

Saint Margaret of Scotland

From Wikipedia – A history

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Image of Saint Margaret in a window in Edinburgh

Queen consort of Scotland

Tenure	1070–1093
Born	c. 1045 Kingdom of Hungary
Died	16 November 1093 Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh, Kingdom of Scotland
Burial	Dunfermline Abbey
Spouse	Malcolm III, King of Scotland <ul style="list-style-type: none">
House	Wessex
Father	Edward the Exile
Mother	Agatha
Religion	Catholicism

Saint Margaret

Queen of Scots

Venerated in	Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Communion
Canonized	1250 by Pope Innocent IV
Major shrine	Dunfermline Abbey, Fife, Scotland

Feast	16 November
Attributes	reading
Patronage	Scotland , Dunfermline , Fife , Shetland , The Queen's Ferry, and Anglo-Scottish relations

Saint Margaret of Scotland ([Scots](#): *Saunt Magret*, c. 1045 – 16 November 1093), also known as **Margaret of Wessex**, was an English princess and a Scottish queen. Margaret was sometimes called "The Pearl of Scotland".^[1]

Born in exile in the Kingdom of Hungary, she was the sister of Edgar Ætheling, the uncrowned Anglo-Saxon claimant on the throne of England after the death of Harold II. Margaret and her family returned to the Kingdom of England in 1057, but fled to the Kingdom of Scotland following the Norman conquest of England in 1066. By the end of 1070, Margaret had married King Malcolm III of Scotland, becoming Queen of Scots.

She was a very pious Roman Catholic, and among many charitable works she established a ferry across the Firth of Forth in Scotland for pilgrims travelling to St Andrews in Fife, which gave the towns of South Queensferry and North Queensferry their names. Margaret was the mother of three kings of Scotland, or four, if Edmund of Scotland (who ruled with his uncle, Donald III) is counted, and of a queen consort of England. According to the *Vita S. Margaritae (Scotorum) Reginae (Life of St. Margaret, Queen (of the Scots))*, attributed to Turgot of Durham, she died at Edinburgh Castle in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1093, merely days after receiving the news of her husband's death in battle.

In 1250, Pope Innocent IV canonized her, and her remains were reinterred in a shrine in Dunfermline Abbey in Fife, Scotland. Her relics were dispersed after the Scottish Reformation and subsequently lost. Mary, Queen of Scots, at one time owned her head, which was subsequently preserved by Jesuits in the Scottish College, Douai, France, from where it was subsequently lost during the French Revolution.

Early life



Margaret from a medieval family tree.

Margaret was the daughter of the English prince Edward the Exile, and granddaughter of Edmund Ironside, King of England.^[1] After the Danish conquest of England in 1016, King Canute the Great had the infant Edward exiled to the continent. He was taken first to the court of the Swedish king, Olof Skötkonung, and then to Kiev. As an adult, he travelled to Hungary, where in 1046 he supported the successful bid of King Andrew I for the Hungarian crown. King Andrew I was then also known as "Andrew the Catholic" for his extreme aversion to pagans and great loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. The provenance of Margaret's mother, Agatha, is disputed, but Margaret was born in Hungary c.

1045. Her brother Edgar the Ætheling and sister Cristina were also born in Hungary around this time. Margaret grew up in a very religious environment in the Hungarian court.

Return to England

Still a child, she came to England with the rest of her family when her father, Edward the Exile, was recalled in 1057 as a possible successor to her great-uncle, the childless King Edward the Confessor. Whether from natural or sinister causes, her father died immediately after landing, and Margaret continued to reside at the English court where her brother, Edgar Ætheling, was considered a possible successor to the English throne.^[1] When Edward the Confessor died in January 1066, Harold Godwinson was selected as king, possibly because Edgar was considered too young. After Harold's defeat at the Battle of Hastings later that year, Edgar was proclaimed King of England, but when the Normans advanced on London, the Witenagemot presented Edgar to William the Conqueror, who took him to Normandy before returning him to England in 1068, when Edgar, Margaret, Cristina, and their mother Agatha fled north to Northumbria, England.

