

Let's find out...  
With the cathedral church  
of St Machar



# Who was St Machar?

**Activities to investigate the life of the mysterious  
saint who gave the cathedral its name:**

- **Who was Machar? Discover his story (read and explore)**
- **Unscramble the past with timeline puzzles (print a copy to play games)**
- **Use the internet to explore the Picts (explore online and then create)**
- **Get arty and draw a Bishop (print a copy)**



These cross-curricular activities have been created with 1st/2nd level Curriculum for Excellence outcomes and are suitable for age 7 upwards. We would love to see any pictures of work/drawings/models that you have made.

Have fun!

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# The Mystery of Saint Machar

## Machar's early life

The cathedral is named after a nobleman called Machar, said to have been born back in the 6th century. He joined a priest called Columba and together with 11 others they decided to leave their homes to spread the news of Christianity. They travelled by boat from County Donegal in Northern Ireland to Scotland and built a church on Iona.

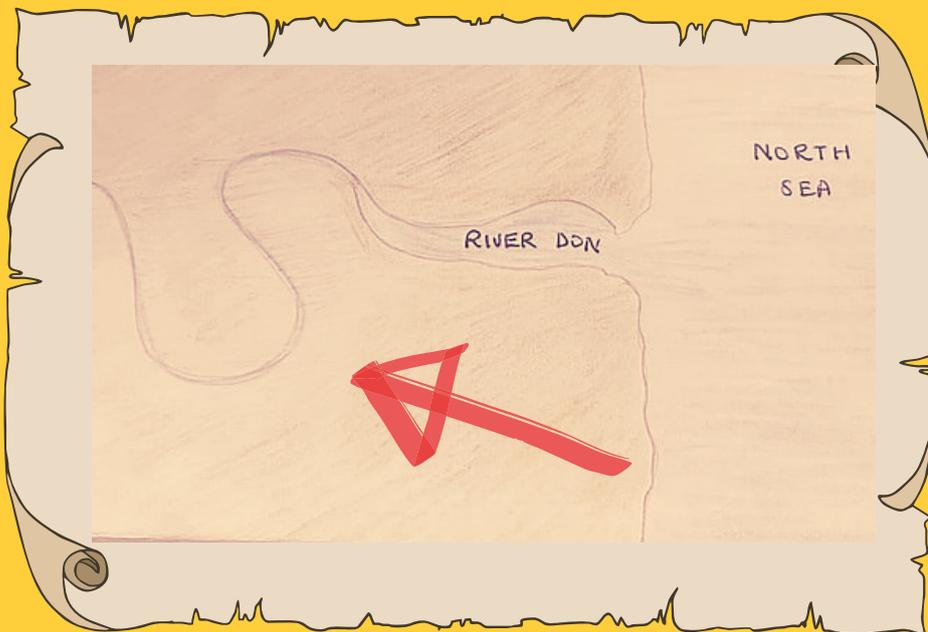
Can you use an atlas to find out the name of the sea they would have crossed?

Legend has it that Columba was jealous of Machar's healing powers and asked Machar to go away east and build a new church. He told him to keep travelling and not to stop until he found a bend in the river that looked like a bishop's crozier. He went all the way to Aberdeenshire and there he found a bendy river, sand sea and a few Picts!

## Machar's Mission

Yes, that looks like just the place!

That's where I'll build my church.



Aberdeen has two rivers going through it. The River Don is the one in our story and the estuary (where the river meets the sea) is shallow and sandy. Can you find out the name of the other river and what it is like as it meets the sea? Is it different to the River Don and what is it used for today?

### Fun Fact

Crozier: a hooked staff carried by a bishop to symbolise the care he would give to his flock (of people not sheep!)

## Top powers

St Machar is said to have preached about Jesus and Christianity on the island of Mull and to have healed people of a dreadful disease called Leprosy. He also performed awesome acts like turning a wild boar into a stone. Pretty amazing.



If you could be like St Machar and do some good in your community, what would you do?

To help my friends I would....  
write your ideas down on paper and put them around your house to remind yourself and others to act for good.



When he arrived in about 580, Machar built a church high up looking over the River Don. Nothing is left of that building today. It was probably built of wood but it was replaced several times and is now made of granite, a local stone which is very hard to cut and carve.

## Mission accomplished

## What a saint



The first time that Machar is written about was in the 14th century. He was made a saint and his special day is the 12th November.

