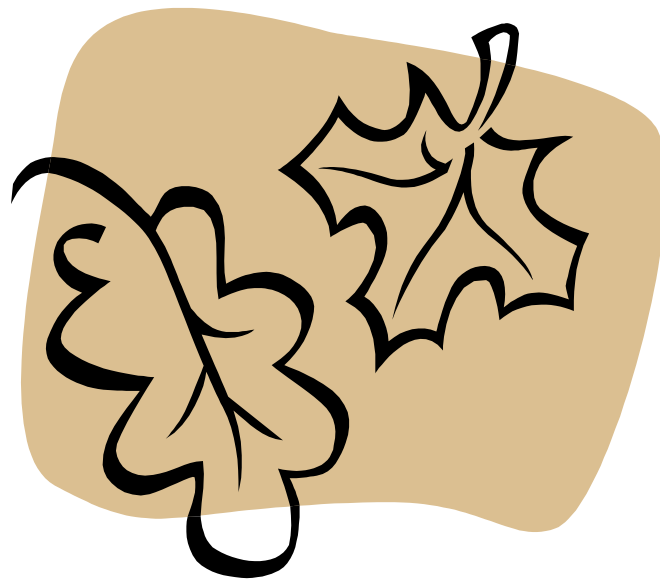


AUTUMN LEAVES

Volume 2



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Foreword

I have much pleasure in presenting the second volume of my *Autumn Leaves*, consisting of items that I wrote as a young man and which I am now re-issuing in my own “autumn” years.

I am very grateful to Scottish Church Heritage Research (SCHR) for kindly allowing me to use some of their copyright photographs in the article on Erskine Church, Dunfermline.

As always, I trust friends will enjoy these contributions from my younger self and will also forgive their many shortcomings.

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December 2013

Saint Mungo - his Life and Legend

This brief popular paper on Saint Mungo was presented at a meeting of the Edinburgh Sunday School Teachers' Union in 1966. It makes no pretensions to being a scholarly work and readers can make what they wish of the various tales and legends recounted. The text has only been lightly revised.

Saint Kentigern or Mungo was one of Scotland's foremost apostles of Christianity and whose life was one of exemplary piety and sincerity. How he came to be a follower of the great Celtic Christian tradition is one of the most remarkable coincidences in the history of Scotland.

The monastic hagiographer, Jocelin of Furness, wrote a "Life" of Saint Mungo around the year 1185. Jocelin states that he rewrote the Life from an earlier Glasgow legend and an old Gaelic document. There are certainly two other known medieval lives: (1) an earlier partial Life now in the British Library and (2) the later Life, based on Jocelin, by John of Tynemouth.

Mungo's mother was called Thenew. She was the Christian daughter of Loth who held sway over a kingdom in Southern Caledonia during the earlier part of the sixth century AD. The story runs that Thenew became pregnant through a relationship with her cousin Eugenius. Partly through fear of disgrace but mainly to satisfy his own pride, Loth decided to have his daughter executed. She was taken up to the top of Traprain Law and hurled over the precipice in a two wheeled cart. According to legend, she landed at the foot of the cliff entirely unharmed.

Her father, however, was determined not to be thwarted by a mere slip of a girl, so he then had her placed in a coracle and pushed into the River Forth at Aberlady. The little craft drifted out into the water, allegedly followed by hundreds of fish. Next morning, Thenew found that the tide had taken her up river and

grounded the coracle on the north bank of the Forth at Culross, in Fife.

Thenew struggled on to dry land and on the foreshore her son was born. The traditional place for this event was marked by a sixteenth century chapel, built by Bishop Blackadder of Glasgow. The remains of the chapel can still be seen.

Thenew had been singularly fortunate in landing at Culross, as this was the home of (Saint) Serf, known as the Apostle of the Ochils, who also had oversight of a monastic school or college there. Serf came upon the two refugees on the foreshore. The kindly man said "Maghaol! Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord." "Maghaol" has, in the course of time, become Mungo, which means "darling". This was to become his popular name throughout his life, in spite of his being baptised with the more formal name of Kentigern.

Mother and son were given refuge at Culross and Mungo was educated and trained under Serf, whose favourite pupil he was destined to be.