Journey to Scotland

According to tradition, the widowed Agatha decided to leave Northumbria, England with her children and return to the continent. However, a storm drove their ship north to the Kingdom of Scotland in 1068, where they sought the protection of King Malcolm III. The locus where it is believed that they landed is known today as St Margaret's Hope, near the village of North Queensferry, Fife, Scotland. Margaret's arrival in Scotland, after the failed revolt of the Northumbrian earls, has been heavily romanticized, though Symeon of Durham implied that her first meeting of Malcolm III may not have been until 1070, after William the Conqueror's Harrying of the North.

King Malcolm III was a widower with two sons, Donald and Duncan. He would have been attracted to marrying one of the few remaining members of the Anglo-Saxon royal family. The marriage of Malcolm and Margaret occurred in 1070. Subsequently, Malcolm executed several invasions of Northumberland to support the claim of his new brother-in-law Edgar and to increase his own power. These, however, had little effect save the devastation of the County.^[2]

Progeny

Margaret and Malcolm had eight children, six sons and two daughters:

1. Edward (c. 1071 – 13 November 1093), killed along with his father Malcolm III in the Battle of Alnwick
2. Edmund of Scotland (c.1071 – post 1097)
3. Ethelred of Scotland, Abbot of Dunkeld, Perth and Kinross, Scotland
4. Edgar of Scotland (c.1074 – 11 January 1107), King of Scotland, reigned 1097–1107
5. Alexander I of Scotland (c.1078 – 23 April 1124), King of Scotland, reigned 1107–24
6. Edith of Scotland (c. 1080 – 1 May 1118), also named "Matilda", married King Henry I of England, Queen Consort of England
7. Mary of Scotland (1082–1116), married Eustace III of Boulogne
8. David I of Scotland (c.1084 – 24 May 1153), King of Scotland, reigned 1124–53

Margaret's biographer Turgot of Durham, Bishop of St. Andrew's, credits her with having a civilizing influence on her husband Malcolm by reading him narratives from the Bible. **She instigated religious reform, striving to conform the worship and practices of the Church in Scotland to those of Rome.** This she did on the inspiration and with the guidance of Lanfranc, a future Archbishop of Canterbury.^[3] She also worked to conform the practices of the Scottish Church to those of the continental Church, which she experienced in her childhood. Due to these achievements, she was considered an **exemplar of the "just ruler"**, and moreover influenced her husband and children, especially her youngest son, the future King David I of Scotland, to be just and holy rulers.

"The chroniclers all agree in depicting Queen Margaret as a strong, pure, noble character, who had very great influence over her husband, and through him over Scottish history, especially in its ecclesiastical aspects. Her religion, which was genuine and intense, was of the newest Roman style; and to her are attributed a number of reforms by which the Church [in] Scotland was considerably modified from the insular and primitive type which down to her time it had exhibited. Among those expressly mentioned are a change in the manner of observing Lent, which thenceforward began as elsewhere on Ash Wednesday and not as previously on the following Monday, and the abolition of the old practice of observing Saturday (Sabbath), not Sunday, as the day of rest from labour (see Skene's *Celtic Scotland*, book ii chap. 8)."^[4] The later editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, however, as an example, the Eleventh Edition, remove Skene's opinion that Scottish Catholics formerly rested from work on Saturday, something for which there is no historical evidence. Skene's *Celtic Scotland*, vol. ii, chap. 8, pp. 348–350, quotes from a contemporary document regarding Margaret's life, but his source says nothing at all of Saturday Sabbath observance, but rather says St. Margaret exhorted the Scots to cease their tendency "to neglect the due observance of the Lord's day."

