval period. In contrast, Alan Macquarrie's appraisal of the importance of the *Breviarium Aberdonense* as a source for the study of Scottish saints' cults, gives an insight into a clerical venture to direct popular veneration through the production of a national liturgy. Although Ditchburn provides some important caveats about the usefulness of the Breviary as a guide to the trends in popular piety within the kingdom at the close of the middle ages, the work remains the most significant and wide-ranging liturgical project undertaken by the medieval Scottish ecclesiastical hierarchy. At the least, then, the Breviary offers an invaluable insight into the thinking of senior figures within the Scottish church as they sought to create an official cycle of worship deemed to be appropriate for the subjects of James IV. As

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Macquarrie emphasises, the Breviary is also valuable because it incorporates a range of earlier hagiographical material which is otherwise unknown and which might, with careful analysis, tell us much about the development of saints' cults long before the opening decade of the sixteenth century. The appearance of a full-scale modern edition of the Breviary, a project in which Macquarrie is currently engaged, is clearly at the top of the list of desiderata for scholars working on saints' cults in Scotland

THE BIG MAN, THE FOOTSTEPS, AND THE FISSILE SAINT:
PARADIGMS AND PROBLEMS IN STUDIES
OF INSULAR SAINTS' CULTS

Thomas Owen Clancy

In this chapter, the focus is primarily on the problems that beset investigating saints' cults in the early medieval period, something approached also in Rachel Butter's incisive case-study of St Munnu.¹ *The Survey of Dedications to Saints in Medieval Scotland*² is one of the most welcome developments in such investigations. First, it will help us understand the dynamism and evolution of saints' cults during the later medieval period, a period for which there remains a great deal of work to do, and much headway to be gained in refining and opening out our understanding of medieval Scottish piety and the nexus between society and religion. Second, and more importantly for this contribution, it will help to clarify for us what we do and do not know about the later medieval position of the cult of those saints already present in the Scottish landscape in the period before the twelfth century. It has become increasingly apparent in recent studies that no real progress can be made in our understanding of early medieval saints' cults without a firm grasp of the nature of the later medieval evidence for those cults. This is especially so, given the paucity of clear documentation cited for the likes of church dedications or fair days by key secondary sources like Mackinlay's *Ancient Church Dedications* and Watson's *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*.³ This chapter primarily addresses the evidence provided by one source which has had to remain largely outwith the remit of the Survey: place-name evidence.

Although my title promises to tackle approaches to the cults of saints in a wider insular context, factors of time and space have led me to focus on a number of problems particular to the use of saints' cults in the understanding

¹ Rachel Butter, 'St Munnu in Ireland and Scotland: an exploration of his cult', in this volume.

² Web address: <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/saints/>; for a brief account of the survey, see Steve Boardman, 'The survey of dedications to saints in medieval Scotland', *IR* 59 (2008), 189–91.

³ James Murray Mackinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland*, vol. II: *Non-Scriptural Dedications* (Edinburgh, 1914); W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926).

of the earlier middle ages in Scotland. The chapter has a wider insular, indeed Celtic, background, however, and it is hoped that the observations made will be helpful in other contexts as well. The problems and paradigms examined here have also been invoked and discussed in the context of studies of saints' cults in Ireland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. These Celtic regions have, and have been seen to have since medieval times, an unusually abundant crop of local or localised saints' cults.⁴ This phenomenon – if it is one phenomenon and not several different ones – is capable of numerous explanations, but in every case a number of observations can be made fairly straightforwardly. First, this abundance of local or localised cults derives in the main from the period before the twelfth century, though as Rachel Butter discusses elsewhere in this volume, one cannot exclude the possibilities of introduction and dissemination of such cults in the later middle ages. That this is so is demonstrable because these cults appear to be present, in many cases enshrined, in place-names preserved in charters and related records, sometimes already by the twelfth century showing signs of misunderstanding and corrupt forms as the names crossed linguistic boundaries.⁵ Second, then, this abundance of cults relates in some way to the ecclesiastical history of each region in the earlier middle ages. This is not to say that, as has sometimes been understood, the 'Celtic church' had a particular approach to sanctity or to church organisation that lent itself to such proliferation and localisation of cults (though, saving any sense that the 'Celtic church' is a valid concept,⁶ it may be so), but rather it is to say that in each region, factors have been at work that have caused this phenomenon, and discovering the roots of it may allow us to catch some glimpse of the church history of each region.

