

Biographical Note on Saint Margaret

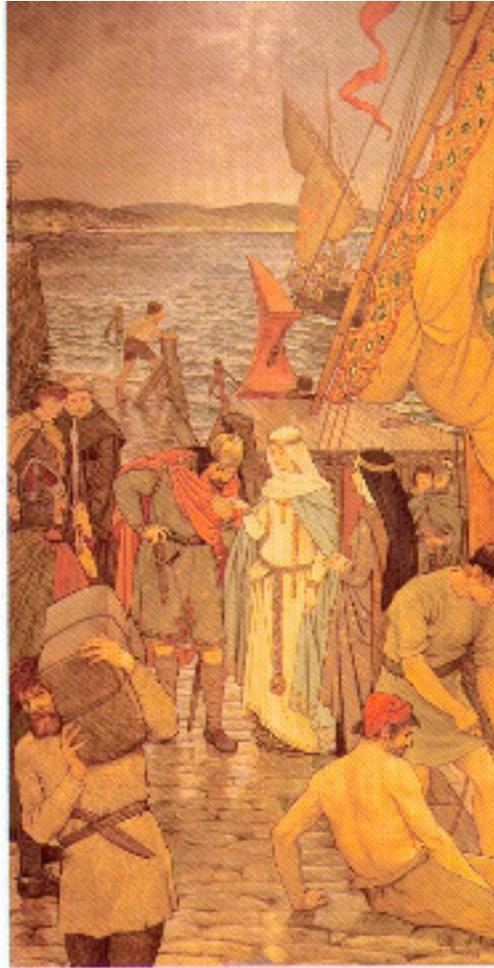
Joanne Crawford, PhD

jcrawfordphd@sbcglobal.net

Saint Margaret lived between 1046 to 1093. She was the Scottish King Malcolm Canmore's queen. Having been born in Southern Hungary during the exile of her father, Edward, son of Edward Ironside and one of the claimants to the Anglo-Saxon throne of England. Her mother was Agatha, supposedly daughter of the Luidolf, Margrave of Westfriesland, and granddaughter of Bruno, Count of Brunswick, whose wife Gisel would later marry Conrad II, emperor of Germany and the Holy Roman Empire. Margaret grew up in Hungary, arriving in England at about age 10.



In 1068 she fled England with her brother Edgar, the Aetherling, on his way into exile in the aftermath of the invasion of William the Conqueror. After a fierce storm blew up, their ship was blown onto the Scottish shore near the Firth of Forth. They were welcomed by the Scottish King Malcolm (III) Canmore, who was newly widowed. He promptly fell in love with the lovely young princess and married her a few months later.



Malcolm and Margaret had 8 children, of whom three successively became kings of Scotland (Edgar I, Alexander I, and David I). Their daughter Edith married Henry I, King of England and son of William the Conqueror, thus beginning the intertwining of the English and Scottish royal families that was to conclude with the ascension to the English throne by James VI of Scotland, as James the 1st of England. Queen Margaret, with all her illustrious relations, was most importantly, however, descended in the paternal male line from Alfred the Great, the Anglo-Saxon ruler who first united England. This relates her to our own Crawford ancestor, Thorlungus, as through the female line, he was also descended from Alfred the Great. Both Thorlungus' mother and his paternal grandmother were Alfred's direct descendants. This made Margaret and Thorlungus cousins, reason undoubtedly why Thorlungus received from King Malcolm Canmore the largest Barony in Southern Scotland. Thorlungus is thought to have accompanied Edgar and Margaret to Scotland. He was a young knight, inheritor of his father's lands in Northumbria. These lands were lost when William the Conqueror cut a wide swath through Northumbria, wasting the land and killing many of its people. The effects of the famine that ensued are supposed to have lasted almost a decade.

Queen Margaret was a pious woman and a devout Catholic. Stories relate how she would sit

every morning with her children and eat with the beggars who came to the castle for alms. She would wash their hands and feet and feed them herself. She is reputed to have taught her rather uncultured husband to read. She introduced continental gentility and culture to the Scottish Court. She founded churches and monasteries, but she also respected and supported the native church, cultivating its leaders and the indigenous institutions. She restored the monastery of Iona founded by St. Colombo in the 6th century. She introduced the Benedictine order, establishing them in Dunfermline. The beautiful stain glassed window pictured above in this article is located there.

Her and Malcolm's figures are flanked by Robert the Bruce and William Wallace, together forming Scotland's most distinguished heroic composition. Though in ruins, the Cathedral of Dunfermline is still a gorgeous structure. Here Margaret is entombed. Nearby lies Robert the Bruce. Margaret Crawford, mother of William Wallace, is also buried at Dunfermline. Queen Margaret was much loved. Her son David I built a small chapel (below) for her on the grounds of Edinburgh Castle. Over the centuries it saw many uses. In the 16th it stored gunpowder. In 1853, it was restored, with several further renovations during the 20th century. In 1993 it was again renovated and refurbished as part of the 900th anniversary of Margaret's death. It is one of the loveliest example of Norman architecture in Great Britain.



Queen Margaret was canonized in 1251, about 150 years after her death. She is the only royal Scottish saint. Today she is still widely revered.