She attended to charitable works, **servicing orphans and the poor every day before she ate and washing the feet of the poor in imitation of Christ**. She rose at midnight every night to attend the liturgy. She successfully invited the Benedictine Order to establish a monastery in Dunfermline, Fife in 1072, and established ferries at Queensferry and North Berwick to **assist pilgrims** journeying from south of the Firth of Forth to St. Andrew's in Fife. She used a cave on the banks of the Tower Burn in Dunfermline as a place of devotion and prayer. **St. Margaret's Cave**, now covered beneath a municipal car park, is open to the public.^[5] Among other deeds, Margaret also instigated the restoration of Iona Abbey in Scotland.^[6] She is also known to have interceded for the release of fellow English exiles who had been forced into serfdom by the Norman conquest of England.^[7]

Margaret was as pious privately as she was publicly. She spent much of her time in prayer, devotional reading, and ecclesiastical embroidery. This apparently had considerable effect on the more uncouth Malcolm, who was illiterate: he so admired her piety that he had her books decorated in gold and silver. One of these, a pocket gospel book with portraits of the Evangelists, is in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England.^[8]

Malcolm was apparently largely ignorant of the long-term effects of Margaret's endeavours, not being especially religious himself. He was content for her to pursue her reforms as she desired, which was a testament to the strength of and affection in their marriage.^[6]

Death

Her husband Malcolm III, and their eldest son Edward, were killed in the Battle of Alnwick against the English on 13 November 1093. Her son Edgar was left with the task of informing his mother of their deaths. Not yet 50 years old, Margaret died on 16 November 1093, three days after the deaths of her husband and eldest son. **The cause of death was reportedly grief**. She was buried before the high altar in Dunfermline Abbey in Fife, Scotland.

In 1250, the year of her canonization, her body and that of her husband were exhumed and placed in a new shrine in the Abbey. In 1560, Mary Queen of Scots had Margaret's head removed to Edinburgh Castle as a relic to assist her in childbirth. In 1597, Margaret's head ended up with the Jesuits at the Scottish College, Douai, France, but was lost during the French Revolution. King Philip of Spain had the other remains of Margaret and Malcolm III transferred to the Escorial palace in Madrid, Spain, but their present location has not been discovered.^[9]



[Castle, Edinburgh, Scotland](#)

Site of the ruined Shrine of St. Margaret at [Dunfermline Abbey, Fife, Scotland](#)

[St Margaret's Chapel](#) in [Edinburgh](#)



St Margaret's Church in Dunfermline, Fife, Scotland

Canonization and feast day

Pope Innocent IV canonized St. Margaret in 1250 in recognition of her personal holiness, fidelity to the Roman Catholic Church, work for ecclesiastical reform, and charity. On 19 June 1250, after her canonisation, her remains were transferred to a chapel in the eastern apse of Dunfermline Abbey in Fife, Scotland.^[10] In 1693 Pope Innocent XII moved her feast day to 10 June in recognition of the birthdate of the son of James VII of Scotland and II of England.^[9] In the revision of the General Roman Calendar in 1969, 16 November became free and the Church transferred her feast day **to 16 November, the date of her death**, on which it always had been observed in Scotland.^[11] However, some traditionalist Catholics continue to celebrate her feast day on 10 June. She is also venerated as a saint in the Anglican Church.

Saint Margaret of Scotland's Story (Franciscan Media)

Margaret of Scotland was a truly liberated woman in the sense that she was free to be herself. For her, that meant freedom to love God and serve others.

Not Scottish by birth, Margaret was the daughter of Princess Agatha of Hungary and the Anglo-Saxon Prince Edward Atheling. She spent much of her youth in the court of her great-uncle, the English king, Edward the Confessor. Her family fled from William the Conqueror and was shipwrecked off the coast of Scotland. King Malcolm befriended them and was captivated by the beautiful, gracious Margaret. They were married at the castle of Dunfermline in 1070.

Malcolm was good-hearted, but rough and uncultured, as was his country. Because of Malcolm's love for Margaret, she was able to soften his temper, polish his manners, and help him become a virtuous king. He left all domestic affairs to her, and often consulted her in state matters.

Margaret tried to improve her adopted country by promoting the arts and education. For religious reform she encouraged synods and was present for the discussions which tried to correct religious abuses common among priests and laypeople, such as simony, usury, and incestuous marriages. With her husband, she founded several churches.

Margaret was not only a queen, but a mother. She and Malcolm had six sons and two daughters. Margaret personally supervised their religious instruction and other studies.