## COOL FACT

Some of his adventures are mentioned in the local Aberdeen Breviary in the 16th century too. It was the first book to be printed in Scotland

## Painted Picts

At the time of St Machar, people known as 'Picti' to the Romans, lived in north Scotland. They have left us many beautiful carvings and patterns. This includes a stone with a cross cut into it, which is now on the wall inside the cathedral. Look out for it when you visit the cathedral.



# Timelines

For these activities you will need to print out this page.

These are some of the important events in St Machar's story. Watch out - they are not in order!

1131

.....

12<sup>th</sup> century

.....

David I moves the cathedral from Mortlack to Aberdeen and Nectan is made the first bishop

580

.....

6<sup>th</sup> century

.....

St Machar arrived in Aberdeen and founded a church by the River Don

1300s

.....

14<sup>th</sup> century

.....

The first time that the story of St Machar was written down in a history of Scottish saints

563

.....

6<sup>th</sup> century

.....

St Columba and his followers landed on the island of Iona

12<sup>th</sup> November 2020

.....

21<sup>st</sup> century

.....

St Machar's day. Every year on that date he is remembered as the founder of the cathedral

1500s

.....

16<sup>th</sup> century

.....

A book printed called the Aberdeen breviary which contains stories about St Machar



Can you solve the clues and put the events of St Machar's life into chronological (that is time) order?



**Cut out the 6 events and lay them on a flat surface in the right order that they happened.**

# Memory Mastery

They say that elephants have good memories -  
is yours as good?

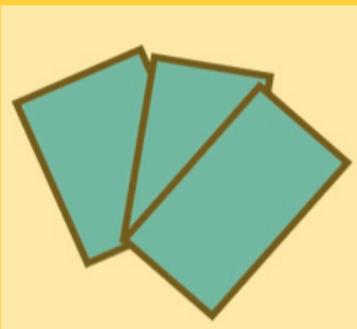
## Play this memory game for 1-3 people

Here's what to do:

- challenge someone to a game
- cut out each timeline card into 3 sections- the date, the century and what happened (follow the dotted lines)
- then put the cards upside down on a flat surface and mix them up
- take it in turns to choose 3 cards and try and match the correct set
- if you get it wrong put the cards back down and the next person has a go

Aim:

- to try and collect the most sets!



### Top Security Tip!

So that no-one cheats, you could stick another layer of paper to the back of your playing cards so you can't sneak a peak!

**Just in case your memory needs some help - here are the answers!**

563 - 6th century - St Columba and his followers land on the island of Iona  
580 - 6th century - St Machar arrives in Aberdeen and founded a church by the River Don  
1131- 12th century - David I moves the cathedral from Morlack to Aberdeen and Nectan is made the first bishop  
1300s - 14th century - The first time that the story of St Machar was written down in a history of Scottish saints  
1500 - 16th century - A book is printed called the Aberdeen Breviary which contains stories about St Machar  
12th November 2020 - 21st century - St Machar's day. Every year on this date he is remembered as the founder of the cathedral



# The Picts



**Use the internet  
to delve into  
Scottish history**  
Some of these  
activities have an  
embedded link to take  
you straight to the  
website.

The Picts are a fascinating part of our history in Scotland. They have left us lots of decorated stones and metalwork and some say they were covered in tattoos.

To find out more and watch some short videos:

bbc bitesize clips

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zr2xpv4>

Also follow  
the link for  
great Pict  
themed  
activities  
and games  
online in the  
Museums of  
Scotland.



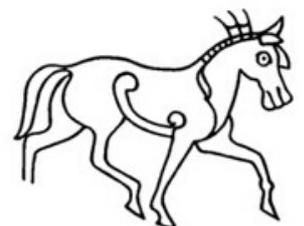
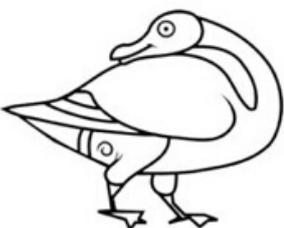
## Search

At National Museums Scotland we care for collections of national and international importance. Our wealth of objects represents everything from Scottish and...

National Museums Scotland

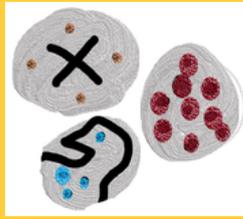
There are some Pictish drawings on this page. They liked animals and geometric designs.

Copy these designs or make up your own line drawings.



