

**THE EARLS and DUKES of ARGYLL and IONA ABBEY.**

IAN ROSS MACDONNELL 2012

**1561 - Archibald Campbell, 5th Earl of Argyll (c. 1537–1573) :-** “In 1561 an Act was passed by the Privy Council suppressing *“Idolatori and all monumentis thairof”*. Arran, Glencairn and Argyle were dispatched to the west to carry the Act into execution. The Abbey is “bombarded with cannon.” Another demolition executed by them was the casting down of part of Crosraguel (Abbey)”. <sup>1</sup>

(including Clan Donald ones and St Oran’s cross as it was in their burial ground? See *Argyll Inventory, VOL 4*; p.150; RCAHMS). It is said that he did not destroy large numbers on Iona, nothing like ‘360’ (not the Maclean’s or St Martin’s crosses) or the main Abbey altar - but others did? Campbell history simply says this about him : *‘whatever may be thought of his life, his death was heroic and Christian’*. Archibald, created Marquess of Argyll in 1641, was beheaded on the Scottish Maiden, taking place on 27 May 1661, - *“Tho’ my head should fall, that is no tragick story, Since going hence I enter endless glory.”* <sup>3</sup>



**1642 : Archibald Campbell, 8<sup>th</sup> Earl and 1st Marquess of Argyll (1607–1661).** He was the eldest son of Archibald, 7th Earl of Argyll, and at only 19 he took over the management of the family estates in 1619 after his father had renounced Protestantism and become a Roman Catholic. Entering politics as a privy councillor in 1626, he fell out of royal favour in 1637–38 by calling for the abolition of episcopacy in Scotland. [*“From his earlier years he stood well affected to the presbyterian interest, and being still a favourer of the puritans (the presbyterians then so called).”* - *Biographia Scoticana, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*; 1781; John Howrie.]

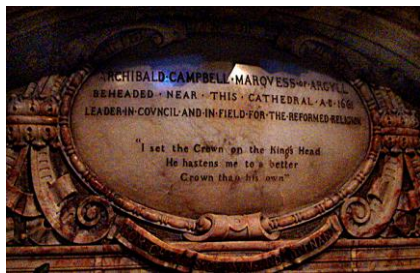
John Fraser, son of F. Fraser, d.1680, both Dean of the Isles, states they had a volume of over 300 monumental inscriptions on Iona compiled in the 1650’s by Sir Robert Moray (founder member of the Royal Society) :- *“the most of them, now obliterated, he received from his father & lent to the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Argyll and which was feared lost.”* (eg, inscriptions for “Gilbrid and Paul Sporrán, ancient tribes of Macdonalds”; M. Martin; p.159; 1695).

He destroyed Iona monuments and “dispersed” the valuable, irreplaceable library. Orders were given from the “red necked” Synod of Argyll 1642 on Iona and he was the **“Leader in Council and in Field for The Reformed Religion”** <sup>2</sup> (as per his inscription below in St Giles, Edinburgh).

Is this an additional perspective of the Argyll Earl’s “daunting of the Isles”? This is a monumental catastrophe with centuries of recorded clan history of the Western Isles forever “lost”!

*A Tour of Scotland; VOL 1; p.285; Thomas Pennant, 1772 :-*

I am indebted to Mr. Stuart for these three inscriptions, which he met with in his former voyage; arriving before the growth of the all-covering weeds. Mr. Frazier, son to the DEAN of the isles, informed Mr. Sacheverel governor of the isle of Man, who visited Iona in 1688, that his father had collected there three hundred inscriptions, and presented them to the Earl of Argyll; which were afterwards lost in the troubles of the family.



**“I set the Crown on the King’s Head, He Hastens me to a better Crown than his own”** (!) “The very word Whig is said to have been originally derived from some local name connected with one of the **Covenanting military associations of my ancestor, the Marquis of Argyll.**” (8<sup>th</sup> Duke’s bio.; VOL 1; p.63).

There is only a dozen or so inscriptions remaining that provide a modicum of history for the **“best men of all the isles”**- D. Munro, 1549. (9<sup>th</sup> Earl, another Archibald : tried for high treason and all his honours forfeit in 1681).

The chapel roof was destroyed probably in c.1642 (roofless ‘three centuries to 1957’- RCAHMS) by Archibald, following the Synod of Argyll that year on Iona when he went around the isles destroying various crosses -“idolatrous monuments”. **He was said to have overthrown “some of the finest monuments of the monastery and the altars”**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Argyll** - Effective possession of Iona passed from the McLeans of Duart to the Dukes of Argyll about 1690. In 1757 when new leases were let, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke stipulated that **the tenants had to fence** their adjoining boundaries to the Abbey and St Oran’s Chapel with a six foot high stone wall. (ARGYLL VOL 4, pps. 150-1; and more detail).

<sup>1</sup> *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland, VOL II;* p.404. David MacGibbon and Thomas Ross; 1897

<sup>2</sup> 1642. In July this year, the General Assembly of the Kirk met at St Andrews, " in other words," says Mr Mark Napier, *" the Marquis of Argyll's conclave of agitation and revolution."* (Rev CJ Lyon; 1843.)

<sup>3</sup> *“No Tragic Story – The Fall of The house of Campbell”*, frontpiece. Raymond Campbell Paterson; 2001.



**8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Argyll (1847). George John Douglas Campbell, d.1900** (His grandfather, George William, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke, was President of the Iona Club 15 Dec 1838). The Inveraray Castle website incorrectly states that the “Duke gives Isle of Iona to the Church” (its Timeline).

**1833-54:-** The 6<sup>th</sup> Duke, and John, 7<sup>th</sup> Duke, 1839, and George John, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke, 1847, were urged <sup>1</sup> by the Society of Antiquities (via Norwegian scholar P. Munch) including by its early Secretary, the famous historian, celtic scholar and antiquarian Donald Gregory, and the Iona Club to protect the Abbey buildings and St Oran’s tombstones. <sup>2</sup> (The Rt. Hon. Godfrey William Macdonald was an Iona Club member, 1835. Donald Gregory was also its Secretary – but he died in 1836.) These repeated urgings started c.1787 to the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke “to protect against future dilapidation” and the enclosure walls were repaired 1791 via the Duke’s factor on Mull.

**1854-9** - Graveslab monuments lay scattered about the St Oran’s burial ground being increasingly damaged by visitors (“peasants and sassanachs”;

<sup>1</sup> *Lumsden & Son's Steam-boat companion, or, Stranger's guide to the Western Isles & Highlands*; James Lumsden & Son; p177. **1839.** “... **there is a loud call on the noble Duke, to adopt proper measures to keep up this venerable fabric**”. Again, no door is in place to secure this chapel; in consequence of which, the whole interior is exposed to the intrusion of cattle, and the depredation from barbarous hands, for the purposes of building walls and repairing houses. Mr Rae Wilson and his attendants also cleared the royal tombs adjoining the Cathedral, those of the abbots, bishops, and mighty chieftains, from the rubbish which concealed them, with the inscriptions, are now distinctly seen. It is to be lamented, that the Royal Cemetery should also be exposed to cattle, from a fence not enclosing it, and that (new) tombstones should be erecting to the dead, spoiling, as they do, the antiquity of the spot; nor is a door placed on the Cathedral, to secure it from invasion.”

<sup>2</sup> *The gentleman's magazine, and historical chronicle*, Volume 100, Part 2; **1830**; **James Logan** “All who venerate the impressive vestiges of former ages must regret the state in which this monument of the piety and learning of other years is now left. **It is discreditable to the proprietors** of such objects to allow them to remain in such a state, for Dunstaffnage and other castles are the same. **The whole is in a state of the most disgusting neglect, filth and degradation.....concealed by an accumulation of rubbish and dung from the cattle which are penned in the chapels and aisles, etc.**”

**By 1872 :** Hutcheson’s steam-boat company paid for the cleaning up of the Abbey grounds and St Oran’s cemetery and the guides’ salaries. John MacDonald was the Abbey guide. .

Sir W Scott; 1814), some stolen (eg, by Rae Wilson, 1830), vandalised and others carelessly re-used for modern burials. At the vigorous insistence of both the Iona Club and the Archeaeology Society, the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Argyll, George John, finally agreed to allow **them** to move and enclose most of the slabs within two parallel iron railings, miscalled “the ridge of kings” and “the ridge of chiefs”. He also agreed to have in-filled the two arches, north choir wall, to stabilise the tracery and prevent their possible collapse (1855-6).

**1870-1 :** (on the coat tails of William Reeve’s popular and very influential Adomnan’s *Life of St Columba*; 1857 – see VOL 4; p.151) George Campbell published his book “*IONA*”, **1870** describing **the existing abbey structures as ... “monuments, not of the fire, freshness and comparative simplicity of the old Celtic Church but of the dull and often the corrupt monotony of medieval Romanism”**. Antiquarians, curator/s and The Society of Antiquities were most unimpressed. They exerted “pressure” on the Duke to stop further decay! (**pressured**; ie, not influenced or persuaded). Its ironic then, that his third wife, Ina Erskine MacNeill of Colonsay (1874-1925), m.1895, put his monument in this *medieval Roman Abbey*, 1912. He is buried in the Campbell Chief’s mausoleum at Kilmun Church (1<sup>st</sup> wife beside as normal), where he would have been buried regardless of that transept not being restored until 1902.

Ina was invested as a Lady, Royal Order of Victoria and Albert and held the office of Extra Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Victoria. She died 25 years after George and made the notable, very personal decision to be buried in Iona Abbey church (not Colonsay) and oversaw the pairing and matching of her white Carrara marble monument with her husband George’s (his in 1912). Why didn’t Ina lie beside her husband at Kilmun like most wives? (There was space to 1949.) All this indicates Ina was a key driving force behind any real sympathy of the Duke towards Iona Abbey (not the same as, but similar to Agnes Douglas, Catholic wife of the **7<sup>th</sup> Earl** who influenced his late conversion. The “Duchess's Cross” was erected in 1878 north of the Abbey for Elizabeth, the 1<sup>st</sup> wife of **8<sup>th</sup> Duke**.)

The inclusion of George’s effigy in the Abbey gives an artificial reading that this Abbey has significantly benefited from the patronage and benefaction of the Dukes of Argyll. The fact he reacted well to calls from rival, confrontational denominations to worship there (ie, separately) from c.1868, eg, by Bishop A. Ewing, whilst worthy and later fixed in

his 1899 deed, is an entirely different paradigm or perspective which is neither specific to Iona Abbey nor its restoration. It was not ecumenism – but appeasement. If the entire abbey had been in perfect condition, the same opposition to Episcopalians and Catholics would still have occurred. It is hyperbole to credit him for Iona Abbey's restoration, but even more so to expound that he did it to allow 'ecumenical' worship, against Presbyterian opposition. "Unification" it was not.

In his book, the Duke never once mentions either Somerled, Reginald, the Lords of The Isles, or Clan Donald even though he talks many times about St Oran's Chapel. These are glaring and telling omissions. Even at the very least, for centuries prior, everyone else had acknowledged the important historical fact that most Lords of The Isles were buried in St Oran's Chapel. He goes out of his way to repeatedly attribute the Chapel's existence as most probably due to "*Margaret, the devout and devoted Queen of Malcolm Canmore.*" (Which is wrong and he also confuses St Oran's Chapel with St Columba's Shrine.) **This aligns with his exclusion of Clan Donald and their immediate antecedent's role in the very existence of the medieval Iona Abbey and St Oran's Chapel and their continued benefaction throughout three centuries.** And this is despite it being widely known that Clan Donald were "*Unrivalled among the barons of Scotland as monastic patrons.*" He would, or could have had the advice of the most respected members of the Iona Club and Society of Antiquities.

It is surprising and very telling that in the Duke's memoirs he never once mentions Iona Abbey or *ecumenism*. He was neither attracted nor attached to both. (The 1300 plus pages, two volume "*George Douglas, Eighth Duke of Argyll, K.G., K.T. (1823-1900) : autobiography and memoirs*"; Ed. Ina, the Dowager Duchess of Argyll; 1906.) Because it was - "*of the dull and often the corrupt monotony of medieval Romanism*"? And which of course (once more) was founded, built, patronised, enlarged, enhanced and maintained for three centuries by his ancestor's enemy, Clan Donald – and which was, in God's truth, their Cathedral of the Isles in all but name. That is until his ancestors plucked its "fruits" and destroyed it. He does however mention his own "little inn" on Iona. He does mention other Abbeys such as Stoneleigh, Westminster and Tintern.