*And thare he browcht up Saynt Mungowe
That syne was Byschape of Glasgowe ¹*

Unfortunately, the fact that Mungo was clearly the favourite scholar, led to topical school-type bullying by the other boys, who set out to make his life a misery.

There is an account that, on one occasion, the other lads extinguished every fire in Culross knowing full well that it was Mungo's turn to light the lamps in the church on the following morning. When Mungo discovered his predicament he pulled a twig from a nearby hazel tree and immediately it sprang into

¹ Quotation from Andrew de Wyntoun's Chronicle
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flames, but was not consumed. On another occasion the lads were playing with their master's pet robin. In the course of the game, the unfortunate bird was killed. Mungo made the sign of the cross and the bird came back to life. We will return to these two miracles later.

In spite of the kindness of the venerable Serf, Mungo still found life at Culross unbearable and decided to run away. Serf, realising what had happened set off in pursuit and caught up with the young man at an unknown location named *Pons Servani* (Serf's Bridge). He entreated Mungo to come home with him, but to no avail. After giving Mungo his blessing, Serf returned to Culross.

Mungo continued on his way; the story runs that the waters of the Forth parted to let him cross just like the waters of the Red Sea had parted for Moses. (It is interesting to note in passing that, around Culross, the River Forth is well known for unusual tides.) Later that day, Mungo arrived at a place called Kernach where we found Fergus, an aged apostle, on his deathbed. Fergus begged Mungo to arrange for him to have a proper Christian burial.

By the next morning, Fergus was dead. Mungo placed his body on a cart and compelled two bullocks to draw it, praying that the Lord would lead them to a chosen place. The bullocks drew the cart as far as a place then named *Cathures* and which Mungo renamed as Glasgow (Dear Green Place). He laid the old man to rest in a burial ground founded originally by Saint Ninian, the father of the Celtic Church in Scotland.

This was to mark the beginning of Mungo's ministry in that part of what we now call Scotland. After a short time, he was created Bishop of Glasgow. It should be explained at this point that a bishop in the Celtic Church had a different role from a

bishop in the modern sense. It was more of an honorary title that was conferred by another bishop in a simple ordination service. It was a position of veneration and respect, rather than political or ecclesiastical authority.

Saint Brigid, one of the patron saints of Ireland, is said to have been created a bishop by accident, as the officiating clergyman is said to have read the wrong service!

From the revived centre at Glasgow, Mungo and his disciples evangelised much of the south of Scotland. After a comparatively short time an unfortunate situation arose. Mungo was forced to flee the country because of opposition from a local ruler named Morken.

There was a great shortage of food in the area. Morken had barns filled with grain yet would not share any of this with his people. The story goes that Mungo commanded the Clyde to sweep away the grain. This is apparently what happened and the grain was miraculously washed ashore, dry, at Mungo's chapel. This enraged Morken, although he died shortly afterwards. His kinsmen took the opportunity to blame Mungo for his death and he was forced to leave the Clyde valley.

We are not reliably informed what happened to Thenew, his mother. It is believed that she followed her son to Glasgow and that she subsequently died there. It is also believed that there was an early chapel at the point when the Molendinar Burn joins the River Clyde. This primitive building eventually took the name "Saint Enoch's" - a corruption of her name. This latter name is still familiar to modern Glaswegians in the St Enoch Centre, built on the site of the former St Enoch Station and Hotel.

When Mungo was forced to leave Glasgow, he made south towards what is now the north of England. In Cumberland, there

are no fewer than eight sites bearing his name plus one dedicated to Thenew, his mother. Similar sites are found in Northumberland. He made his way even further south through England. Saint Mungo's Well was a cold water spring and bath at Copgrove, near Ripon, North Yorkshire, formerly believed effective for treating rickets.

We tend to think that transport would have been very difficult, if not impossible. In fact, some parts of the country had been opened up with the Roman roads. Assuming - and this is a reasonable presumption - that Mungo stopped at Carlisle (Luguvallum), the whole of the north west of England would have opened to him. Even with a detour through the northern counties, it would still have been a simple matter to proceed south, on the road to Wales, by way of Chester (*Deva*).

Once in Wales, Mungo studied for some time under (Saint) David in the south which provided an excellent supplement to the grounding he had received in Culross. Eventually, he moved to the north of Wales guided, according to legend, by a white boar and began new outreach. He even named one of the rivers "Clwyd" after his own beloved Clyde.

