



# St Andrew Scotland's Patron Saint



Figure of St Andrew with cross and book, carved in oak, dating from the 15th century.  
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In most Christian countries and for many centuries the last day in November has been observed as the feast day of St Andrew. The Church Calendar begins with Advent (defined as the nearest Sunday to St Andrew's Day), and it seems fitting that Andrew, the first of Christ's disciples, should have the distinction of coming first in the Church Year. In Scotland - and wherever else Scots are gathered - November 30th is celebrated as our national day, for St Andrew is Scotland's patron saint and the St Andrew's Cross (or Saltire) is Scotland's flag. But who was St Andrew, and how did he become our patron saint?

## ST ANDREW THE APOSTLE

The Bible tells us that Andrew, a fisherman from Bethsaida in Galilee, was the 'first called' of Christ's disciples and that he brought his brother Simon Peter to become a follower of Jesus. After the Crucifixion, as tradition relates, Andrew travelled the countries bordering the Black Sea and preached the Gospel in Scythia (as the Ukraine and Southern Russia were anciently known) and in Greece. (For a link between Scythia and the Scots, see the part of the Arbroath Declaration quoted overleaf). His missionary work is still remembered in that part of the world: to this day Andrew is patron saint in Greece, Russia and the Ukraine. It was in Greece, in the city of Patras, that he suffered martyrdom. Possibly because he felt himself unworthy to meet his death on a cross of the same shape as his Lord's, he was crucified on a diagonal cross.



St Andrew in stained glass (by Gabriel Loire of Chartes) in Archbishopal Chapel, Greenhill Gardens, Edinburgh.

Part of the tradition is that St Andrew wore blue, and so the white of the wooden cross against the blue of his robes gave us the colours of our national flag. However, there is another legend to explain the white cross on a blue background, a legend which had its birth a long way from Greece, in the village of Athelstaneford in East Lothian.

## THE BATTLE OF ATHELSTANEFORD

According to this legend, an army of Picts under Angus mac Fergus, High King of Alba, and aided by a contingent of Scots, had been on a punitive raid in Northumbrian territory, but were pursued and then confronted by a larger force of Angles and Saxons under one Athelstan. Defeat seemed almost certain, but after Angus and his men had prayed for deliverance, the appearance in the blue sky above them of a white cloud in the shape of a saltire or St Andrew's Cross seemed to promise that their prayers had been heeded. Thereupon Angus vowed that if they were victorious that day, St Andrew would forever after be their patron saint. Victory was indeed theirs, Angus remembered his vow, and so Andrew became our patron saint and his cross our flag. The date is believed to have been 832AD.



Panel at the Saltire Memorial, Athelstaneford, by Eric Stevenson, showing the cross of St Andrew appearing above the opposing armies.

The battle is commemorated by a monument in the churchyard at Athelstaneford. Attached is a tall flagpole on which a Saltire is flown permanently, even during the hours of darkness when it is floodlit, as a reminder of the flag's origins.

## ST ANDREW AND ST ANDREWS



St Regulus' (St Rule's) Church in St Andrews Fife, built in the 11th century to house relics of the saint and to serve as a landmark to pilgrims.

Far though he travelled on his missionary journeys, St Andrew never set foot in the most westerly of the countries which adopted him as patron saint. But four centuries after his death, some of his bones arrived here. Quite how they did so is uncertain. One version of the story is that St Regulus (St Rule) was homeward bound from the Mediterranean lands with the relics of the saint he had acquired there

when his ship was wrecked on the coast of Fife. Regulus settled where he had been shipwrecked, at Kilrymont, and the church which he founded there became an important place of pilgrimage and the seat of the Bishop

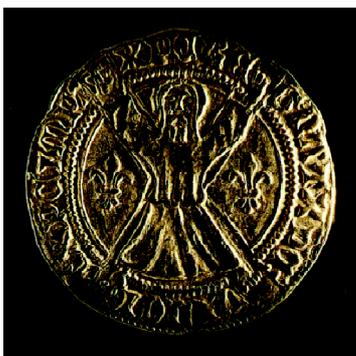


Examples of Pilgrim Badges of St Andrew, as worn in medieval times by thousands of pilgrims from all over Europe en route to the holy shrine of St Andrews in Fife. Badges, which had four stitching holes so that they could be sewn to hats or clothing, were worn to gain the Saint's protection and as proof of pilgrimage.

of St Andrews. Another version, favoured by historians, is that some relics of St Andrew found their way from Constantinople, where the Emperor Constantine the Great had a collection, via the Italian town of Amalfi to

Scotland. But whatever the truth of the matter, it is clear that the rise to prominence of St Andrew and the cathedral city bearing his name was closely linked to changes taking place in Scotland between the 9th and the 12th centuries.

During this period Celtic influences coming from Ireland and associated with local saints such as Columba had led to the



The gold 'lion' (five-shilling piece) - the earliest known use of St Andrew as a national symbol on a coin of the Scottish realm, minted c. 1390-1400 in the reign of King Robert III.  
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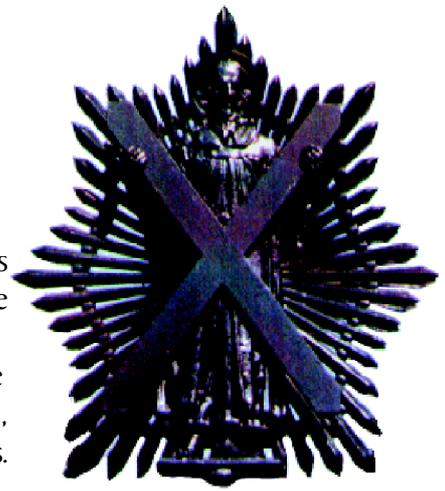
creation of religious centres at Dunkeld, Abernethy and elsewhere; but the influence of Rome coming via England was to prove stronger in the end, and St Andrews, named after an apostle of the universal church, became its headquarters. The strength of St Andrews was shown in the stubborn resistance it offered to the pretensions of the See of York, which was seeking to extend its jurisdiction over Scotland. The resistance was successful, and in the end the independence of the Scottish Church was recognised by the Pope.

The country's political independence, restored by the heroic efforts culminating in Bannockburn, was given its most eloquent expression in the Declaration of Arbroath, and in 1385 an Act of Parliament established the statutory position of the St Andrew's Cross as the national flag which any Scot is entitled to fly or display.

The Arbroath Declaration (1320) relates with pride the country's link with St Andrew and the scene of his missionary labours:

*"Among other distinguished nations our own nation, namely of Scots, has been marked by many distinctions. It journeyed from Greater Scythia ... but nowhere could it be subjugated by any people ... it acquired, with many victories and untold efforts, the places which it now holds, although often assailed by Norwegians, Danes and English.*

*"Our Lord Jesus Christ ... called them ... almost the first to his most holy faith. Nor did he wish to confirm them in that faith by anyone but by the first apostle by calling, ... namely the most gentle Andrew, the blessed Peter's brother, whom he wished to protect them as their patron for ever".*



St Andrew on the magnificent wrought iron gates of the Palace of Holyrood, Edinburgh.



St Andrew against a Saltire background on the great bronze doors (by Walter Gilbert) of St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh.

For more information about the Trust, about the Athelstaneford T-shirts, or for an application form to become a 'Friend', write to The Scottish Flag Trust, P.O.Box 84, Edinburgh, Scotland.