[What he said for example about the inhabitants of Iona was : "*From the accounts we have of the rural economy of the monks of Iona in the seventh*

*century, it is clear that agriculture in those regions had not only made no progress for a thousand years, but had retrograded until it had become deplorable. All these results were inseparably bound up with customs of occupation and of tenure to which the people were passionately attached with the deep but stupid attachment of long hereditary habit. Nothing but some external authority, governed by superior intelligence and knowledge, could abolish, or even modify, these ruinous customs.*" - p.20, VOL 1.]

The origins of the Campbell's Kilmun (St Munn/Mund – their Patron Saint says Niall, 10th Duke) site "remain a mystery" - quote from Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. It has no international significance, unlike Iona Abbey. But the site is thought to be ancient (13<sup>th</sup> c.) and the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Campbell mausoleum contains : "medieval burial effigies dating back to the 1450s (were in their 1660 chapel) which are thought to be the last examples of such quality in Scotland". By Laura Maxwell, BBC Scotland news, 6/1/2010 : "Twenty generations of the clan's chiefs have been buried here over the past 500 years. At the north-east side of the church there is a mausoleum of the Campbell Dukes of Argyll, built in 1790. Its most striking feature is an enormous cast iron dome which was forged in the Glasgow shipyards and erected during the mausoleum's last restoration in the **1890s**". David McKenzie, the director of Argyll Mausoleum : "You don't have to agree with their politics, but they were the men who were fundamental in the reformation, men who conceived and executed the concept of Britain." The 13th Duke of Argyll agreed."

It is evident that the Campbells in the 1890's were very much concerned and preoccupied in preserving their own 18<sup>th</sup> century mausoleum – preparing for the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke's imminent interment (1900).



Campbell Chief's domed mausoleum at Kilmun Church, near Dunoon. (now being restored by a charitable community led company.)Tweed J, 1871, says St Kilmun was Irish and had been a monk on Iona

**1874-6 :** Under *“increasing pressure on the Duke(s) of Argyll”* (RCAHMAS; ARGYLL VOL4; p.12) by WF Skene, the leading Scottish historian and antiquary, and James Drummond, Curator of the Nation Museum of Antiquaries of Scotland, through the Society of Antiquities (SoA), parts of the Iona ruin were stabilised using the architect R. Anderson, Edinburgh. This also involved some rebuilding in the church choir and south transept. That is all that was done. Basically, he did what he had to. Surely Skene and Drummond (the SoA) must be given due credit. There is certainly reasonable doubt that this work would ever have been done on the Duke’s own volition. Credit should be given for Anderson’s “thorough consolidation” which was, in the main, noted for its “scholarly restraint” for the period. (**1874** is when *parochial patronage* of benefices was ‘abolished’; the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke supported it, without compensation (no actual loss). The *Veto Law*, 1834, had already in effect passed it to members of the parish church.)

Twenty five years later in **1899** just before his death, the Duke transferred (returned) ‘ownership’ to the Iona Cathedral Trust (linked to the Church of Scotland). This *“was not accompanied by any endowment and funds had to be raised by the Trust.”* The abbey church was substantially rebuilt and restored by the Iona Cathedral Trust (by Public Subscriptions for Abbey Church 1901) from 1902-1910. **This fund raising was vigorously led by the Rev. Donald MacLeod, former minister of St Columba’s Church, London.**

One wonders why the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke did not affect a deed of transfer to the Church of Scotland, etc, from 1874-6 when Andersons were already contacted, on site consolidating the ruins, and then have the trust fund raising to allow the momentum of consolidation to the full restoration stage to flow uninterrupted – not have a big hiatus of 25 years. If his personal inclination was to return the property, have it fully restored, and simply continue all denominational access (separate : divided), then surely this was the moment. But it only happened in 1899, a few years after he married Ina MacNeill.

For all the other substantial Abbey buildings, and including the Library, Abbott’s House, Michael and St Oran’s Chapels, etc, the Iona Community under the leadership of George McLeod raised and provided all the resources, trained the manpower and performed all the work, from 1938 to 1965. The Public Works Dept. also did some relatively minor restoration.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Duke openly played down and disdainfully spurned the medieval abbey’s significance and status during 1200-1560 saying that :- *“After all, the real period of Iona’s glory was not a long one. It is almost confined to the life of one man (St Columba), and to the few generations which preserved the impress of his powerful character.”*

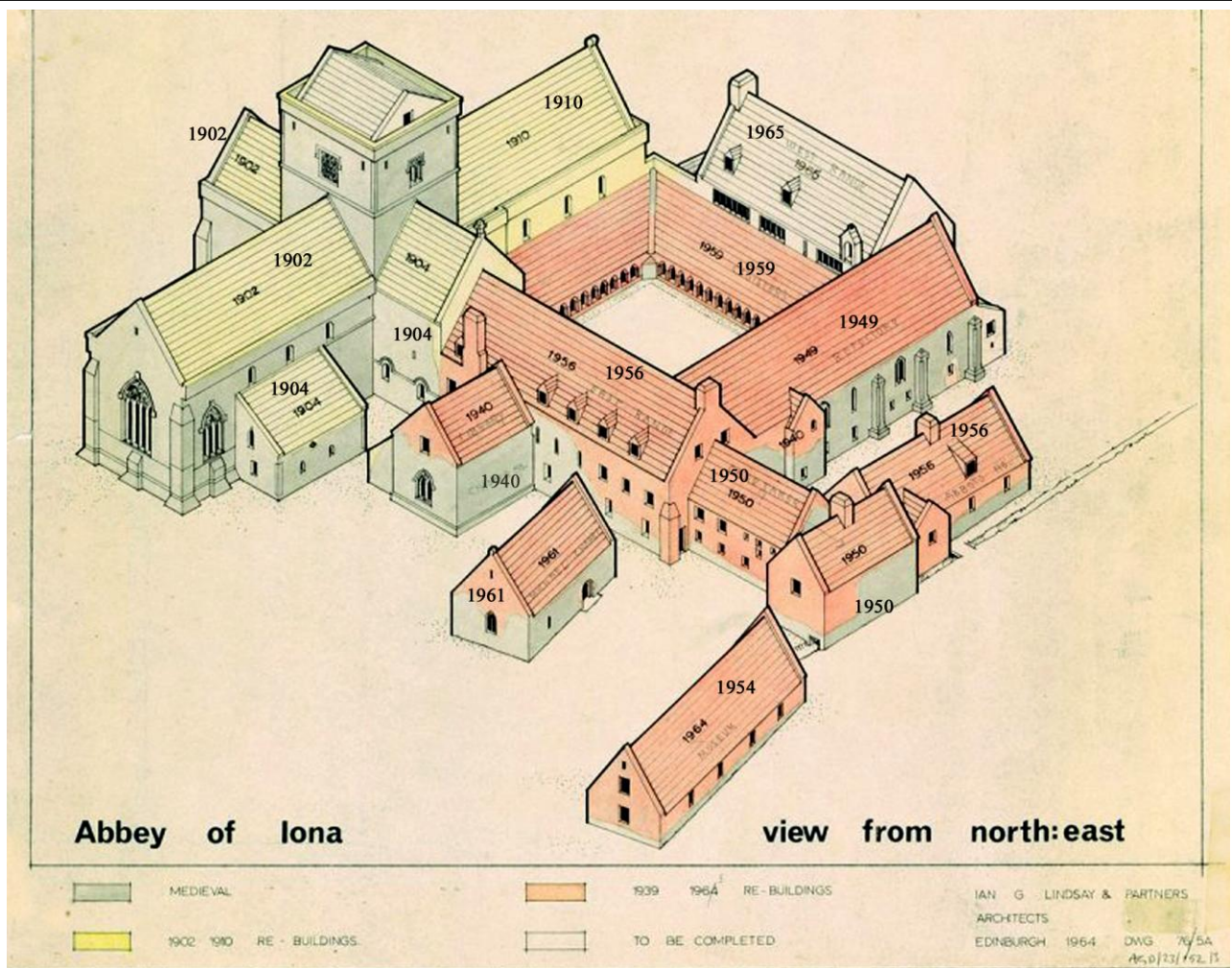
**This gives the distinct impression that he would have been quite satisfied if the medieval abbey had never existed. He was only “proud” of being the owner of early christain Iona. He was not alone in having a Love Columba, Hate Pope relationship with it.** (In fact the early Celtic church did not dispute Papal authority.) He was only impressed with (and concentrated mainly on) St Columba the man, the very early Celtic Church and the island, ‘I’, itself. Some might say that all the above should be put in this context, and of the times, his clan’s history and the Duke’s heritage.

[eg : (A) “This district of Argyllshire was the refuge of many Covenanting families, under the protection of the Marquis and Earl of Argyll” (Memoirs; p.311; VOL II);

(B) **1885** - Disestablishment of the Church of Scotland speech by 8<sup>th</sup> Duke (pps 450-56):- **“The establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland has been the glory of our national history”**. “Do not think that I am wishing to revive sectarian jealousies when I remind you simply of historical facts. What is the equality of the Roman Catholic Church? **What has the Roman Catholic Church done for Scotland? She burned our martyrs.** What did the Episcopal Church do for Scotland? She tried to suppress our liberties”.

(C) **He did not agree with *The Oxford Movement*, precursor to ecumenism (VOL 1) :** eg, pps. 309-12; “Then I had watched from the beginning the progress of the Oxford Movement, noting specially that its central idea was a theory on the nature and authority of the Church which **differed from that of Rome in nothing except in the absence of a central authority or head. I have also lived to see a recrudescence of the Romanising tendency which followed the Oxford Movement.**” p.103; ..the famous Oxford Movement was in its full swing. The air was ringing with the cry of Puseyism. Under these circumstances, I heard the service performed in a way **that could not make on me any favourable impression**”.]

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**Restoration Time Table** :- 1902-1910 . Yellow = Iona Trust. 1940-1965, Red and West Range = Iona Community (Courtesy of CANMORE, RCAHMS).

The Iona Community was founded in **1938** \* by George MacLeod, a parish minister in Glasgow who hoped to infuse a new vitality into Christianity. He was convinced that the wide gap between actual life and theoretic religion should be closed and that, as in the ancient Celtic church of St. Columba (Columba, Saint), the Irish missionary who established a monastery on the island of Iona, the spiritual and the material should be intertwined.

**The pitiful condition of many of the ancient buildings** on Iona offered MacLeod and his seven comrades an opportunity to show something of the spirit that had impelled Columba and his 12 followers, more than 1,300 years earlier, to leave their native Ireland to spread the gospel. With the approval of the Church of Scotland, they began their work of restoring the ruins, and when the cloisters, the sanctuary, and the sacristy were finished, the abbey was consecrated in 1959. In 1957 George had been made Moderator of the Church of Scotland. **1967** : Revd George MacLeod was created a life peer. **1991** : Death of Lord MacLeod of Fuinary, founder of the Iona Community.

\* **PS : In 1938** the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Bute, a reformed Catholic, had tried to buy the whole island from the Duke the of Argyll. He wanted to build a Catholic seminary on the island, not convert the ruins as such. This would have been against the terms of the Iona Cathedral Trust (Church of Scotland) but in any case the current Duke did not wish to sell. *"There was alarm that Iona might be turned into a Catholic seminary"*! **If this situation, call it a "perceived threat of Popery", did not arise, one has to ask the question :- what would have been the reality of the Iona Community and the Abbey building restoration commencing in 1938?** (A notable long forty years after the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke's Trust Deed.)

They may very well have a point, after all, this is the milieu of the day : *“The Culdees, 'servants of God,' as the fraternity of Iona and the communities connected with them were called, seem to have had no connexion whatever with the corrupt, pompous, usurping, and multitudinous sect which, from an early period in the 4th century, claimed the alliance of the state, arrogated to itself the title of 'the Catholic church,' and was already far advanced, all indeed but completely matured, in the foul innovations of Romanism. An Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, and an Independent, if keener to gather laurels for his party than to obtain an impartial view of facts, will each, and not without plausibility, but under decided mistake, claim the Culdees, as brethren in creed.”*<sup>1</sup> (also see James Watson, 1862).

AND, on the gates of Cork, mid 19th century :-  
*‘Jew, Turk, Infidel, or Atheist  
 May enter here, but not a Papist’*<sup>2</sup>

Leaving all that well behind us (and Glasgow sectarianism), there should however not be even a subliminal continuation of the clouding of the facts which :-

- (A) gives none or very little credit to the early Clan Donald and their immediate antecedent for the very existence and continued growth, enhancement and maintenance of the medieval Abbey for three centuries;
- (B) portrays little of the responsibility for the then Earls of Argyll playing a significant, leading part in its 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries destruction and exactly how the abbey’s wealth and property *“came into the hands of”* their family;
- (C) however sees the Argyll Earls/Dukes (and consequently Clan Campbell) enjoying a disproportionate amount of the accolades for *“returning”* and *“restoring”* the Abbey, when very little of it all or the exact opposite is the truth.<sup>3</sup>

For example, this kind of very common message :- *St Columba and his followers built a small monastery from wood, wattle and daub. Later, the timber was replaced with stone and in around 1200, the Columban Monastery was transformed into a Benedictine Abbey* [that’s it!; Isle-of-Iona.com. Someone called Reginald sometimes gets a mention

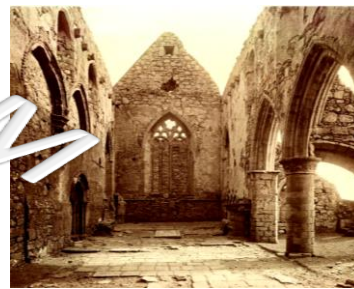
<sup>1</sup> The Topographical Statistical and Historical Gazetteer of Scotland, Volume 2. p.47. 1854.

<sup>2</sup> John Dowden, DD, LL.D. Bishop of Edinburgh.; *The Medieval Church in Scotland*; 1910; Biographical Sketch..

<sup>3</sup> 1979 : (NY Times, Apr 2001.) **“Heavy estate taxes led the 12th Duke of Argyll to sell the island of Iona. The Hugh Fraser Foundation buys Iona for the nation; ownership transferred to the National Trust for Scotland.”**

as the founder.] *The abbey as you see it today is largely due to the vision of the 8th Duke of Argyll.* (Undiscovered Scotland - website.)

From the Historic Scotland website (ionahistory.org.uk) :- ***“In 1874 the island’s owner, the Duke of Argyll, began reconstructing the abbey church, with the intention that it be used for ecumenical worship”***. But, *“The contemporary ecumenical movement for Protestants is often said to have started with the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference”* (+35 years) ; and *“Early ecumenism :- some attempts at dialogue began in 1915”*. Besides the fact that the Duke, under pressure, only stabilised sections of the ruin in 1875 and nothing else (or very little) was done for twenty five years, this is a revisionist statement regards his ‘intention’, unless the Duke was involved in the early YMCA (said to be a precursor to ecumenism), or in the Oxford Movement, was a *Newmanite* (pre-1845) or a *Puseyite* (post-1845). None of which are true, and in fact he was not ‘favourable’ to the movement -*“a recrudescence of the Romanising tendency”* he said.



This c.1870 photo’s information below by the RCAHMS, CANMORE website is insufficient ([SC365297](https://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/details/365297)): *“Iona: Iona Abbey, interior. View of choir looking East, pre-1874/5 restoration by the Duke of Argyll”*.<sup>4</sup> It

is more precisely : pre-1902 restoration by the Iona Cathedral Trust under public subscription - with earlier arch infill stabilisation (left : north choir, ‘sacristy’) in 1855-6 by the Duke of Argyll as urgently requested by the Society of Antiquities (SoA), 1854.

Its easy to see how a perception could be built up over time by the following sequence of events :- the visibility of the outstanding, beautiful Carrara marble effigies of the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke and wife Ina (nee McNeil) in the south transept of the church; the local knowledge that they had possessed the island for a *“long time”*; something was done by them to *‘fix the ruins’*; the abbey was given to a trust; later it was fully restored; and then the whole island was gifted to the nation. All of this has led over time to the general perception that the island was always theirs, the abbey probably endowed by them, the restoration was done by them and the whole abbey and island was gifted to the public and the entirety performed by the respective Dukes from great generosity and public spirit.

<sup>4</sup> [http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/details/365297/](https://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/details/365297/)

The sum of the above is simply not true, it has almost myth status and is very hard to shake, particularly amongst loyal locals – and generally Scotsmen.

However, it should be added, that I cannot see any public written material where any 20<sup>th</sup> century Argyll Dukes have ever actually claimed so – as per above. It appears to be the work of possibly well meaning public servants, misplaced regional loyalties, some obsequious local officials or press, and a measure of lazy deduction and just regurgitating prior statements. However, neither have I seen any statements by the Dukes to put the history right and honestly put their part from the fall of the Lordship, *The Restoration* and Civil War destruction, their non-restoration of the abbey and the real reasons behind the transferring and sale of the Abbey and island into a true perspective. To them its a welcome rare piece of good press to offset the “300 years of bad press” (12<sup>th</sup> Duke). And its not something that would easily go unnoticed and unappreciated; something not to be confirmed, but equally not to be denied. Clan Donald was “wayward”, and it was duly vanquished – serves them right!

As Clan Chief, Ian Campbell, 12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Argyll stated on TV <sup>1</sup> :- "by the standards of the Highlands in those days, it (Glencoe Massacre) was simply no big deal," since only 38 MacDonalds were killed. He provoked another uproar, this time among Scottish nationalists in 1995, when in a television documentary he pronounced himself "very satisfied with the result" of the Battle of Culloden in 1746, when British Redcoats crushed the "Forty-Five" Jacobite uprising and drove Bonnie Prince Charlie, the young pretender, into exile. "The battle," the duke said, put an end "to all this Highland nonsense and dragged the clans into a comparatively modern world," **ending what he called "400 years of barbarism."** <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (New York Times, 24 Apr 2001.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/24/world/argyll-63-chief-of-clan-of-campbell-is-dead.html> )

<sup>2</sup> Whenever, the (extreme end) Calvinist *Double Predestined* “Chosen Ones” took property from the *eternally damned* others (then and by sympathisers for three centuries anywhere in the colonial world) it was always conveniently dressed up as their “manifest destiny”, or “white man’s burden”, to relieve those “savages and devil’s disciples” of their ancient lands, riches and resources (eg, starting with monastery’s wealth.) No problem; under their *lapsarianism*, they were all *the undeserving reprobates*. How anyone could seriously decree the Lords of the Isles and the religious community on Iona as barbarous or reprobate savages is beyond belief - its profane, its ludicrous. It goes to prove that its main purpose was as a lame excuse and to disingenuously salve what was an *un-Christian* conscience for what amounted to plain *robbery by force*.

For stark clarity, an intentionally contrasty, black & white image of what happened to the Iona Abbey over 700 years from 1200 to 1900, is that **over the FIRST HALF of the period, the Clan Donald :-**

Founded, built, continually endowed with lands and income, gifted, patronised, served, protected, developed, enhanced and maintained it. Even if it was for pious self interest, that’s of no consequence in the equation and any privileges, benefices were fittingly earned and well deserved. There was only two MacDonald Iona Abbots (John MacAlister who was the Prior; Angus, removed by MacKinnon chief for his unelected, outsider son) and two Bishops of the Isles in the entire three centuries of what was the Clan Donald’s unparalleled benefaction of this monastery. They all came up through the orders in their Abbey organisation and were nominated by the Chapter (“*postulated by the convent*”—except maybe *Ruaidhri M’Alistair* of Clan Ranald, Bishop (elect) of Isles 1545–46, being the (unsuccessful) candidate of Donald Dubh during his attempted re-instatement as Lord of the Isles.

**Over the SECOND HALF of the period**, including incessant fighting with, and between, Clans McLean and Donald for the first two centuries, the Argyll Earls/Dukes who never founded, or rarely endowed or patronised monasteries <sup>3</sup> (alike Macleans) let alone Iona:- used their privileged Royal connections to heavily partake of “*the fruits*” of Iona’s benefices and revenue as soon as the MacDonald Lordship was forfeited again in 1493 <sup>4</sup>; they regarded it as their

<sup>3</sup> To my knowledge : using *A History of Clan Campbell*; Alastair Campbell, 2000, and *House of Argyll*; J Tweed, 1871. **Exception** : Sir Duncan, 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Campbell, 1445; gave Abbey of ‘Sandal’, in Kintyre, the lands of Blairnaliber for safety of his soul. Founded own Collegiate **Kirk of Kilmun** by charter, 1441. (Restored King James 1<sup>st</sup> to power – married Stewarts.)

<sup>4</sup> “*After the forfeiture of the lordship 1493, King James, at the Earl of Argyll’s request, petitioned the Pope that his cousin Bishop John Campbell should hold the abbey of Iona in commendam* †.” (*Acts of The lords of The Isles*; Monro & Monro; 1986. Intro, p. lvi.). 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Argyll died 10 May 1493. † **Commendators** = “*property administrators; regarded as a family propriety interest*”; from “*The Heads of Religious Houses in Scotland*; Ed. D Watt & NF Shead; 2001).

**Campbell Bishops, Abbot-Commendators of Isles/Iona :-**

- **Eóin (John) Caimbeul (I)**, # 1487 – d.1510; Son of 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Argyll. Bishop. **Abbot/Comm. from 1499. Petition to Pope 1498 by his brother Archibald, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Argyll** “*one can hardly avoid seeing personal motives - perfect opportunity to promote Campbell interests in the area*” – S&B; LMMSWH; p116.
- **Eóin Caimbeul (II)**, 1514–1532; Bishop. Nephew of (I). Repeated nominations by Crown. Resigned on securing pension and had “*certain parts of the revenue assigned to him*”.

“family propriety interest”; suppressed it; shared to an unknown extent in the dissolution “*plunder of Iona*” (with Maclean Iona *factors* then “*intruders-molesters*”) of :- library books and MSS of great value, Registers <sup>1</sup> (so called “*dispersed and lost*”), some gold and silver plate, tower bell/s (“independent testimony”; Argyll Vol 4; p142); were instrumental in destroying it, being the responsible local *Leaders in the Field for the Reformed Religion* - and ‘lost’ 300 priceless graveslab inscriptions,

- **Eóin Caimbeul (III)**, 1557-1562; Abbot/Comm-Bishop; then to Argyll’s superintendent, Seon Carsuel/Carswell, with crown grant of the See and Abbacy\*.
- **Eóin Caimbeul (III)**, 1572-1594; to 1581 as Abbot/Comm, then to Bishop.
- **Alasdair Caimbeul**, 1581–1615; Abbot/Comm. Son of (III) – appointed when father resigned.. *Split revenue with father*. Abbey annexed to bishopric 1615.
- **Niall Campbell**, 1634-1638 Bishop. In 1635 King Charles I donated £400 & directed it be spent on the Abbey **Cathedral (1635)**. It appears it wasn’t. \*\*

# “On 26 March, 1466, Pope Paul II. dealt with the petition of **Sir Colin Campbell (1st Earl of Argyll, c. 1433–1493), then ambassador from James III to the Holy See**, on behalf of **John ‘Cambel,’** scholar of Lismore diocese, of baronial race on both sides, **born of said Colin** a married man and an unmarried woman, **then in his seventh year**, for dispensation to hold two canonries and prebends of cathedral or collegiate churches ; which the pope granted **when he should reach his ninth year** {Reg. Of Petitions to the Pope, 585, 206}.

John Dowden, DD, LL.D, Bishop of Edinburgh.; *The Bishops of Scotland*; 1912; p. 291, n.1.

\* Bishop, Séon Carsuel, agent of Campbell, 1565–1572. **Joined the service of the Earl of Argyll, tutoring his son and using his patronage to obtain benefices, most notably becoming Bishop of the Isles in 1565.** Had revenues of the bishopric of the Isles and the abbey of Iona. Protestant Superintendent of Argyll and the Isles. Had lease of Saddell abbey. It was later said in a Gaelic quatrain that he had “*an empty greedy capacious maw.*” He married the Earl’s daughter, Margaret.

A very telling and disappointing observation is that fact that one of the main reasons (excuses) given for dismantling of the monasteries was that the Abbot’s positions were being constantly occupied on a hereditary or family basis (what exactly wasn’t!). But, predictably, after the Lordship of the Isles fell and the closely following Reformation beginnings, suppression and dissolution, what do we have, for the Iona Abbot and Bishops of the Isles, just for example? There are seven periods of three Eoin/John Campbells, an Alasdair and a Niall Campbell (plus their agent Carsuel) as Abbot/Commendator and sometimes concurrent Bishop occupations. This is the “worst” case of hereditary (or family elite) occupation in the mid-late medieval period than any other I know of! (The many McLean Commendators/Bishops come close.) **Campbells were double that of the entitled Clan Donald but in half the period (ie, 4 times more).**

(\*\* Episcopacy (1610) was abolished 1688 in Scotland; ‘restored’ 1847 – A. Ewing, Bishop Of Argyll and the Isles).

