

Title	St Mechyll of Anglesey, St Maughold of Man and St Malo of Brittany
Creators	Lewis, Barry James
Date	2014
Citation	Lewis, Barry James (2014) St Mechyll of Anglesey, St Maughold of Man and St Malo of Brittany. <i>Studia Celtica Fennica</i> , 11. pp. 24-38. ISSN 1795-097X
URL	<a href="https://dair.dias.ie/id/eprint/360/">https://dair.dias.ie/id/eprint/360/</a>

# St Mechyll of Anglesey, St Maughold of Man and St Malo of Brittany

Barry Lewis

## Abstract

A late-medieval Welsh poem in honour of the Anglesey saint Mechyll contains features drawn from two other cults, those of the Breton St Malo and the Manx St Maughold. This article surveys the evidence for the interpenetration of these three cults in medieval Man and Anglesey. It describes first the contents of the Welsh poem and the other evidence for the cult of Mechyll. It demonstrates that Mechyll was identified with Malo under his Latin name, Machutus, though the identification itself is unhistorical. The question of the name of Malo-Machutus, the spread of his cult and the hagiography associated with him are then surveyed. It is shown that St Maughold of Man was likewise associated with Machutus, and that much the same thing happened at the Scottish church of Lesmahagow, originally dedicated to St Féchín. The place of Maughold in the Lives of St Patrick is then discussed, confirming that Maughold of Man was the saint associated by Muirchú (c.700) with Patrick's adversary Mac Cuill. The final question raised is the name of Maughold himself. Though it is unlikely that Maughold and Mechyll were really the same historical individual, the possibility is acknowledged.

In Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Manuscript Llanstephan 125 there is preserved the only surviving copy of a Welsh poem in honour of St Mechyll.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is the work of Wiliam Bodwrda, who was a noted collector of Welsh poetry, and an amanuensis of his, and it was written in 1644 x 1648.<sup>2</sup> The poem, on the other hand, is anonymous and impossible to date with any precision. All we can say is that examples of this type of poem—in *cywydd* metre, and addressed to saints—are not found earlier than the late fourteenth century, and that the patronage which allowed the composition of new ones appears to have dried up with the Reformation of the 1530s and 1540s. On that basis the poem is best described simply as late medieval. It is one of a large number of addresses to

- 
- 1 The poem is on pp. 206–209. A full critical edition will appear in Lewis forthcoming, poem 1.
  - 2 On Bodwrda and his manuscripts, see Ifans 1975–6 and Huws 2004, 30–31, 32. An index to Llanstephan 125 was made in 1648 according to Huws forthcoming, under ‘Llanstephan 125’, hence the manuscript must have been written by then.

saints attributed to Welsh poets of that period, and it shares their common features: it gives the saint's genealogy; it versifies, in brief and allusive terms, some events from the saint's career; it praises the healing miracles available at the saint's cult site; and it concludes with a final prayer for the saint's intercession. The copyist left room for approximately one more couplet at the end, suggesting either that his exemplar was illegible at this point or that he had some reason for thinking that it was incomplete. He may well have been correct in this judgement, yet the poem is clearly drawing to a close in lines 83–84, the last ones preserved, so that it is unlikely that more than a single couplet has been lost from the end. If the exemplar was deficient in some way, that would also explain the lack of a named author, for in Welsh manuscripts it was the custom to place the attribution beneath the text.

The following four lines from near the end of the poem (lines 77–80) are the starting point for this article:

*I'r côr pan droist o'r moroedd  
Ym Manaw deg (maendy oedd),  
O'th orau gwyrth i'th aur gob  
Y'th wisgwyd yn ddoeth esgob.*

When you came from the seas to the chancel  
In fair Man (it was a house of stone),  
Because of your supreme virtue, in your gold cope  
You were invested as a wise bishop.<sup>3</sup>

This is an identification of St Mechyll with St Maughold of Kirk Maughold in the Isle of Man. No other source equates these two saints, yet the equation is merely a part of a complex series of hagiographical links which extend beyond the Irish Sea as far as St-Malo in Brittany. It is to an exploration of these links that the rest of this article will be devoted.

