

The Synod of St Giles

5 May 1226



by

A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

On Tuesday, 5th May 1226, [Bishop Andrew de Moravia](#) held a *synod* of the clergy then serving in his diocese of Moray.^a

This Synod was held not long after Andrew's *consecration* as bishop, which took place either during, or soon after, a visit he made to the Holy See, and just after the cathedral of Moray had been moved from Spynie to Elgin.¹

It would seem that, as yet, not enough of the cathedral building had been completed to allow the Synod to be held within it. (Incidentally, this is an argument in favour of the cathedral being a 'new build'; or, that any building that had pre-existed it had either been removed or was too small for the bishop's purposes.) Consequently, Andrew convened the Synod within the parish church of *St Egidii, abbot*, (St Giles), in Elgin.

This Synod was to come to mark one of the most important 'mile-posts' in Bishop Andrew's great master-plan to establish his cathedral on a par with those fabulous examples that he had seen in England and Europe. There is no written record of an agenda for the Synod but we get some indication of the business at hand from certain charter evidence in the Moray 'Registrum'.² It becomes obvious that one of the main agenda items was the approval of Bishop Andrew's plan to expand the cathedral's Chapter.

Firstly, the bishop confirmed the eight prebends which had been created by Bishop Bricius,³ his predecessor. Since Bricius died in 1222, these prebends must have come into existence before that date. Andrew then states that the prebend of *Strathouen* (Stratha'an) and *Urchard* (Glenurquhart), formerly a simple canonry comprised of the *rectory* tithes of these two churches, had been assigned to the Chancellor of the diocese, and that of *Fothervais*, which had been the Chancellor's, was to be *pro tempore* assigned to the bishop himself. This latter was

^a (cover) Etching of the old Parish Church of St Giles at Elgin as it appeared from the west. This building was demolished in 1826 to make way for the 'Greek Edifice.' The etching is originally from - Rhind, W. (1840) *Sketches of the Past and Present State of Moray*, Elgin: George Wilson, facing p. 42. It was reproduced in - Crammond, Wm. (1903) *The Records of Elgin, Volume 1.*, Aberdeen: Printed for the New Spalding Club, facing p. 448.

an important move since it allowed the bishop to sit, albeit as a simple canon, in Chapter.

At the Synod, Andrew started to bring his expansionist plans to fruition. He began by confirming six additional prebends from his own resources.⁴ He also declared that, thanks to the generosity of Walter de Moravia, two more prebends⁵ were to be created bringing the total up to sixteen,⁷ which was on a par with many other European cathedrals. The Synod also ratified that the constitution of the cathedral at Elgin would mirror that of the cathedral at Lincoln and that the prebendaries would have the same 'rights' as those of Lincoln.

Apart from creating these new simple prebends, Andrew appears to have taken note of the arrangements in other cathedrals that he had visited and we find that at the Synod it was agreed, no doubt at the bishop's suggestion, that the Dean should have an assistant - a *Sub-Dean*, as also the Precentor - a *Succentor*, bringing the total number of prebends up to eighteen. Having made a careful note of the Dean's and the Precentor's current prebends, it was agreed that the new 'officials' should be awarded prebends comprised mostly of parts sliced off from their seniors' income. The Sub-Dean received from the Dean's prebend the altarage revenues of *Auldearn* with the toft and croft there (saving a sum to provide for the vicar serving the cure), and the corn teinds of the chaplainry of *Inverairn*; to which was added the parsonage revenues of the church of *Dolays Mychel* (Dallas), saving the bishop's ½-dabhach (of his *mensa*) and the *episcopalibus*.⁸ The Succentor was given the church of *Rafford* from the Precentor's prebend (saving 4 marks p.a. that was still to be paid to the Precentor); to which was added the church of *Fothervais* (from the bishop? The Chancellor had held the lands of Fothervais, not the church, which, I suspect, had always been held by the bishop as part of his barony of *Ardclach*). The Succentor also received a toft and croft assigned by the bishop (presumably just outside the Chanonry walls); and the tithes known as the *predialium de Burgyn* which he received from the abbot and monks of Kinloss (Burgyn = Burgie {NGR: NJ 09_595}). We are also told that the Succentor was to act as 'superior' of the vicars who were in sub-deacon's orders.⁹

On the same day that the Synod was held, Bishop Andrew also enacted a charter¹⁰ gifting certain lands at *Abernethy* to James, son of Morgundi (earl of Mar). The witness list, for obvious reasons, included a number of the individuals who signed the bishop's charter summing up the transactions of the Synod.

This list of the signatories who witness the two charters is of considerable interest. It includes most of the important cathedral officials - with the exception of the Dean, Precentor and Chancellor.

