



Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

August 2023

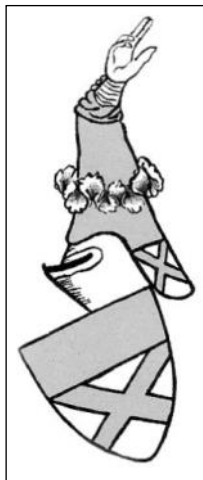
"The will to do, the soul to dare"

Dear Faithful,

Last month's article on St. Ronald preceded his feast day which occurs this month on the 20th. The biggest feast this month is of course Our Lady's Assumption while, for our Polish parishioners, there is the feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa on the 26th. Otherwise, the month is when we see a changing congregation with many away on holiday while newcomers visiting Edinburgh and Glasgow pop in to one of our lovely churches. The UCI cycle race will only cause inconvenience on the 6th but the International Festival and the Tattoo might bring in new faces. I shall be away at the *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* at the start of the month while Fr. Hennick leaves towards the end of the month to visit his family in the States.

This month's article is on (another) saint relatively unknown to modern Catholics, St. Fillan. Towards its end, it mentions the connection with Robert the Bruce and the devotion he had for him after his escape from the MacDougalls. There is an additional sign of devotion, however, that continued well after the Battle of Bannockburn. Most will probably be aware of the Bruce Clan crest – a lion stantan Azure armed and langued Gules, but a 14th century helmet bears a remarkable armorial crest.

The usual Bruce saltires are there but above them is an arm raised in blessing which has led many to believe that this is a reference to the miraculous arm of St. Fillan being incorporated into the symbol of the Bruce family after his glorious victory.



One of the ancient traditions that has recently been brought back to Scotland is the Blessing of herbs and harvest produce on the feast of the Assumption. This dates back to the

10th century but, along with so many other Catholic practices, fell out of use in Scotland in the 16th century and, unlike others, was not restored with Emancipation.

The association of the Blessed Virgin with a divine fertility (the root of Jesse that brought forth David, the House of David which brought forth the Messiah) is clear

from the prayers. The first one is quite general, the second gives a detailed history of the bounty of God together with the necessity of our humble supplications for it. The third is the most explicit and gives the full spiritual aspect of the blessing:

Oh God, who on this day didst raise up to highest heaven the rod of Jesse, the Mother of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that by her prayers and patronage Thou mightst communicate to our mortal nature the fruit of her womb, Thy very Son; we humbly implore Thee to help us use these fruits of the soil for our temporal and everlasting welfare, aided by the power of Thy Son and the prayers of His glorious Mother; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I encourage all to bring your own herbs and first fruits to your chapel on the feast day in order to benefit from the bountiful blessings of God.

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)





St. Fillan, Light in the Darkness



This month's saint is St. Fillan, a 7th century missionary and possibly hermit. The difficulties of obtaining reliable information for someone who lived well over a thousand years ago (with the notable exception of St. Columba) are obvious. In the internet age, there is a variety of information provided by well-meaning sources who variously describe him as a son of St. Kentigern who founded a mill at Killin on the river Dochart. Whereas St. Fillan's mother was indeed called Kentigerna and a mill building dating back to 1840 as a wool mill still exists today, but the inaccuracies are quite obvious. St. Kentigern, a celibate bishop, lived over a hundred years previously and was active in Strathclyde and principally Glasgow. The mill, was built a thousand years later and only called St. Fillan's because of the long association of Glen Dochart with him. When it ceased its function as a mill, the building became a sort of museum housing the 'healing stones' of St. Fillan.

Along with her brother, St. Comgán, and various other children including St. Fillan, the widowed Kentigerna came to Scotland and is said to have lived as a hermit, first in Strath Fillan, then in the Lennox, on the island of Inchcailloch on Loch Lomond. Originally the family was from Ireland, St. Fillan's father being called Feriach, of the princely family of Leinster. The Aberdeen breviary has an interesting story from his earliest years. Fillan was born with a stone in his mouth (does this mean some sort of speech impediment? It is difficult to know), on account of which he was held in such contempt by his father that when newly born his father had him thrown into a nearby loch. But miraculously he did not drown – instead he was looked after by angels. After a year a bishop called Ibar saw him playing among the angels under the water. The bishop lifted him unharmed out of the loch, baptized him, took him into his household and gave him a good education in theology. As a young man, Fillan received the monastic habit at the Abbey of Fintán of Taghmon in Wexford. It is from

this period that the Breviary assigns the miraculous event later attributed to his time in Pittenweem cave. Since his cell was removed from the other monks, when it was time for supper, a servant was sent to bring him to the monastery. Peering through a crack in the wall of the cell, the servant saw Fillan writing in the darkness, the only illumination coming from his left arm which was glowing brightly. This event or the similar (transposed?) event from the cave is written off as silly mediaeval superstition. It is significant, however, that along with the traditional relics of St. Fillan (his crozier and his bell), the relic that has since been lost is precisely this miraculous arm – more of which later.

He came to Scotland in 717 as a hermit. Along with his family they settled at Loch Duich, just east of the Isle of Skye. Fillan later moved south to make his home in Strath Fillan, at the head of Glen Dochart, where he built a church. Nothing remains of this, though there was an Abbot of Glendochart in the 12th century and this is similarly the site of the Augustinian Priory founded by Robert the Bruce after Banockburn. The Breviary has another story associated with the building of the first church near Auchentyre. An ox, used to carry materials, was killed by a wolf and work was held up. A *geis* was put on the wolf meaning he now had the obligation to take the ox's place. Since animals do not generally take notice of this peculiar Celtic practice, Fillan is said to have convinced the wolf of the error of its ways and it took the place of the dead ox until the building work was completed and then returned to the wild. It is a curious fact that in old Gaelic, the saint's name *means* wolf (*Faolan*). Close to this second church (he had built one at Killilan [Kill-Fillan] while in Lochalsh), was the Holy Pool, which is said to have healing powers, proving particularly curative for the mentally ill who were attracted in large numbers over succeeding centuries.

The rest of St. Fillan's life can only be guessed from the various places that bear his name or a church which bears his dedication. These are principally in Perthshire and Fife including Luncarty and Struan in the former and Forgan in the latter. He almost certainly visited St. Andrews and thence we get the association with the cave at Pittenweem. Wikipedia states with absolute certainty that this was a different saint which, of course, is possible. Only the story of him writing in the dark cave using as illumination his left arm would be a remarkable



Representation of the Mayne, found in a graveyard in Strathfillan

coincidence. Certainly the church in Aberdour bears the name of Fillan and he was the same one who worked at Forgan. On the top of Dunfillan near Comrie was a rocky seat where, according to tradition, Fillan sat and gave his blessing to the country round about. Up until the 18th century, there was a belief that sitting there could be beneficial for rheumatism of the back. A stone basin at the bottom of the hill was known as Fillan's Spring, whose water was said to cure sore eyes. Martyrologies are of little use in this matter, though they are often the most ancient source we have, because saints who bear the same name were grouped on the same day. This Fillan has his feast day on 20th June, whereas our Fillan is celebrated on 9th January. It is impossible to know.

At any rate, St. Fillan's Cave, situated in Cove Wynd, Pittenweem has long been associated with a Fillan. The cave has flat rocks that are presumed to have been used as beds and a small spring of holy water at its rear and a well. The cave was a stopping off point for pilgrims on their way to St. Andrews or St.



Ethernan's shrine on the Isle of May. The cave was rediscovered about 1900 when a horse ploughing in the Priory garden above in the village, fell down a hole into it. It was rededicated as a place of worship by the Bishop of St. Andrews in 1935. It has since been refurbished and opened to visitors as of October 2000, and is owned by the Bishop Low Trust. It is entrusted to St. John's Episcopal Church. The entrance from above with its steep staircase carved into the rock is deemed too dangerous for visitors today and bears a grille to deter the adventurous but the entrance at the bottom of the Wynd is accessible to visitors. It, too, bears a gate but the key is readily available from local shops.