It is this second hope that has tempted scholars over the years to employ the cults of saints as narrative tools for telling the ecclesiastical history of their regions. It should be said that this is least the case in the region for which there is the greatest abundance of evidence: Ireland. That historians of the Irish church have largely eschewed narratives derived from hagiography and other signs of the cults of saints, may tell us something about the extent

⁴ See in particular the observations in Oliver J. Padel, 'Local saints and place-names in Cornwall', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), 303–60; Karen Jankulak, 'Adjacent saints' dedications and early Celtic history', in *Saints' Cults in the Celtic World*, eds Steve Boardman, John Reuben Davies and Eila Williamson (Woodbridge, 2009), 91–118.

⁵ For example, Kilduncan and Kilconquhar in Fife, dedicated most probably to Dúnchad, abbot of Iona. The latter is first found in the form *Kilconcat* (1165×1169), with subsequent variant forms. See Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife, Volume 3: St Andrews and the East Neuk* (Donington, 2009), s.n., noting that Kilconquhar could instead be for an unknown saint Conchad; Simon Taylor, 'Place-names and the early church in eastern Scotland', in *Scotland in Dark-Age Britain*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (St Andrews, 1995), 93–110, at 100 for discussion.

⁶ On this problem, see Kathleen Hughes, 'The Celtic Church: is this a valid concept?', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1 (1981), 1–20; Wendy Davies, 'The myth of the Celtic Church', in *The Early Church in Wales and the West*, eds Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (Oxford, 1992), 12–21; Gilbert Márkus, 'Pelagianism and the "Common Celtic Church"', *IR* 56 (2005), 165–213.

to which these are useful historical tools, if there are other options available.⁷ In Scotland, however, it has been a particularly unavoidable tool, given the paucity of early historical texts, and the proportion of those we have that are hagiographical in nature.⁸

On the other hand, Scotland's linguistic and cultural evolution has seemed to hold out greater hope of gaining some purchase on the chronology of saints' cults. Because regions have shifted their main language during the course of the early middle ages, and because place-names often preserve the names of saints, it has been thought that names might act as, essentially, fossil records of cult and church development. For instance, the preservation of the name of a saint in a linguistically Pictish context in eastern Scotland might be seen to point to the origins of that cult in the period before that language lost ground in the east.⁹ In such a context it has been an understandable temptation to augment what we might seem to know about a saint such as Columba or Ninian by a consideration of the distribution of dedications to that saint. Taken as a study of the afterlife of such an individual (that is,

⁷ It should be noted that this is not because Ireland lacks for hagiographical evidence. On the contrary, it has a very considerable corpus not just of saints' Lives, but also of a diverse array of other material relating to saints' dossiers: anecdotes, martyrologies, genealogies, litanies, etc. Irish scholars have been at the forefront of more rigorous approaches to the construction and therefore historical usefulness of saints' Lives in the early medieval insular world: see especially the work of Máire Herbert, for example, *Iona, Kells and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* (Oxford, 1988; repr. Dublin, 1996). They have also pioneered approaches to the very complex ancillary material, such as saints' genealogies: see especially the work of Pádraig Ó Riain, for references to whose work see below, n. 12; Edel Bhreathnach, 'The genealogies of Leinster as a source for local cults', in *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, eds John Carey, Máire Herbert and Pádraig Ó Riain (Dublin, 2001), 250–67; and also Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, 'Early Irish saints' cults and their constituencies', *Ériu* 54 (2004), 79–102. Scholars such as Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin have attempted to use these more refined approaches to hagiographical material to construct very different kinds of historical narrative; see, for example, his *Church and Polity in Pre-Norman Ireland: The Case of Glendalough* (Maynooth, 1996). For reviews of Irish hagiographical literature, see Máire Herbert, 'Hagiography', in *Progress in Medieval Irish Studies*, eds Kim McCone and Katharine Simms (Maynooth, 1996), 79–90; 'Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland from the origins to the sixteenth century', in *Hagiographies III*, ed. Guy Philippart (Brussels, 2001), 326–60.

