

Part of Historic Environment Scotland



CANMORE

NATIONAL RECORD OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



Archaeology InSites



[Return to Archaeology InSites](#)

St Margaret's Chapel - Edinburgh Castle





Private prayer

Among the hustle and bustle of Edinburgh Castle on a busy day, St Margaret's Chapel is a place where you can almost imagine the contemplative prayers made by the Scottish Royal Family in times gone by. Margaret was a member of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Family, and lived as a young girl at the court of Edward the Confessor. She fled to Scotland in 1066 after the Norman Conquest and in 1070 became the second wife of King Malcolm III. Histories record Margaret as a pious woman who is reputed to have performed many acts of charity and in 1250, some 157 years after her death, she was canonised by Pope Innocent IV and her remains were transferred to a shrine chapel at Dunfermline Abbey.

In early 2016 Kirkdale Archaeology undertook a survey of the chapel which brought to light new information about the construction of the building, and clarified the extent to which its later reuse and restoration altered the appearance of the structure. The chapel was converted for use as a gunpowder store in the 17th century while the late-medieval chapel that adjoined its east end continued as the garrison's chapel until the late 18th century. This, in turn, was replaced by a new chapel which lasted until the late 19th century before being removed. The chapel's fine Romanesque chancel arch, decorated with a chevron pattern and perhaps dating to the first decade of the 12th century, appears to have been inserted into an earlier building.



The chapel today

Having been thoroughly obscured by later alteration and construction, the chapel was effectively rediscovered by the archaeologist Sir Daniel Wilson in 1845 and thereafter underwent a major restoration. Five stained glass windows by the famous stained glass artist Douglas Strachan were added in 1922, depicting Saints Andrew, Columba, Margaret and Ninian, as well as William Wallace. In 1993, 900 years after St Margaret's death, the chapel was renovated, refurnished and rededicated with the help of St Margaret's Chapel Guild. The Guild, founded in 1942, now ensure there are always fresh flowers at the chapel to welcome its many visitors. The Chapel is still used for religious services that include baptisms and weddings.

Further reading:

Fawcett, R (2002) Scottish Medieval Churches: architecture and furnishings.

RCAHMS (1951) An Inventory of the ancient and historical monuments of the city of Edinburgh, 13-15.

Wilson, D (1887) 'Notice of St Margaret's Chapel, Edinburgh Castle', Proc Soc Antiq Scot 21, 291-316

Dr Rebecca Jones, Head of Archaeology and World Heritage and Dr. Kirsty Owen, Senior Archaeology Manager



<https://canmore.org.uk/site/52091/edinburgh-castle-st-margarets-chapel>
<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48228>



#ArchInSites

Please be aware that this site may be on private land. For more information regarding access please consult the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#)



[Accessibility Policy](#)
[Buying Images](#)
[Cookie Policy](#)
[Legals](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Contact](#)
[MyCanmore](#)
[Sitemap](#)



SUPPORTING
year of young people
bliadhna na h-òigridh
2018



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA