

ST PIUS X WEEKLY REFLECTION

Saints and Place Names (2 of 6)

Saint Andrew

St Andrews is a seaside town northeast of Edinburgh which named after St Andrew.

As well as his role as the patron saint of Scotland, and several other countries, St Andrew is also the saint of fishmongers, gout, singers, sore throats, spinsters, maidens, old maids and women wishing to become mothers. But what is the history of St Andrew?

Saint Andrew was an agile and hardy Galilean fisherman whose name means “strong”. Having Saint Andrew as Scotland's patron saint gave the country several advantages: because he was the brother of Saint Peter, founder of the Church, the Scots were able to appeal to the Pope in 1320 (The Declaration of Arbroath) for protection against the attempts of English kings to conquer the Scots.

Early Scots claimed that they were descended from the Scythians who lived on the shores of the Black Sea in what is now Romania and Bulgaria and were converted by Saint Andrew himself.

In another fascinating legend, St Andrew was claimed to have come all the way to the shore of Scotland and established a church in Fife, in the town now known as St Andrews.

As Scotland slowly became a nation it needed a national symbol to rally around and motivate the country. Saint Andrew was an inspired choice and the early Picts and Scots modelled themselves on Saint Andrew and on one of his strong supporters, the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great.

Although a pagan who worshipped the Roman sun god Sol, Constantine later became a Christian and went on to make Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

It all began near Rome in 312 AD when, on the night of a make-or-break battle against a rival emperor, he saw the symbol X P (Greek for the first two letters of 'Christ') in the dazzling light of the setting sun and then had a dream in which he was promised victory. Constantine ordered his troops to hold the Christian cross at the front of the army and won.

Around 500 years later, King Angus of the Picts, facing a large army of Saxons at Athelstaneford in what is now East Lothian in Scotland, was overwhelmed by a blinding light the night before the battle and, during the night, had a dream. The message he was given was that he would see a Cross in the sky and would conquer his enemies in its name.

ST PIUS X WEEKLY REFLECTION

The following morning King Angus looked into the rising sun and saw the Saltire Cross in its blinding light. This filled him and his men with great confidence and they were victorious.

From that time Saint Andrew and his Saltire Cross were adopted as the national symbols for an emerging Scotland. The Saltire Cross became the heraldic arms that every Scot is entitled to fly and wear. However, its colour was not white at first but silver (Argent), as in heraldry white stands for silver.

Both William Wallace and King Robert the Bruce appealed to Saint Andrew to guide them in times of national emergency. The Saltire was flown on Scottish ships and used as the logo of Scottish banks, on Scottish coins and seals and displayed at the funerals of Scottish kings and queens - that of King James VI for example and of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots. When King George IV visited Edinburgh in 1822, he was presented with a Saltire Cross made of pearls on velvet, within a circle of gold.

There are also broader connections. Saint Andrew and his relics at St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral, Edinburgh provides Scots with a special link to Amalfi in Italy and Patras in Greece (where two Cathedrals named after the saint also hold his relics).

The many [St Andrew's Societies](#) worldwide, set up originally as self-help organisations for Scots who had fallen on hard times, form a network of Scots who are all united under the Saltire Cross of Saint Andrew. They give Scotland a European and worldwide dimension

St Andrew has been celebrated in Scotland for over one thousand years, with feasts being held in his honour as far back as the year 1000 AD. However, it wasn't until 1320, when Scotland's independence was declared with the signing of The Declaration of Arbroath, that he officially became Scotland's patron saint.

Since then, St Andrew has become an important part of Scottish society. The flag of Scotland is the saltire, also known as St Andrew's Cross, and the ancient town of St Andrews was named due to its claim of being the final resting place of St Andrew.

Who was St Andrew?

Andrew was singled out to be Christ's first disciple, preached the Gospel in the lands around the Black Sea and in Greece and was eventually crucified on an X-shaped cross (saltire) in Patras.

[St Andrew](#) is the patron saint of other countries as well as Scotland. His association with Scotland, a land he never set foot on is based on several conflicting legends, the most interesting of which is the story of St Rule.

ST PIUS X WEEKLY REFLECTION

Three hundred years after Andrew's martyrdom the Roman Emperor Constantine, himself a Christian, ordered that the saint's bones should be moved from Patras to his new capital city of Constantinople.

Before the order was carried out a monk called St Rule (or St Regulus) had a dream in which an angel told him to take what bones of Andrew's he could to 'the ends of the earth' for safe keeping. St Rule took what he could, presumably in a swift and frantic raid on the tomb, and after an epic journey was shipwrecked on the east coast of Scotland.

Over a millennium later, St Rule's Tower still stands among the ruins of St. Andrew's Cathedral, which in its heyday was a centre of Medieval pilgrimage. But no one knows where the relics are now. They were probably destroyed in the Scottish Reformation.

During his visit in 1969, Pope Paul VI gave further relics of St. Andrew to Scotland with the words "St Peter gives you his brother" and these are now displayed in a reliquary in St Mary's Catholic Cathedral in Edinburgh. But what these consist of is not recorded

Despite the fact that St Andrew has stood as Scotland's patron saint for so many years, it wasn't until the 18th century that the popular celebration of his day became commonplace.

Surprisingly, the tradition of celebrating on 30 November was not started in Scotland, but by a group of Scots in the USA who were keen to reconnect with their Scottish roots. It all began with the creation of the 'St Andrew's Society of Charleston' in South Carolina, which was founded in 1729 by a group of wealthy Scottish immigrants. The organisation is the oldest Scottish society of its type in the world. They became famous throughout the region for their work assisting orphans and widows in that area.

This was followed by another society, this time in New York, which was founded in 1756. 'The St Andrew's Society of the State of New York' is the oldest charity of any kind registered in New York and was founded by Scotsmen who were looking to relieve the poor and distressed in the town. From these first organisations, [St Andrew's societies](#) have spread around the world.

When is St Andrew's Day?

Recently, St Andrew's Day has become more special to Scots and is celebrated each year on 30 November. People across the country gather to celebrate St Andrew and share good times.

The day is usually marked with a celebration of Scottish culture, including dancing, music, food and drink, with parties going on long into the cold winter night.

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