<u>Name.</u>	<u>Title.</u>	<i>Moray Reg., no.69</i>	<i>Moray Reg., no.70</i>
Andrew	Bishop	✓	✓
Thomas	Prior of Urchard		✓
Henry	Dean of Ross ¹¹		✓
Henry	Treasurer of Moray	✓	✓
Hugo	Archdeacon of Moray	✓	
Adam	Sub-dean of Moray	✓	
Lambert	Succentor of Moray	✓	
Robert	Canon of Moray	✓	
William	Canon of Moray	✓	
Symone	Parson of Roscolpyn ¹²		✓
Robert	Dean of Christianty (Inverness)	✓	✓
William	Dean of Christianty (Strathbogie)	✓	✓
Gregorius	Dean of Christianty (Strathspey)	✓	✓

Radulphus	Rector of Elgin ¹³	✓	
Henricus	Parson (of?)	✓	
Nicholaus	Vicar of Rothyn (Ruthven)	✓	
Gillemor	Vicar of Botary	✓	
Douenaldus	Parson of Cromdale	✓	
Alexander	Parson of Darneway	✓	
Radulphus	Vicar of Moy	✓	
Malcolmus	Vicar of Keith	✓	
Symon	Vicar of Dallas	✓	
Radulpho	Bishop's Chaplain		✓
Robert	Vicar of Elgin		✓
An ✓ indicates that the individual signed this charter.			

At first glance, the Chapter seems to be under-represented both in terms of quantity and quality. Only the Treasurer and two canons (and the two new officeholders of Sub-Dean and Succentor) are present - assuming that all present would have signed. Apart from the bishop's own chaplain, there are no other chaplains who are signatories. Others may have been present at the Synod but not required to sign as witnesses - perhaps they were not considered important enough to sign a charter of such significance?

It can be argued, with good cause, that Bishop Andrew was fulfilling the dreams of his predecessor, Bishop Bricius. But this would be to belittle the achievements and aspirations of Andrew himself. During his episcopate Elgin became a serious rival to Glasgow and St Andrews cathedrals and the remaining Scottish diocese started to look tawdry by comparison. Andrew and Bricius had set their sights high by taking

the magnificent Lincoln cathedral as their model. The Synod of St Giles marked a giant leap forwards for the diocese as it attempted to follow the example of both the English and the Continental dioceses. It is to be regretted, most sincerely, that we can not enjoy the utter magnificence of the building today.

References:

1. Andrew is first described as *bishop* rather than *bishop-elect* on 10 April 1224. [Moray Reg., 57. Given at the Lateran, 4 Ides April]
2. Moray Reg., 69, 70.
3. The Chapter as established by Bishop Bricius (at Spynie before 1222) consisted of -
 1. *Strathouen* (Stratha'an) & *Urchart* (Glenurquhart) - a simple canonry
 2. *Fothervais* - the **Chancellor's** prebend
 3. *Dipple & Ruthven* - a simple canonry
 4. *Spynie & Kintrae* - a simple canonry
 5. *Kennedor* (Kineddar) & *Eskyl* (Essil) - the **Treasurer's** prebend
 6. *Eryn* (Auldearn) - the **Dean's** prebend
 7. *Lamnabride* (Lhanbryde) & *Aluays* (Alves) - the **Precentor's** prebend
 8. *Forays* (Forres) & *Logyn Fythenach* (Edinkille) - the **Archdeacon's** prebend

4. added from the Bishop's resources (and confirmed at the Synod of S Giles, 1226)
 9. *Rynyn* (Rhynie) - a simple canonry
 10. *Kynnor* (Kinnoir) & *Dumbannan* - this prebendary was to act as *Sacristan*
 11. *Innerketheny* (Inverkeithny) - a simple canonry
 12. *Elchy* (Elchies) & *Buttharry* (Botary) - a simple canonry
 13. *Moy* - a simple canonry
 14. *Cromdol* (Cromdale) & *Aduyn* (Advie) - a simple canonry

5. added from the gift of Walter de Moravia, lord of Petty (confirmed at the Synod of St Giles, 1226)
 15. *Butruthyn* (Botriphne) & *Abirlouer* (Aberlour) - a simple canonry
 16. *Petyn* (Petty) & *Bracholy* (Brachlie) - a simple canonry

6. new cathedral 'officials' (added at the Synod of St Giles, 1226)
 17. *Dallas*, altarage of *Auldearn*, chapel of *Invernairn* - Sub-Dean's prebend
 18. *Rafford & Ardclach* - Succentor's prebend

7. Moray Reg., 69.
8. Moray Reg., 93.
9. Moray Reg., 93.

10. Moray Reg., 70.
11. Henry was Vicar of Dunballoch in Moray Diocese at the same time that he was Dean of Ross. [O.P.S., vol.2, part 1, 573]
12. Simon, parson of *Roscolpyn*, appears before the Deans of Christianity of Moray and immediately after the two canons of Moray. Roscolpyn is a mystery. It must be a parish church since Simon is styled parson. I can only suggest that he was parson of *Roskeen* in Ross Diocese and was present at the Synod having accompanied Henry, the Dean of Ross.
13. This is difficult because the Rectory of Elgin belonged to the Bishop, the 'cure' being served by the Vicar of Elgin who appears at the end of the list. It may be that this individual had been given the rectory *ad vitam*. He is mentioned as Rector of Elgin in two other charters [Moray Reg., 62, 63] and in the latter he is also styled 'Chaplain'.



e-mail: admin@cushnieent.com

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