⁸ I am thinking of texts like Adomnán's Life of Columba, a key text for our understanding of the sixth and seventh centuries; or the Life of St Margaret, crucial for our understanding of the late eleventh century. For an intelligent approach to using this material as a historical source, see the work of Alan Macquarrie, *The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History, AD 450–1093* (Edinburgh, 1997); and for cautionary comments on the general approach, see Dauvit Broun, 'The literary record of St Nynia: fact and fiction?', *IR* 42 (1991), 143–50; Thomas Owen Clancy, 'The real St Ninian', *IR* 52 (2001), 1–29, esp. 1–2.

⁹ An example might be that of Exmagirdle (*Eglesmagril*, 1211×1214), derived from the putatively Brittonic (here Pictish?) element **eclēs* (< Latin *ecclesia*) with the name of a saint, probably Grillán, preceded by the first-person possessive pronoun *mo* often used in the formation of hypocoristic names for saints. It should be noted that although the place-name may be a Pictish one, the saint is probably Irish, one of the companions of St Columba. See G. W. S. Barrow, 'The childhood of Scottish Christianity: a note on some place-name evidence', *Scottish Studies* 27 (1983), 1–15, at 12, 7; Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, 519; Alan O. and Marjorie O. Anderson, *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (Edinburgh, 1961), 546–7.

as a study of cult proper), this is entirely valid as an approach. Scholars have over the years, however, been tempted to go the extra distance and make connections between historical activity and saints' dedications. These are the 'Footsteps' of my title, the notion that the distribution of dedications to a saint record, in some way, the activities of that saint.¹⁰ Even where that has been at an early date seen as an inappropriate explanation of certain kinds of distribution, recourse has been had to the secondary notion that a saint through his followers, or through an expanding federation of churches looking to that saint as a patron, was somehow involved in the distribution of cult. This in a sense is the 'Big Man' paradigm referred to in my title, a paradigm that refers the cults of saints back to the activities of a very small group of original historical individuals who are seen as marking the main turning points in ecclesiastical history. A different way to view this, both from the point of view of modern scholarship and of the evolution of saints' cults, would be to think of the way in which those saints with effective hagiographical dossiers, particularly Latin Lives, based at effective centres of promotion, are to be seen in a dominant position within the dedicatory hierarchy of saints in Scotland.¹¹

Since the 1970s, the researches of Professor Pádraig Ó Riain have provided yet another paradigm for understanding some of the proliferation of local and localised cults in Celtic regions.¹² Ó Riain's work has demonstrated the disturbing phenomenon of the 'Fissile Saint', the propensity for the cult of an original individual to divide over time into many separate local and localised cults as a result of a number of cogent pressures which may have been more important in a Celtic, and particularly in a Gaelic, context than elsewhere. These include, first, the tendency towards the formation of multiple hypocoristic names for saints along the lines of those demonstrable for the name lying behind St Columba: Columb, Mo Cholm, Colmán, Mo

¹⁰ An example may be found in the work of W. Douglas Simpson, *The Historical Saint Columba* (Aberdeen, 1927); E. G. Bowen pursued this line of enquiry from a slightly different theoretical angle, but with many of the same presumptions: see especially his *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands* (Cardiff, 1969). For recent reviews of these paradigms as applied to other Celtic regions, see John Reuben Davies, 'The saints of south Wales and the Welsh church', in *Local Saints and Local Churches*, eds Thacker and Sharpe, 361–95, at 361–5; Susan Pearce, 'Sainly cults in south-western Britain: a review', in *Saints of Europe: Studies towards a Survey of Cults and Culture*, ed. Graham Jones (Donington, 2003), 261–79; Jankulak, 'Adjacent saints' cults'.

¹¹ I have commented on this issue in Clancy, 'Scottish saints and national identities in the early middle ages', in *Local Saints and Local Churches*, eds Thacker and Sharpe, 397–422.

¹² His main works on this subject include: 'Towards a methodology in early Irish hagiography', *Peritia* 1 (1981), 146–59; 'Cainnech alias Colum Cille, patron of Ossory', in *Folia Gadelica*, eds Pádraig de Brún, Seán Ó Coileáin and Pádraig Ó Riain (Cork, 1983), 20–35. 'Finnio and Winniau: a return to the subject', in *Ildánach Ildirech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*, eds John Carey, John T. Koch and Pierre-Yves Lambert (Andover and Aberystwyth, 1999), 187–202, restates his arguments regarding the complex of saints relating to these names and gives necessary previous bibliography.

