

## **SAINTS IN GLORY (PART 4)** **Charles Jury**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> January Munchin (Mainchine) *Seventh century***

Nothing much seems to be known of Munchin, and what is known is clearly folklore. He appears to have been associated with Limerick, being regarded by some historians as its founding bishop. However, this is unlikely to be true, as the first recorded occupant of the see was a bishop called Gilbert at the beginning of the twelfth century. Certainly, Munchin is associated with a religious settlement there, bearing the name Luimneach Munchin. .

### **31<sup>st</sup> January Edan (Aodan) *Seventh century***

Edan is also known as Maedoc – Mo Aed Oc, my young Aed – a nickname given to him by the O'Duffey's by whom he was fostered. There are two traditions about his birthplace, one that he was born on St Mogue's Island in Co Cavan, and another that he was from the family of the Kings of Connaught. There is also a tradition that he was predicted to live a holy life – reminiscent of the prophecies preceding the births of John the Baptist and Jesus in the Gospels. He studied under St Finnian at Clonard and later travelled to Wales. There he is said to have studied under St David, before returning to Ireland and establishing a church at Ferns, on a site donated by the king of Leinster, reputedly as a reward for assistance – no doubt miraculous – in winning the Battle of Dunboyke. While in Wales he is reputed to have blessed the army of the Britons (Welsh) as they defended the country against the invading Saxons, and were, needless to say, subsequently victorious. At some stage in his life Edan travelled to Rome to further his education, and while there was consecrated bishop. One of his Lives described him as the "Patron Saint of Europe" which gives an indication of how widely he was honoured.

### **5<sup>th</sup> March Kieran of Seirkeiran (Ciaran Shaighir) *Sixth century***

Kieran's family came from Ossory, though he himself was fostered on Cape Clear, where he learned the Christian Gospel, by direct revelation from Heaven, according to his Lives, as he appears to have lived before St Patrick's mission. It is more than likely that Kieran heard of the Christian message from non-Patrician sources, as it is widely recognised that St Patrick was not the only person to bring Christianity to Ireland. Kieran then travelled to Rome where he studied and was baptised. He remained in Rome for thirty years, before returning to Ireland, meeting St Patrick who gave him specific instructions to establish a monastery at Saighir (modern Seirkeiran),

where he was assisted by wild animals in building his church. His mother is reputed to have joined him and founded a convent nearby. Kieran is also said to have founded Churches in Wales and in Scotland. A rock at Campbletown upon which he is supposed to have knelt was long venerated by pilgrims. It is also possible, though not undisputed, that the Cornish Saint Piran was the same person, the 'p' replacing the 'c' caused by the phonetic shift between Irish and Cornish.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> March Macartan (Mac Cairthm) *Sixth century***

Macartan was descended from Fiachus Araidh, an Ulster king. He was said to be the uncle of St Brigid and a companion of St Patrick. As he often had to carry the ageing saint, he became known as "the Staff of Patrick's Old Age". On St Patrick's instruction he founded a church at Clogher and became its first bishop. One tradition has it that this was because St Patrick had forgotten to reward the saint for his work, and appointed him Bishop of Clogher to make up for this omission. The place had been a renowned centre of pagan worship, and it was to counter this that Macartan founded his church there. He is also credited, along with St Patrick, with banishing snakes to Lough Beg.

This series is dealing with the commemorations provided in the Book of Common Prayer 2004. I will discuss the Red Letter Irish Saints – St Brigid, St Patrick, and St Columba – at a later stage. These are in a different category to the saints listed in the Commemorations, as they are festivals to be observed throughout the Church of Ireland.