David I of Scotland granted the monks of the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin on the Isle of May the manor of Pittenweem, where they erected the Priory of St. Adrian over the ancient cave associated with St. Fillan. The cave was also used by smugglers for some time, and as a store room for local fishermen (Pittenweem has been a fishing village since the time of early Christian settlement and later a harbour was constructed). It served as a prison during the witch hunts of the 17th-18th centuries and was used as a rubbish tip which probably resulted in its disappearance for some time.



But it is in Glen Dochart that the greatest devotion to the saint endured. This was certainly where his relics – a bell (the Bernane) and his pastoral staff were kept along with the Mayne (his left arm) by Dewars – at Ewich (the crozier, including its heavily ornamented casing – the *Coigreach*) at Suie lived the dewar of his bell, while the dewar of the famous arm reliquary possibly dwelt at Acharn (a small stone with the carving of an arm was recently discovered here in a graveyard). As mentioned, the arm reliquary has been lost and the bell and crozier similarly were lost to Scotland for a while though they have since been returned and are kept in the Scottish Museum.

It remains for us finally to look into the connection with Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland and an obscure saint from Strathfillan. In March 1306, Robert de Bruce had himself crowned at Scone as Robert I, king of Scots. Only 2 months after his coronation, Robert and his followers were defeated at the battle of Methven near Perth. After this he fled into the hills of west Perthshire, trying to reach the west coast and from there cross to the islands, or even Ireland, and to relative safety. The route he took was up Glendochart and Strathfillan since this was one of the more common paths through the southern Highlands. However, at the head of Strathfillan, at Dalry near Fillan's old church, the king found his way blocked by the hostile MacDougalls. Here he suffered his second defeat, and just managed to escape with his life. It seems that he attributed this escape to the power and blessing of St. Fillan, and there is no



doubt that after this he held St. Fillan in special devotion, founding an Augustinian priory on the site of the old church of St. Fillan. There is also the tradition of him bringing the reliquary of the Mayne to the battle of Bannockburn. The Abbot who brought the reliquary, fearing another defeat, left the actual arm behind to protect it from falling into the hands of the English. On the night before the battle, however, while talking to the King, a noise was heard from the reliquary and, on approaching it, both men were astonished to watch an arm bone fall out of the wooden box.

Mass Schedule

	Carlisle	Glasgow	Edinburgh
Tuesday 1 st August	7.15am		
Wednesday 2 nd August	7.15am		
Thursday 3 rd August	11am		
Friday 4 th August (<i>First Friday</i>)		6.30pm	
Saturday 5 th August (<i>First Saturday</i>)			11am
Sunday 6 th August — Transfiguration		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 7 th August	11am		
Tuesday 8 th August	7.15am		
Wednesday 9 th August	7.15am		
Thursday 10 th August	11am		
Friday 11 th August	7.15am		
Saturday 12 th August		11am	11am
Sunday 13 th August — 11 th after Whitsun		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 14 th August	11am		
Tuesday 15 th August—Assumption of the BVM		6.30pm	6.30pm
Wednesday 16 th August	7.15am		
Thursday 17 th August	11am		
Friday 18 th August	7.15am		
Saturday 19 th August		11am	11am
Sunday 20 th August — 12 th after Whitsun		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 21 st August	11am		
Tuesday 22 nd August	7.15am		
Wednesday 23 rd August	7.15am		
Thursday 24 th August	11am		
Friday 25 th August	7.15am		
Saturday 26 th August — <i>O.L. of Czestochowa</i>		11am	11am
Sunday 27 th August — 13 th after Whitsun		8.30am & 10am	11am
Monday 28 th August	11am		
Tuesday 29 th August	11am		
Wednesday 30 th August	11am		
Thursday 31 st August	11am		

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If you require any further information concerning one of these places, or need to talk to a priest e.g. in case of emergency for the Sacraments, please ring the phone number mentioned in contact details.