His ministry in north Wales was very fruitful. Many gifts were poured on his monastic settlement. He founded a church at Llanlwy that later became known as Saint Asaph's Cathedral. He also restored the sight of a local chieftain, who quickly befriended and protected him.

There is no reliable evidence as to how long Mungo actually stayed in Wales. However, at some point in time, the political situation in Glasgow seems to have improved sufficiently to allow him to return home. It is said that when he arrived back in Glasgow, he was accompanied by no less than 665 monks. With renewed zeal, he and his followers began to restore his work in

the south of Scotland, taking in what are now Ayrshire, Roxburgh, Berwickshire and the Lothians.

Mungo himself soon set off on another expedition. First of all he followed in the steps of his venerable master, Saint Serf. He followed his tracks round the foothills of the Ochil Hills and made his way up Glendevon. On the other side of the Ochils, he stopped for some time at Gleneagles where there was a primitive chapel dedicated to his name. Saint Mungo's Well is still the main source of the River Ruthven. From here, Mungo seemed to have travelled north as far as Aberdeenshire.

In Aberdeenshire, several wells and chapels bore his name. He also followed in the ministrations of (Saint) Drostan of Deer, one of the foremost evangelists of north Aberdeenshire. Among other places, Mungo's name still clings at Kinnoir near Huntly and there is a Saint Mungo's Hill at Glengairn.

After this northern mission, Mungo is believed to have returned to Glasgow. There is a somewhat unreliable account in the *Martyrology of Aberdeen* (the dates do not seem to quite tie up) that he was visited by Saint Columba of Iona at Kilmacolm and that the two exchanged pastoral staffs. However, it is almost certain that Mungo was in Glasgow in the second half of the seventh century.²

Four items that refer to Mungo are to be found on the Glasgow coat of arms, referred to in the ancient rhyme:

*Here is the bird that never flew
Here is the tree that never grew
Here is the bell that never rang
Here is the fish that never swam*

² There is a reference to his being Bishop of Glasgow at the time of Conwalle, King of Strathclyde, in Adam King's *Kalendar* published in Paris in 1588.

It was almost certain that somewhere around his later period the famous miracle of the fish and the ring took place. Queen Languoreth of Strathclyde was suspected of infidelity by her husband, King Riderch, who demanded to see her ring, which he claimed she had given to her lover. In reality the King himself had thrown it into the River Clyde. Faced with execution she appealed for help to Mungo, who ordered a messenger to catch a fish from the river. On opening the fish, the ring was miraculously found inside it, which allowed the Queen to clear her name.

So far, we have dealt with three of the four symbols linked with Mungo that appear on the Glasgow coat of arms, namely the Bird (Saint Serf's robin), the Tree (from which he plucked a twig that allowed him to light the church lamps at Culross) and the Fish. One only remains - the Bell, which remains more of a mystery and no one knows for certain why it never rang. Most Celtic apostles seem to have owned a bell, the exact purpose of which is uncertain but probably were used in worship. Very few of these bells have survived. One of the best examples - Saint Ternan's Bell - was carelessly lost in the nineteenth century.

There is a legend that Mungo brought his bell from Rome. This seems unlikely as communications with mainland Europe were very difficult at the time, due to the infiltration of warlike peoples from the Low Countries and Scandinavia. Also, although Rome was increasing in importance as a seat of ecclesiastical power, the Celtic church only recognised this fact slowly and with a degree of resistance. The visit to Rome is more likely to be later wishful thinking and a subtle rewriting of history.

Mungo died in 601 or 612, having achieved a great deal. Because his life seems to have been influenced by later legends, there is the temptation to dismiss him altogether. That would be a mistake. There is no doubt that he was a real person and he left

a valuable legacy behind him. Glasgow Cathedral in a very real sense is a witness to his early work being built on the site of his first chapel.

The City of Glasgow's motto *Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of His word and the praising of His name* and the more secular *Let Glasgow flourish*, are both inspired by Mungo's original call "*Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the word*".



Coat of Arms of the City of Glasgow

Lochore and Ballingry - A Parish History

What follows is a series of three articles, published in weekly instalments in *The Dunfermline Press* in 1961 when I was a schoolboy at Dunfermline High School, approaching my 18th birthday. When I read through the typescript after so many years, I was very tempted to do a complete rewrite. To me now, at age 70+, some of the language presents at times as childlike and at other times, rather pompous. I decided to make no real changes as that would have compromised the integrity of the original. I have made only a very few minor alterations in the text where the original might be ambiguous. Some superfluous and (now) irrelevant sentences have been deleted.

As a matter of historical fact, the articles were written by a teenage schoolboy at that exciting and scary time of life when he was seeking to establish his own identity. Whilst I always welcome constructive criticism of anything I write, please bear in mind that what follows was written by a schoolboy!

People who are less well disposed towards me may, of course, consider that my later writings are also childlike and pompous. On that issue, others alone must judge.

Also, it should be kept in mind that the area of which I wrote has changed beyond recognition since the early 1960s, with the closure of the coal mines and the remarkable reclamation of Lochore Meadows, now a country park.

These three articles led to my being awarded the Sixth Year Divinity Prize at school, of which I was, at the time, immensely proud!

Chapter 1 - Ancient History of Ballingry

Ballingry - to those who know only the geography of West Fife, this name brings up a rather uninspiring picture of coal-pits and modern council houses in one of the more run-down regions in the county. However, the bystander should know some of the history of that area before he or she passes judgment.

One of the oldest sites in the parish is the large stone circle on Hare Law, just east of Glenraig. Unfortunately little is actually known about it - some say that it is the site of an ancient battle, others that it is a type of burial mound to some long forgotten chieftain. Excavations have taken place and material, said to be human remains, was found deep in the cairn.

Whatever it is, historians can safely place the date of the cairn between the second and first millennium BC.

The historical event for which Ballingry parish is best known is the battle, said to have taken place on the north bank of Lochore in the first century of the Christian era, around 83 AD.

A battle that might correspond to this is described by Tacitus, the biographer of the Roman General, Julius Agricola. According to Tacitus, the Roman fleet assembled in Bodatria, now the Firth of Forth, and then the soldiers advanced north into Caledonia. Tradition states that he landed either at Aberdour or Burntisland. Both of these places have natural harbours, both with advantages and disadvantages, but there is information that traces of (possible) Roman encampments survived in the Burnisland district until fairly recent times. Some say that he might have come ashore at Kinghorn - it all depends which town you like best!

Tradition also states that Agricola made a line of forts across West Fife, the most famous being those at Lochore and Carnock near Oakley, to the west of Dunfermline. . In the eighteenth century, a horde of Roman coins was found on Carneil Hill near Carnock and last century³ another similar horde was found at North Bogside, near Ballingry. Coins have also been found near Auchterderran and Strathmiglo.

At the Battle of Lochore, the Ninth Legion narrowly escaped defeat at the hands of the local people (the Horestii) and indeed the position was so grave that Agricola was sent for at his temporary headquarters at Carneil Hill to come quickly with reinforcements. He came at once and was able to turn the tide of events.

³ i.e. the 19th century

The Roman legion had been asleep and the Horestii (Caledonians) made a sudden rush at daybreak from their own camp on Benarty Hill right into enemy territory. The Ninth Legion fought back bravely and kept the Caledonians at bay until Agricola came with his force, the very sight of which drove them back to their native hills.

The result of this battle was a stalemate but it did two things (a) it made the Romans realise the strength of the Caledonian forces and (b) it gave the Caledonians a fatal confidence in their "rush" tactics, just as at a later date it was the downfall of the Highland Host at Culloden.

There are still people in Fife who state, not without cause, that the famous Battle of Mons Graupius took place somewhere at the base of the Lomonds, perhaps at Strathmiglo. Large numbers of skeletons were found near Gateside, signifying in all probability the site of some ancient battle.

Assuming that Mons Graupius was fought there, is it not possible that the Caledonian forces were routed and that as a result they built the line of camps which run across the country to the south of Crieff as a kind of improvised wall, just as was done under the Emperors Hadrian and Antonine?

After the Battle of Lochore, Agricola was so shaken that he is said to have withdrawn over the Forth to consider the position. In that case it seems unlikely that Galgacus would withdraw his troops back over the Ochils when he had just won a moral victory.

After Mons Graupius, when victory was in their blood, it is quite likely that the Roman legion would pursue the fleeing Caledonians over the range of hills or even further. It is evident from

historical writers such as Livy that the Romans, once victory was in their sight, would pursue a fleeing enemy with delight.

In the days of Agricola, the land around Lochore would not have had its present appearance. It would have been wild and desolate and in all probability much if it would have been covered with thick forest land, inhabited by wolves.

The remains of the Roman camp at Lochore have been almost completely destroyed within the last 200 years. It is said to have stood on the site now occupied by Chapel or Camp Farm on the north bank of the loch. According to historians' reports, the camp measured 2020 feet right round, had three ramparts and ditches and a large watchtower facing out over the dark waters of the loch. Camps of similar appearance are said by rather unreliable period writers to have existed near Burntisland, Kinghorn and Queensferry. This kind of camp would perhaps have been one of the many temporary forts erected by the Romans.

The person who probably knew most about the Lochore camp was Sir Walter Scott, but like the great writer he was, he was apt to make up what he did not know. Sir Walter's connection with Lochore will be dealt with later.

Chapter 2 - The Coming of Christianity to the Ore Valley

To begin a critical survey of Saint Serf whose followers are said to have brought Christianity to the Ore Valley would require a whole volume but, to understand how the faith was brought, a little knowledge is necessary. When exactly he lived and who his parents were has long been a matter of argument among learned men. Indeed it is often argued (with very little evidence) that there were two Serfs or perhaps even three. To keep matters

simple we shall place Saint Serf in the sixth century and attempt to keep him singular!

According to tradition, he died at Dunning in Strathearn and was buried at his place of ministration, Culross. When the Norse invasion came, his followers were driven out of Culross and were given refuge by the Pictish King Brude on the largest island on Loch Leven called St Serf's Inch to this day.

The Priory on St Serf's Inch was brutally sacked at a later date by King David I, the "Sore Saint" who crushed the Celtic church in Scotland while his mother, the Saintly Queen Margaret of the royal line of Edward the Confessor was content to "let sleeping dogs lie". The rather idealised picture of this kindly king peacefully building beautiful churches for the greater glory of God is only one side of the picture.

When Saint Serf's followers fled to this large island (which is now bigger due to the later partial draining of the loch) they gradually began to bring the light of the Gospel to the surrounding wild and barren areas. It will never be known how much of Scotland was actually enlightened by Saint Serf himself or by his followers. He is known to have had a retreat at Dysart where, according to Andrew de Wyntoun, sometime the Prior of St Serf's Inch, he had an argument with the Devil!

If Serf walked between Culross and his retreat at Dysart, he might well have made a detour into the upland country. He himself might well have founded the church of Inchgall, probably near Chapel farm and (possibly) the church at Aucterderran. The ministration of Serf or his followers has been eclipsed by a much later figure - Fothad II, the last Celtic Bishop of St Andrews, who performed the simple marriage service between Malcolm Canmore and Margaret in the humble Culdee church on whose site she built the Church of the Holy Trinity - later built over

again by King David I as the great and impressive Abbey of Dunfermline. Although the Abbey is like a favourite penknife which has had a new handle and two new blades but remains the same old knife, much of the old part of the Abbey is still David's.

If Saint Serf founded Ballingry Parish Church⁴ it may be of like age with Culross, Dysart, Tullibody, Tillycoultry, Alva, Dollar, Fossoway and others. If it was founded by his Culdee followers, it may be two centuries younger, but it still ranks as a very ancient parish being between 1,000 and 1,500 years old.

The present church was built in 1831 and although subsequently enlarged, it has not changed fundamentally. It contains two burial aisles and a most unusual bell which peels across the valley every Sunday. It bears the following inscription:

Malcolme of Lochore 1658

*Felices quos haec Balingria cimbita Christi ad pia sacra vocant
Ps. 89 vers 15*

It may be translated thus: Blessed are they whom these Ballingry chimes call to the sacred worship of Christ. Psalm 89 verse 15 reads: Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

It is interesting to notice that the Latin lines are written in a Classical metre and scan perfectly.

The church of Ballingry is mentioned by Sir Walter Scott in his (rather dull) novel "The Abbot" in the following terms: "Send or

⁴ Following church readjustment in the area, this building is now named Saint Serfs.
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