### The cult of St Mechyll

Only one church is dedicated to St Mechyll, namely the parish church of Llanfechell, which lies in the far north of Anglesey within the medieval commote of Talybolion.<sup>4</sup> The present church has a probably twelfth-century romanesque nave and chancel, extended in the following century, while the tower is later but may have had a predecessor (Haslam et al. 2009, 174). The scale of the twelfth-

---

3 The edited text and translation are taken from Lewis forthcoming, poem 1. The manuscript orthography is as follows: *ir cor pan droist or moroedd / Y manaw deg mayn dy oedd / oth orav gwyrth ith avr gob / ith wisgwyd yn ddoeth escob.*

4 The Ordnance Survey Grid reference is SH 369 913.

century structure indicates that it was then a place of some significance. Other features likewise hint that Llanfechell was originally more than a simple parish church. It is surrounded by a nucleated village, an unusual feature for the region, where dispersed settlement is the norm. Carr suggests that it reflects the type of landowning known in Welsh as *tir corddlan* and associated with early medieval mother churches (1982, 32–33). Most significantly, late medieval records reveal that the tenants of the township of Llanfechell held their land of the saint (Wiliam 2009, 59)—in other words, they were tenants of the church, an arrangement that strongly suggests the former existence of a religious community maintained by their rents. Llanfechell also possessed the dependent chapel of Llanddygfael. Such features have led other scholars to the conclusion that Llanfechell was an early medieval foundation served by a community of clerics, an opinion which I share (Carr 1982, 32–33, 275; Haslam et al. 2009, 174; Davidson 2009, 55).

Llanfechell is first named in a survey of 1254, where it appears as *Lanwechil* (Richards 1966, 169). From then on the name is quite frequently recorded, and until the end of the fifteenth century the spellings are almost unanimous in showing that the vowel of the final syllable was *y* rather than the *e* which is established today. Only from around the 1490s did the form *Llanfechell* largely supersede the earlier *Llanfechyll*. The change is explained by Richards on the grounds that *-ell* was a commoner suffix in Welsh than *-yll*; in other words, the change occurred by analogy with such names as *Cadell* (1966, 170). Attested spellings of the saint's name outside of the place-name confirm that *Mechyll* is the older form. It is the form found in the poem under discussion here, and likewise in medieval copies of *Bonedd y Saint*, the genealogies of the Welsh saints.<sup>5</sup> The etymology of the name is transparent: it consists of *mach* 'surety' + diminutive suffix *-yll* (Richards 1966, 168–169). *Mach* occurs in other personal names such as *Machno*, *Machraith*, *Mechydd* and, as we shall see, in *Malo*. The change *a* > *e* in the stem vowel was triggered by vowel affection from the *y*- of the suffix, as is found also in *Mechydd*.

The genealogies and the poem reveal a little more of the Welsh cult of Mechyll. The saint was assigned an obscure pedigree as the son of Echwys son of Gwyn Gohoyw (Bartrum 1966, 49). An extended version, which takes him back to the legendary Beli Mawr ap Mynogan, king of Britain, is found in one sixteenth-century manuscript and also in the poem.<sup>6</sup> The poem also contains two miracle stories pertaining to Llanfechell. In lines 43–44 the saint turns thieves into stones, a story probably connected with a group of three standing stones within Llanfechell

5 Cardiff, City Library Manuscript 3.242, 112 (c.1400) and Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Manuscript Peniarth 27, 69 (later fifteenth century) both have *mechyll*, while Cardiff, City Library Manuscript 1.363, f. 212<sup>r</sup> (first half of the fourteenth century) has *mechyl*.

