

Crínán of Dunkeld

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Crínán of Dunkeld (died 1045) was the lay abbot of the diocese of Dunkeld, and perhaps the Mormaer of Atholl. Crínán was progenitor of the House of Dunkeld, the dynasty which would rule Scotland until the later 13th century.

Crínán was married to Bethóc, daughter of King Malcolm II of Scotland (reigned 1005–1034). As Malcolm II had no son, the strongest hereditary claim to the Scottish throne descended through Bethóc, and Crínán's eldest son Donnchad I (reigned 1034–1040), became King of Scots. Some sources indicate that Malcolm II designated Duncan as his successor under the rules of tanistry because there were other possible claimants to the throne.

Crínán's second son, Maldred of Allerdale, held the title of Lord of Cumbria. It is said that from him, the Earls of Dunbar, for example Patrick Dunbar, 9th Earl of Dunbar, descend in unbroken male line.

Crínán was killed in battle in 1045 at Dunkeld.

Sir Iain Moncreiffe argued he belonged to a Scottish sept of the Irish Cenél Conaill royal dynasty.^[1]

Crínán as Lay Abbot of Dunkeld

The monastery of Saint Columba was founded on the north bank of the River Tay in the 6th century or early 7th century following the expedition of Columba into the land of the Picts. Probably originally constructed as a simple group of wattle huts, the monastery - or at least its church - was rebuilt in the 9th century by Kenneth I of Scotland (reigned 843–858). Caustantín of the Picts brought Scotland's share of the relics of Columba from Iona to Dunkeld at the same time others were taken to Kells in Ireland, to protect them from Viking raids. Dunkeld became the prime bishopric in eastern Scotland until supplanted in importance by St Andrews since the 10th century.

While the title of Hereditary Lay Abbot was a feudal position that was often exercised in name only, Crínán does seem to have acted as Abbot in charge of the monastery in his time. He was thus a man of high position in both clerical and secular society.

The magnificent semi-ruined Dunkeld Cathedral, built in stages between 1260 and 1501, stands today on the grounds once occupied by the monastery. The Cathedral contains the only surviving remains of the previous monastic society: a course of red stone visible in the east choir wall that may be re-used from an earlier building, and two stone 9th century-10th century cross-slabs in the Cathedral Museum.

Notes

- ↑ Sir Iain Moncreiffe of that Ilk, *The Highland Clans*. Part II. 1982. p. 236

External Source

- Cawley, Charles, *Medieval Lands Project on Crinan* (<http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/SCOTLAND.htm#Crinandied1045>), Foundation for Medieval Genealogy (<http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/Intro.htm>), retrieved August 2012,
- Clans and Families of Ireland and Scotland (<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/cairney/109.htm>)

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This page was last modified on 7 March 2013 at 02:24.

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