Cholmóc, Mo Chonna, Do Chonna, Mo Chummai, etc.¹³ Second, we can witness the localising tendencies of kindred interests and proprietorial attitudes towards churches and saints, which also gave rise to the extraordinary abundance of genealogies of saints in Ireland.¹⁴ One might add to Ó Riain's researches the observation that in Celtic regions it may be that the very fact that Celtic toponymy created place-names along the order of {ecclesiastical toponymic element + saint's name}, whether that be Kilmacolm in Scotland, Donaghpatrick in Ireland, Llanbadarn in Wales, Constantine in Cornwall, or Locronan in Brittany, contributed both to the preservation of the memory of cult – even often the faintest traces – where elsewhere it might have been lost, and also to the propensity for division, reanalysis, and localisation. In other words, that a place has acquired the name *Cill Mo Choluim* at some stage in the early middle ages has preserved the memory of that church's dedication to a saint called Mo Cholum longer than might have happened had the church been called something else, and thereby also set in train a demand for local faithful to know, or discover, who their particular Mo Cholum was.

My main purpose in what follows is to suggest that a better understanding of the implications of saints' cults would be achieved by a greater openness about the fact that we interpret the available evidence of these cults using a number of different paradigms. No one paradigm provides the answer for the entirety of the evidence we have, in any of the Celtic regions, and a fuller appreciation of this will also help our growing appreciation of the dynamic nature of saints' cults, and the different ways in which churches, places, times and objects came to commemorate saints.

One example may help to ground this abstract observation in the concrete before we move on. This relates to the cult of St Ninian, a topic on which I have been controversially involved in recent years.¹⁵ A number of critics of my 2001 article on St Ninian have pointed to the large and important medieval parish of Eccles, now St Ninians, Stirling, as one place where evidence of an early, probably pre-Northumbrian British church intersects with the cult of St Ninian.¹⁶ This has long been a suggestive intersection. *Eccles* names

¹³ The key review of this issue is Paul Russell, 'Patterns of hypocorism in early Irish hagiography', in *Saints and Scholars. Studies in Irish Hagiography*, eds John Carey, Máire Herbert, Pádraig Ó Riain (Dublin, 2001), 237–49; see also Ó Riain, 'Cainnech alias Colum Cille'.

¹⁴ See Pádraig Ó Riain, 'Irish saints' genealogies', *Nomina* 7 (1983), 23–30; *idem*, 'Irish saints' cults and ecclesiastical families', in *Local Saints and Local Churches*, eds Thacker and Sharpe, 291–302; Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, 'Érlam: the patron-saint of an Irish church', in *ibid.*, 267–90.

¹⁵ Especially in 'The real St Ninian', *IR* 52 (2001), 1–28; see also Clancy, 'Scottish saints and national identities', 399–404.

¹⁶ For criticism in general, see G. W. S. Barrow, *St Ninian and Pictomania* (Whithorn, 2004); John MacQueen, *St Nynia*, new edn (Edinburgh, 2005), 152–4. I am guessing that the absence of any reference to or engagement with either my article or that of James Fraser in Prof. MacQueen's 2006 Whithorn Lecture *Ninian and the Picts* (Whithorn, 2007) is an implicit form of criticism, or at least tantamount to a summary dismissal. The recently published papers from the 2007 Whithorn Study Day, *St Ninian and the Earliest Christianity in Scotland*, ed. Jane Murray

have been held to relate in some way to the early and British phase of the church in southern and central Scotland, as in parts of England;¹⁷ the dedication to St Ninian is, aside from Whithorn, perhaps the earliest attested – it was certainly dedicated to him by 1242.¹⁸ It seems to me that we stand our best chance of evaluating these two pieces of evidence dispassionately if we acknowledge the different paradigms through which we might interpret their intersection, and acknowledge also the difficulty of objectively choosing from among them the correct paradigm.