<sup>1</sup> “It is probable that one or other of these noblemen destroyed the Register of the diocese, through fear of being called upon, at some future time, **to disgorge what they had no right in conscience to call their own.**” (CJ Lyon on St Andrews and Duke of Lennox.)

c.1660; hardly acquired the property at anything like “fair market value” (“Fell into the hands of” Macleans for nothing, *Act of Convention of Estates*, 1561-74, then Campbells for ‘nixt’ c.1700 [fraction of face value], by purchasing Maclean debt, then by force); and then let it all slide into further ruination.

Finally, under community and institutional pressure, another “*loud call*” by the SoA (Vol 4; p.151), the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke eventually did some extra necessary stabilising, 1874 (two decades after the first bit). Obviously then, some parts of the buildings remained unstable, that is, a foreseeable hazard for the increasing heavy tourist traffic (*romanticism*) and with the emerging tort of negligence, the Duke also likely received some good advice from his lawyers and accountants :- on *Occupiers’ Liability*, grounded in the recent 1867 decision of *Indermaur -V- Dames*. Then, twenty five years later, in 1899, with very little else done, at deaths door and under additional pressure of some obvious spousal pleading, he penned a Trust Deed and handed it back to *the church* (establishment) to let them restore it at their own and public expense - what was, in a common sense (*to be sincere*), originally and rightfully *theirs* in the first place [Knox’s *First Book of Discipline!*]. Even if this is not a valid observation of each and all of the elements in their absolute entirety, it is a substantially correct and legitimate overall thematic analysis. There is no benefit in a situation like this for niceties, to be wishy washy or so-called politically correct, as the point will be missed, the ‘misinformation’ uncorrected - nothing will change. Even if I have been unintentionally wrong in some area and/or too unsympathetic, it can clearly be seen that it is simply not true that the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Argyll had a positive vision for the medieval Abbey of what he disdainfully denoted as being the “**dull and often the corrupt monotony of medieval Romanism**”. **And its actual rebuilding, as you see it today, was decidedly not largely due to him. He was ‘forced’ to stabilise sections of it – he only reluctantly started a long process. Settling the access dispute was a reaction, not ‘a vision’.**

Some of the differences pointed out may seem fine distinctions, but indeed they are not, for the detrimental ramifications for Clan Donald are demonstrable. But no one knew, or cared or could do anything about it in the past. It is only necessary to explain all of this above in such fernickety detail because otherwise it is virtually impossible for most to understand why Clan Donald’s central role in the existence of Iona Abbey has been so underplayed and undocumented. And also, to a lesser degree, that of the Iona Community in its restoration, which is a bit harder to be ignorant about because they have



been actually living there for a century.

I make no apology for strenuously seeking and demanding a true history of Clan Donald's primary role in medieval Iona. Historical facts should not be concealed on the presumption of needing to shield or be flattering to local identities, no matter what their esteemed, favoured standing might be. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century – not the 16<sup>th</sup>. Nor are they accountable for what happened in the past.

This is not a vacuous continuation of the “Campbell V McDonald” issue in all its realities, myth and hype. It is not even about attempting to “set the main political record straight”. I have restricted any mention of the Argyll Earls, Dukes to the germane periods in question and what is applicable to Iona, Saddell and associated ecclesiastical and religious matters in the Isles and Argyll, continuing to the relevant Reformation and Civil Wars. If I have gone further (than one exception) it will be because of pertinent ecclesiastical and graveslab connections or applicable reality checks for assimilation, verification and transparency.

I have deliberately avoided mentioning the “Clan Campbell” wherever I can because the issues above involve personal decisions and actions of two past Earls, and them alone. I don't, and no one should, impugn the entire Clan Campbell and all the headship (if that needs to be said at all). I'm not laying this at the feet of every Campbell clansmen who ever lived. And neither am I running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. All, or most, clans have some episodes which they'd rather forget concerning a particular past Chief, or two. **And it must be widely and loudly acknowledged that many Campbell clansmen and women have made significant, valuable contributions towards Iona's rebirth from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century's Iona Club, The Cathedral Trust, the Iona Community and other varied and important ways right to the present.**

And it must be said, Clan Donald was not inherently saintly – it wasn't eternal “*joy with them.*” Some of its Lord's miscalculated strategic decisions, predisposed by their unusual regional situation, diverse ancestral history and self-preserving historic ties to England, were a factor in its eventual downfall. [*“The mate of monarchs, and allied on equal terms with England's pride.” “Your Lordship (Henry VIII) shall consider we have been old enemies to the realm of Scotland...”*]

Its informative to read Clan Campbell's account and view of these times and the “*increasingly wayward*

*Lords of the Isles*”. I'm sure some think Clan Donald got what it deserved. Clan Donald will say they were securing and protecting only what was rightly theirs in the first place (as indeed it was, including Ross) from expansionist crown sympathizers. Clan Donald's “Old Alliance” with England was not all that dissimilar to Scotland's *Auld Alliance* with Catholic France, even after the Reformation – “*the oldest alliance in the world*” – “*with the eldest daughter of the (Roman) Church*”.