## Painted Pebbles

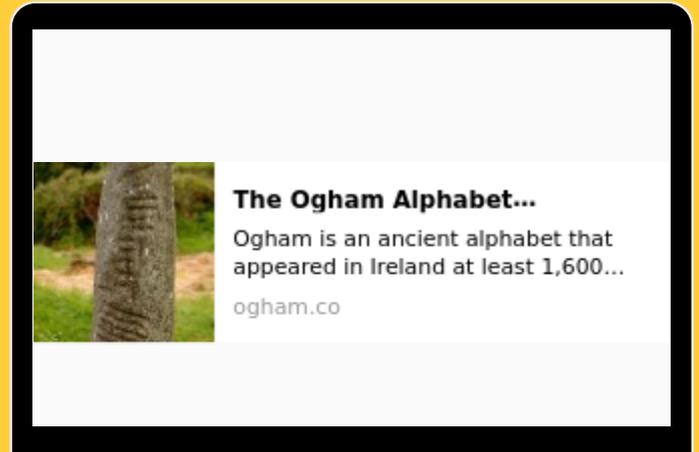
Do an internet search for Pictish pebbles and find some designs to copy or just make up your own designs. Collect flat, smooth pebbles or stones. Decorate with shapes or animal patterns. Use permanent pens or paint. Display or give to a friend.



## More Pict inspired activities

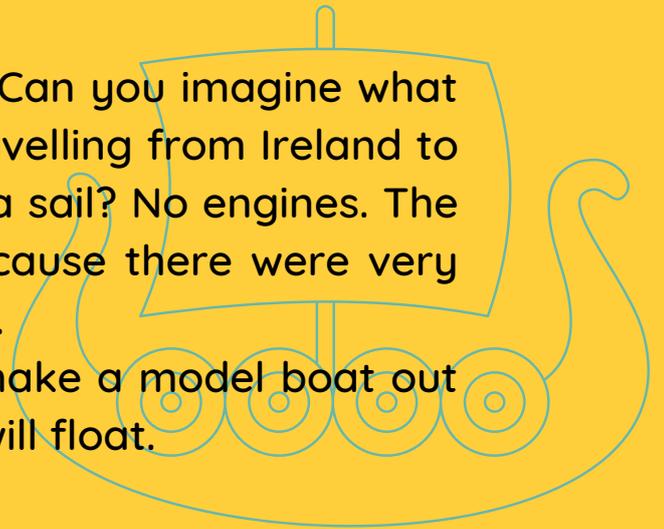
### Crack the ancient code

Try reading Ogham script by following the link. Write your own name or make a secret letter for someone to decipher.



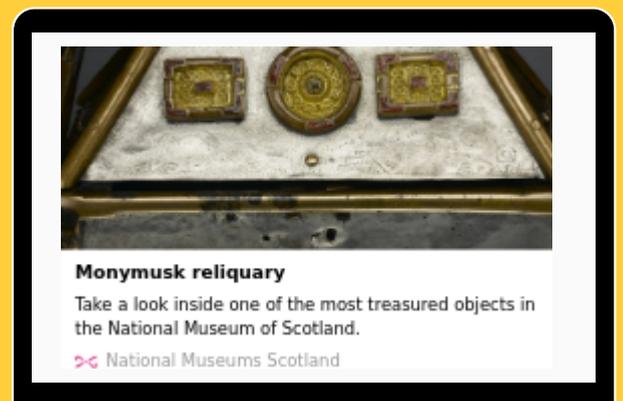
### Across the seas

Have you ever been on a sea journey? Can you imagine what it must have been like for St Machar travelling from Ireland to Scotland in a boat with oars or maybe a sail? No engines. The seas were like our motorways then because there were very few roads in good condition to travel on. Research Celtic and Viking boats and make a model boat out of junk. Maybe you can make one that will float.



### Make a Reliquary

This object dates from about 750 and would have housed the relics (bits of bone, skin or hair) from a saint - probably St Columba. It was made in Aberdeenshire at Monymusk. Follow the link and then try and draw it or make a model from cardboard or paper. What precious objects would you keep in it?



# Try your hand at drawing a bishop

Print out this page to copy



In the bible, Jesus was described as a shepherd who looked after his sheep. Shepherds use a hooked stick or crook to catch their sheep and lambs as they move very quickly! The bishop is also looking after people in his church and he still carries a crozier today, a symbol of his care for others.



In the cathedral we have many stone carvings. This is Bishop Lichtoun who died in 1440 and was buried here. This stone figure is called an effigy. If you go on the cathedral website you can see it in 3D. On his head is a mitre - worn only by bishops. He has his crozier in his hand but the curly top has been broken off. Notice his long clothes called vestments. His feet are resting on an animal - probably a lion. **Copy the drawing in the box.**