One paradigm would interpret the dedication as a record of the personal activity of the person commemorated. In this analysis, St Ninian's British background, the key location and seeming ancient connection with Stirling (which may or may not be the British fortress of Iudeu/Bede's *urbs Giudi*),¹⁹ and the simplex name Eccles, all may combine to suggest that this is one of the many monasteries held to be founded by Ninian in the two eighth-century texts relating to his life.²⁰ In other words, this is a church founded by the saint to whom it is dedicated. A related, but less historically charged view would be to see the Eccles place-name here as fundamentally related to a British phase of Scottish church history, and to place the Ninian dedication as also a relic of this: that is, the continuation of a British commemoration of a British saint, at a site with a Brittonic ecclesiastical place-name. This more nuanced view would acknowledge the British background to both the saint and the place-name, but not necessarily view both as of equal antiquity.

My view of the Ninian question in 2001, while it has been somewhat altered or muted by the subsequent responses to it of both critics and supporters,²¹

(Oxford, 2009) make for an important new contribution. Jonathan Wooding's article addresses the 2001 proposal most directly, and finds judiciously against it, and I find some of his reasons persuasive: 'Archaeology and the dossier of a saint: Whithorn excavations 1984–2001', in *ibid.*, 9–18. I would, however, maintain that Bede's descriptions of Ninian, while not of course implausible (I have never argued they were), are too conveniently aligned with Northumbrian ecclesiastical agenda to be taken at face value.

¹⁷ Barrow, 'Childhood of Scottish Christianity'; see also K. Cameron, 'Eccles in English place-names', in *Christianity in Britain, 300–700*, eds M. W. Barley and R. P. C. Hanson (Leicester, 1968), 87–92.

¹⁸ On Eccles/St Ninians, see Alan Macquarrie, 'St Ninians by Stirling: a fragment of an early Scottish minster kirk', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 28 (1998), 39–54; A. A. M. Duncan's description of this as 'the one dedication to St Ninian most likely to be ancient' is quoted by Macquarrie, 42 (see Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1975), 39–40). For the date of the dedication to Ninian, see Barrow, *Saint Ninian and Pictomania*, 11.

¹⁹ See on this most recently James E. Fraser, 'Bede, the Firth of Forth and the location of *Urbs Iudeu*', *SHR* 87 (2008), 1–25.

²⁰ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* book III, ch. 4: *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), 220–3; Winifred W. MacQueen, 'Miracula Nynie Episcopi', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 38 (1960), 21–57. Of course a stumbling block here is that St Ninians by Stirling was not, according to most reckoning, in what would have been considered the kingdom of the Picts in Bede's day.

²¹ This is not the place to discuss some of the criticisms levelled at the article, some of which are entirely justified, but many of which cannot be easily sustained (MacQueen's contribution in

has not changed in one regard. Whatever we think of the historical person behind St Ninian, the *cult* of St Ninian is as we have it initially a Northumbrian phenomenon, and secondarily one belonging to the twelfth-century and later reforming church. The evidence we have provides no clear evidence of a pre-Northumbrian cult of Ninian. In this context it is important that recent studies are increasingly inclined to see the simplex Eccles names mainly in conjunction with those found in southern Scotland and northern England where **eclēs* has been incorporated as a specific within English place-names (Eccleshall, Eaglesham).²² In other words, **eclēs*, although a term of British derivation, is in many cases in southern Scotland and northern England a linguistically English place-name element. If this is so in the case of Eccles/St Ninians, then we should perhaps look to the evidence we have for Northumbrian interest in the Stirlingshire region from the mid-seventh to the eighth centuries – precisely the time when St Ninian's cult was being first propagated in Northumbrian circles.²³ Both the Eccles name and the dedication to St Ninian could, therefore, be seen as fundamentally part of the Northumbrian history of this region. Given the politicised nature of the eighth-century descriptions of Ninian's activities, he could easily be seen as a 'Northumbrian saint', despite his British background, and a dedication could therefore be seen as part of a Northumbrian statement about their control of the region.

particular suggests some wilful misreading). Nor do I wish to give the impression that my views on the issue are unaltered. However, both supporters and detractors have had a tendency to describe the argument advanced there as suggesting that 'St Ninian never existed' (see MacQueen, *St Nynia* (2005 edn), 152). This was not, of course, what I did suggest (rather, I suggested that his name as we have it may have been the victim of scribal error and its preservation in a largely literary environment until the twelfth century). The main point of the article – that all we know of the pre-twelfth-century cult of Ninian is channelled narrowly through texts produced in the politicised environment of the eighth-century Northumbrian church – has unfortunately largely been passed over for the more controversial suggestions of the second and third part of the article. I accept a large part of the blame for this over-emphasis, and consequent skewing of the article's reception. For an inflected, though not uncritical building on the core case made in the article, see James E. Fraser, 'Northumbrian Whithorn and the making of St Ninian', *IR* 53 (2002), 40–59.