To put things in some context, these were tumultuous, explosively divisive and uncompromisingly brutish times. Like the famous “*roasting of the Abbot*” of Croraguel by the Earl of Cassilis, 1570, to sign over the Abbey titles. I can imagine a sarcastic taunt by Kennedy, the “King of Carrick”, saying he was just genially providing Abbot Stewart with a little acclimatisation for Purgatory – see Epilogue. He disposed of every shred of the Abbey's property (MacGibbon).<sup>1</sup>

This chapter of the book is simply about explaining in a transparent manner, a fuller history of Iona Abbey from 1493 by more of the known facts and dispersing the political smoke clouding the issue. The fire has gone out, but it continues to glow brightly, and warmly, in this locality. Winston Churchill : “*History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.*” Some localised heat may possibly be regenerated. Churchill also said :- “*Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.*”

The 8<sup>th</sup> Duke said he listened to what Tennyson called “*the two voices - a disposition to accept all received opinions with great reserve*”. (Memoirs; I; p.167). A sit-down service for Clan Donald and Clan Campbell in Iona Abbey Church is something I have always thought would be cathartic. Maybe in 2013, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Iona Community. Or better still, 2014, the 700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bannockburn where we fought side by side for the freedom of Scotland with Angus Og's mother being the daughter of *Sir Colin Campbell* of Lochow. And, the mother of the very last Clan Donald Lord of The Isles, Donald Dhu, was the daughter of the Earl of Argyll (there are more examples). The two clans are on very good terms today, all around the globe, and it could be organised. If there is any place in the world where goodwill can be experienced it is on sacred *Icolmkill*, especially with the Iona Community and their “*quiet peacemaking in our neighbourhoods and families*”.

<sup>1</sup> Part of this Abbey happens to be one of the demolitions, *casting down*, executed by Archibald Campbell, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Argyll, after the 1561 Act of suppression.

**SUMMARY:- 1897 photo** (9 or 15 June?); author's attribution. This is the large congregation for the commemorative services in Gaelic and English of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Columba's death. The buildings are mainly stable but as can be clearly seen, it is **still an entirely unrestored, roofless church and abbey** (had a temporary choir roof). Note the central tower's facing west arch to the nave with its 17<sup>th</sup> c stone infill taken from the nave walls (Charles 1, 1635).



**Also in 1897** : MacGibbon, *Eccles' al Arch. Of Scot.*, said: "Iona **Cathedral**...the ancient buildings have been put in a good state of preservation by the present Duke (1874-6)." From all accounts, records and photos it is clear that this relatively minor work over a short period, although a basic prerequisite, is all that the Duke did over 50 years – and through 'pressure'. There was very little rebuilding – no 'proper restoration' or re-roofing of the cathedral or other abbey buildings. RCAHMS; VOL 4; p.57:- describes "***The Church and monastic buildings as enlarged in the 15<sup>th</sup> century*** (2<sup>nd</sup> half of; p.65) **and restored in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**". **It took an extra 8 years to totally rebuild and fully restore the church (1902-10); 23 years more to rebuild and restore the other abbey buildings (1938-61).** July 1905 was the first service in the restored choir and transepts. The nave, in front centre, restored by **1910** (inaugural service held on 26 June 1910; chapter house and library above it by 1940; East range (living quarters) and Abbots House by 1956; Cloisters by 1959; Michael Chapel by **1961** and West range and kitchen (all buildings) by 1965. ]

A request from the Catholics to attend on 9 June 1897 was refused. Six days later, over 600 pilgrims arrived by steamer for a high mass in the cathedral ruins. To the Duke's credit (and Ina's), the 1899 Trust Deed enforced the (c.1868-) tolerance of segregated Catholic and Anglican congregations on Iona against local Presbyterian opposition. Imposed, refereed, unequal access to a location, which was also segregated, is not embryonic ecumenism or anything resembling a nascent, 40 year later, Iona Community. The 8<sup>th</sup> Duke would have attended the 9 June Church of Scotland congregation for such a significant event because the only (religious) aspect of Iona that impressed him was "*the real period of Iona's glory*" and "*the life of one man (St Columba)...etc.*" [NB: The established Church of Scotland (orientation Calvinist) traces its origins beyond the Reformation and sees itself in continuity with the church established by St. Ninian, **St. Columba**, St. Kentigern and other Celtic saints. The Scottish Episcopal Church ('Anglican') claims the same continuity. NB: The Celtic church, though it was organically dissimilar, didn't dispute Papal authority. It was cut off when Romans left c.400 and developed some "operational" differences.]

He had a negativity towards the existing medieval abbey and particularly what he regarded it had, and for some 400 years, still stood for – '*the corrupt monotony of medieval Romanism*' (and of its inherent "*Hebridean MacDonaldism*"?) He is wholly entitled to this opinion, but equally, and as a corollary that influenced his relatively minor and enforced action on the Abbey, he should not have plaudits heaped on him (by others) as its **principal saviour**, especially at the expense of the real instigators of Gregory, Skene, Drummond, Bishop Ewing, his wife Ina, then Sir David Russell, Sir James Lithgow, the Rev. Dr. Donald McLeod, the general public's generosity and the Rev. George McLeod's truly ecumenical Iona Community (with their pure selflessness; sheer back breaking work). **This is not a criticism of the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke.** Its a statement on other's '*hagiographic gloss*' on him; and their thinness of cause and affect.

[Coda: Its very possible that the 9, 10, 11<sup>th</sup> Dukes of Argyll (who were not attached in any meaningful way with Iona Abbey) were somewhat uncomfortable at do-gooders trying to pin a rather inflated *St John* (Ambulance) *Cross* on them, when all that happened with the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke was that he was obligated, under pressure, to *stabilise the victim*, who was *bashed and robbed* by an extremely youthful Argyll Earl with a later accomplice (two past ancestors), and he duly had good *bandages and splints* applied (and allowed an *any-brand minister* to attend). After being haranged again, he returned the "received goods," still badly damaged and without due reparation from the liable dynasty's coffers. If I am judged to be too harsh, please read the Anglican, "middle way" *History Of St Andrews, etc*; VOL I ; pps 330-343.<sup>1</sup> ]  
<http://www.archive.org/details/historyofstandre01lyon>

<sup>1</sup> For example : "*At St Andrews, Knox met by appointment with the Prior of the Augustinian monastery, the well known Lord James Stewart, and with Archibald the fifth Earl of Argyll. But I must pause here a moment to make a few remarks on these the two most influential of the lay Reformer's of Scotland, the first of whom was, at this time, only twenty-six years old, and the latter no more than eighteen ; both, it must be confessed, far too young and inexperienced, and as the event proved, too greedy ..... to conduct so momentous a work as the Reformation of the Christian Church*". **NOTE** : this 1843 book is addressed to the *Reformed Catholic Church* in Scotland (ie, Anglican: *ecclesia Anglicana*, 1246 ; non Papal; "middle way"; "Protestant Episcopal Church") - by Rev. CJ Lyon, MA. "formerly of Trinity College, Cambridge, and now Presbyterian of the Episcopal Church, St Andrews".