Although she was very much caught up in the affairs of the household and country, she remained detached from the world. Her private life was austere. She had certain times for prayer and reading Scripture. She ate sparingly and slept little in order to have time for devotions. She and Malcolm kept two Lents, one before Easter and one before Christmas. During these times she always rose at midnight for Mass. On the way home she would wash the feet of six poor persons and give them alms. She was always surrounded by beggars in public and never refused them. It is recorded that she never sat down to eat without first feeding nine orphans and 24 adults.

In 1093, King William Rufus made a surprise attack on Alnwick castle. King Malcolm and his oldest son, Edward, were killed. Margaret, already on her deathbed, died four days after her husband.

Reflection

There are two ways to be charitable: the “clean way” and the “messy way.” The “clean way” is to give money or clothing to organizations that serve the poor. The “messy way” is dirtying your own hands in personal service to the poor. Margaret’s outstanding virtue was her love of the poor. Although very generous with material gifts, Margaret also visited the sick and nursed them with her own hands. She and her husband served orphans and the poor on their knees during Advent and Lent. Like Christ, she was charitable the “messy way.”

They say it was love at first sight: the beautiful, educated, pious English princess and the rough and tumble warrior, widower, and Scots king twenty years her senior.

Margaret was devoted to the Lord; Malcolm III, not so much, though he considered himself a believer. Despite all their differences, Margaret and Malcolm proved to be exceptionally well yoked.

In addition to her royal household duties, which included raising their eight children and two sons from the king’s first marriage, Malcolm involved Margaret heavily in matters of state. It was through Margaret that Catholic traditions were integrated into court life, specifically through a synod that resulted in rules regarding the Lenten fast and Easter communion and challenged clerical abuse. She also lived her faith in seemingly small but very visible ways: she washed the feet of the poor and orphans. At meals to assist the needy, she made sure others were served before her. She set aside time for prayer and devotions, a practice Malcolm so admired (though he did not emulate it) that he had some of her books covered in gold and silver. It is said that while he never learned to read them, he was known to hold them and kiss the pages she had been reading.

The couple also founded a number of churches, including the Abbey of Dunfermline, where they are both buried. Margaret died just days after Malcolm and their oldest son were killed in battle. On her deathbed, she mourned them both; blessed their other children; and made a final prayer to the Lord. It’s not always a bad thing when opposites attract. Margaret’s love for and influence on Malcolm helped Scotland mature into a well-run, compassionate land. May we seek to find the commonalities with those whose upbringings or worldview are different from our own. It may be an evangelization opportunity.

Inspiration

“O, my children, fear the Lord; for they who fear Him shall lack nothing, and if you love Him, He will give you, my darlings, prosperity in this life and everlasting happiness with all the saints.”

—Saint Margaret of Scotland

St Margaret

by Ben Johnson

Margaret was born in 1046 and was a member of an ancient English royal family. She was a direct descendant of King Alfred and was the granddaughter of King Edmund Ironside of England through his son Edward.

Along with her family Margaret had been exiled to the eastern continent when King Canute and his Danish army had overrun England. Beautiful and devout she was also intelligent receiving her formal education in Hungary.

Margaret and her family returned to England towards the end of the reign of her great-uncle, Edward the Confessor, as her younger brother, Edgar the Aetheling, had a very strong claim to the English throne. The English nobility had other ideas however and elected Harold Godwin as Edward's successor. All of this political manoeuvring proved irrelevant when William, Duke of Normandy, otherwise known as 'The Conqueror' arrived with his army near Hastings in 1066, but that's another story.

As some of the last remaining Saxon Royals in England, Margaret and her family's position was precarious and fearing for their lives they fled northwards, in the opposite direction to the advancing Normans. They were heading back to the continent from Northumbria when their ship was blown off course and landed in Fife.

The Scottish King, Malcolm III, known as Malcolm Canmore (or Great Head) offered his protection to the royal family.

Malcolm was particularly protective towards Margaret! She initially refused his proposals of marriage, preferring, according to one account, a life of piety as a virgin. Malcolm however was a persistent king, and the couple finally married in Dunfermline in 1069.

Their union was exceptionally happy and fruitful for both themselves and the Scottish nation. Margaret brought with her some of the finer points of current European manners, ceremony and culture to the Scottish Court, which highly improved its civilised reputation.