²² See Alan James, '**Eglēs/Eclēs* and the formation of Northumbria', in *The Church in Place-Names*, ed. Eleanor Quinton (Nottingham, 2009), 125–50; see also Carole Hough, 'Eccles in English and Scottish place-names', in *ibid.*, 109–24. Note the brief but cogent comments of Richard Sharpe on this issue, resulting in his conclusion: 'The survival of Eccles as a place-name element is therefore almost certain to depend on some other factor, such as its becoming a loan-word in Anglo-Saxon and being (however briefly) productive of place-names in English rather than Brittonic.' Sharpe, 'Martyrs and local saints in late antique Britain', in *Local Saints and Local Churches*, eds Thacker and Sharpe, 75–154, at 147. It should be cautioned that this issue is distinct from the situation in Scotland north of the Forth, and to a lesser extent south of it, where names in **eclēs* + a saint's name suggest a different and Celtic (Brittonic or Gaelic) context for coinage of these names. See Simon Taylor, 'Place-names and the early church in Scotland', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 28 (1998), 1–22, esp. 3–7. Neither Barrow, *Saint Ninian and Pictomania*, nor MacQueen, *Ninian and the Picts*, seem to have sufficiently taken on board the importance of Taylor's distinguishing these two different sets of **eclēs* place-names within the Scottish corpus.

²³ The evidence is best reviewed in Peter Hunter Blair, 'The Bernicians and their northern frontier', in *Studies in Early British History*, ed. Nora Chadwick (Cambridge, 1939), 137–72.

Here our paradigm is one in which saints' cults relate to the values placed on particular saints by political or ecclesiastical groups. It may in this case be significant that among those **eclēs* place-names north of the Forth containing affixed saints' names, there are significant dedications to universal saints such as Peter, John and Martin.

Finally, although the dedication by 1242 may well suggest to some that it is an ancient church dedication, nonetheless the cult of St Ninian in Eccles/St Ninians cannot be shown to antedate the thirteenth century, and we know there to have been interest in St Ninian during this period, including by one twelfth-century reformer who was intimately involved with the royal dynasty, Aelred of Rievaulx. This being so, there is nothing that would entirely militate against a new twelfth- or even thirteenth-century dedication to Ninian here, though the channels through which it happened would remain uncertain. I suspect the growth in the cult is not solely prompted by Aelred's Life – one must also remember that among the Scottish clergy in the twelfth century there was a much increased access to Bede and later historians using Bede. I have suggested, following Watson and others, that many, perhaps most medieval church dedications to St Ninian date from this later period, and correspond to the evolution of Ninian into a type of national saint, and I suspect that a detailed study of all the attested medieval Ninian dedications in their full context would help underpin this suspicion.²⁴

There are two further points of interest here. One is that *all* of these phenomena may have some role to play in the dedication of this important medieval church to St Ninian. For the preservation of saints' cults, as crucial as the cause of the initial dedication is what ensures their continuity. As Matthew Hammond's contribution to this collection indicates, replacement and augmentation of saints' cults was a common feature, certainly of the central middle ages. In the case of St Ninians/Eccles, British, Northumbrian *and* twelfth-century Scottish church contexts may all have contributed to the reaffirmation of this church site's importance and association with the saint called Ninian – the last phase certainly contributing the form of his name as we first find it there.

The second point of interest relates to the proposed intersection between early church name and early saint. A point I did not sufficiently consider – indeed, a point which I think has not, in a Scottish context at least, been sufficiently considered – is the chronological horizon for the dedication of churches to saints by name, and the incorporation of those names into place-names. That this was already happening in a Gaelic context by *ca* 700 can be shown by the work of Adomnán,²⁵ but it is difficult to be so certain in

²⁴ Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, 293–4; Clancy, 'Real St Ninian', 10.

²⁵ Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, i.31; Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, 268–9. See also the comments of Davies, 'Saints of south Wales', 392.