

Saint Blane

We know very little for certain about St Blane for nothing written about him in or near his own lifetime survives, and anything we have dates from many years after he died. We do know that he was born on the island of Bute in the Firth of Clyde, probably around the year 565. Apparently, Blane and his mother, Ethne, were set adrift in a small boat or coracle, without any sails or oars, and ended up in Ireland, where the young Blane received much of his education before returning to Bute. Here he was educated at the monastery by his uncle, Cattan.



Monastery grounds & Sound of Bute

Like his uncle, Blane became a monk, and spent part of his life travelling. Monks would move to various communities, setting up a small monastery and church, teaching local people about Christianity before returning to base or moving on elsewhere. There being very few roads at the time, they often sailed along the coast or up rivers. It seems that Blane spent some time in Europe, possibly going to Rome, before returning to Britain. He travelled in the north of England as well as Ayrshire and the Mull of Kintyre before setting up a monastery in what was to be called Dunblane around 602. A clue to where he visited can be found in place-names that include the name “Blane” or “Blaan” in Gaelic.

Local tradition maintains that he set up a monastery in a fort (called a *Dun*) in what is now known as Holmehill in Dunblane. A fort would have been necessary for protection. There was little law and order in those days, and Scotland was covered with forest in which wild animals such as bear, wolf and lynx would roam.

Dunblane was an ideal centre from which Blane and his fellow monks could work. It was central, and they could travel with relative ease to other places north, south, east and west.

Nothing obvious remains of Blane’s fort or church, for these would likely have been built of wood or clay, and the Cathedral that bears his name is a much later building.

We know nothing of what he looked like, and little of his personality. It was suggested that he was a very gentle man, but he must also have had considerable courage to travel as he did at a time when travel was difficult and dangerous. Like many saints of the time, he is said to have performed miracles, including the healing of a blind boy and making fire with small lightning bolts from his fingers.



It is thought that St Blane died around 630-635 and is buried on the island of Bute, where a ruined church still bears his name.