Queen Margaret was renowned for her good influence on her husband and also for her devout piety and religious observance. She was a prime mover in the reform of the Church in Scotland.

Under Queen Margaret's leadership Church councils promoted Easter communion and, much to joy of the working-class, abstinence from servile work on a Sunday. Margaret founded churches, monasteries and pilgrimage hostels and established the Royal Mausoleum at Dunfermline Abbey with monks from Canterbury. She was especially fond of Scottish saints and instigated the Queen's Ferry over the Forth so that pilgrims could more easily reach the Shrine of St. Andrew.

Mass was changed from the many dialects of Gaelic spoken throughout Scotland to the unifying Latin. By adopting Latin to celebrate the Mass she believed that all Scots could worship together in unity, along with the other Christians of Western Europe. Many people believe that in doing this, it was not only Queen Margaret's goal to unite the Scots, but also the two nations of Scotland and England in an attempt to end the bloody warfare between the two countries.

In setting the agenda for the church in Scotland Queen Margaret also ensured the dominance of the Roman Church over the native Celtic Church in the north of the country.



Margaret and Malcolm had eight children, all with English names. Alexander and David followed their father to the throne, whilst their daughter, Edith (who changed her name to Matilda upon her marriage), brought the ancient Anglo-Saxon and Scottish Royal bloodline into the veins of the Norman Invaders of England when she married and bore children to King Henry I.

Margaret was very pious and cared especially for the poor and orphans. It was this piety that caused considerable damage to her health with the repeated fasting and abstinence. In 1093, as she lay on her deathbed after a long illness, she was told that her husband and eldest son had been ambushed and treacherously killed at the Battle of Alnwick in Northumbria. She died shortly after aged just forty-seven.

She was buried alongside Malcolm in Dunfermline Abbey and the reported miracles that took place in and around her tomb supported her canonization in 1250 by Pope Innocent IV.

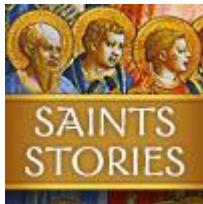
During the Reformation St. Margaret's head somehow passed into the possession of Mary Queen of Scots, and was later secured by the Jesuits at Douai, where it is believed to have perished during the French Revolution.

The feast of St. Margaret was formerly observed by the Roman Catholic Church on 10 June but is now celebrated each year on the anniversary of her death, 16 November.

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofScotland/St-Margaret/>

Saint Margaret of Scotland

Feast day November 16



For Saint Margaret—a wife, a mother, and a queen—giving money was never enough. She was with those who were poor, making sure they had food and clothes. Margaret was born about 1045. She was raised in the Hungarian court, for she was from the line of nobility. When she was 12, she was sent to the English court of Edward the Confessor and further educated. When the Normans conquered England, Margaret, her mother, her brother, and her sister tried to return to

Hungary. Their ship was blown off course and landed in Scotland. They were welcomed by King Malcolm III, who fell in love with the beautiful and gentle Margaret. They were married in 1070.



Scotland was a rough country, and although Malcolm was a good man, he was more of a soldier than a scholar or courtly gentleman. But Margaret helped him become a virtuous, gracious leader. They had eight children; all of them grew to love those who were poor and to care for them as their parents had. The youngest, David, was thought of as a saint by the people.

Margaret was prayerful. She gathered women together to study the Scriptures and to embroider vestments and altar cloths. She was always surrounded by beggars, and she gave them money and clothes. She helped ransom the English who had been captured, and she set up homes and hospitals for those in need. She and her husband would go to church during Lent and Advent. On the way home, they would wash the feet of poor people in need and give them money. At home, Margaret fed nine orphans who were brought to her daily. She brought a love of the arts and education to the people, and they loved her in return. Her children are believed to be primarily responsible for two centuries of progress and peace in Scotland.

Margaret died four days after her husband's death in 1093. In 1250, she was canonized and later declared patroness of Scotland.

(source - <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/saints/saints-stories-for-all-ages/saint-margaret-of-scotland/>)