6 Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Manuscript Peniarth 128, 66; cf. lines 1–8 of the poem.

parish.<sup>7</sup> In lines 45–58 we have the foundation legend of Llanfechell. The saint has an angry confrontation with King Maelgwn of Gwynedd, whose men and dogs are hunting nearby. Both men and dogs are struck dead, while the king himself is blinded. His sight is only restored when he agrees to cede the spot to St Mechyll. The boundaries of the saint's land are then determined by the course of a hare as it runs before the hounds (who, presumably, were resurrected for the purpose). This story is of a familiar kind, and versions of it were told about the other two major churches of northern Anglesey, Holyhead and Llanellian (Henken 1991, 87–88; Lewis forthcoming, poem 2).

That concludes the account of those elements in the cult of St Mechyll that can confidently be assigned to local tradition in north Anglesey. He was a saint with a well-defined local cult and an etymologically transparent Welsh name. Notwithstanding this, the influence and prestige of the more famous cult of Malo of St-Malo led to the identification of Mechyll with Malo and the incorporation into his cult of elements belonging to the Breton saint. The creation of this composite figure will be the subject of the next section.

### St Mechyll and St Malo

In Latin documents, as opposed to vernacular ones, the saint of Llanfechell is regularly called *Machutus*. This first occurs in the Extent of Anglesey of 1352, where the township of Llanfechell is described as being held *de S[an]c[t]o Machuto* (Richards 1966, 170). It was still current on the eve of the Reformation: in a deed of 1535 one Huw ap Rhys appears as a free tenant of *Sanctus Machutus* (Wiliam 2009, 59–60). The form cannot be etymologically related to the vernacular *Mechyll*, for though the names are superficially similar, there is no common origin between the *ut-* element in the Latin name and the Welsh *yll*. The correctness of the vernacular name is supported by a great deal of documentation, as we have seen, and so *Machutus* must be a learned substitution—a name taken over from a more famous and more widespread cult.<sup>8</sup> *Machutus* is in fact the common Latin form of the name of the patron saint of St-Malo in Brittany. The Welsh poem in honour of Mechyll provides abundant evidence that Mechyll was identified with Malo, for much of it relates events that occur in the Lives of the latter. These Lives are the subject of the next section, so it will suffice here simply to list the borrowed elements in the Welsh text. These comprise: the saint being taught by St Brendan (lines 15–16); the saint falls asleep on the seashore and is saved from drowning when the land miraculously rises beneath him (lines 21–28); the saint revives a

---

7 They are at Ordnance Survey Grid reference SH 364 917.

8 Such substitutions were extremely common. To take just one example: a late-medieval Welsh poem in honour of Mechyll's neighbour Elian of Llanellian incorporates traditions drawn from three different saints called Hilary (Lewis forthcoming, poem 2).

pagan giant and baptizes him (lines 37–42); the saint carries hot coals without harm (lines 59–62); a candle is miraculously lit for the saint (lines 63–66). It appears that St Mechyll's feast day, namely 15 November, was also appropriated from St Malo (Baring-Gould and Fisher 1907–13, III, 432–433).

When, then, did this identification take place? Certainly by 1352, for we see it in the record in the Extent of Anglesey of that year. Most likely it goes back significantly earlier. By 1352 Llanfechell was no more than a parish church yet, as suggested above, it bears signs that it formerly housed a community of clergy. Such a community would have had a corporate identity linked to their patron saint, and they could be expected to compose (and augment) his biography. Indeed, the author of the late medieval poem hints that he had access to a written source (lines 81–82):

*Ystyrio 'n llwyr d'ystoria  
A dynn gwŷr o dân ac iâ.*

Thoroughly meditating upon your [Mechyll's] Life  
Will bring men from fire and ice [i.e. damnation].

*Ystoria* is a derivative of Latin *historia*. Roberts has shown that in Welsh the loanword consistently refers to written texts (1974–6). For this reason it is translated here as 'Life', with a capital *L*. The complexity of the hagiographical traditions in the poem and their close consistency with the extant Malo materials strongly support the idea that the poet was drawing on a written source, in fact on this very *ystoria*. But what was it: a Life of St Malo which the poet himself was plundering on behalf of St Mechyll, or a Life of Mechyll which had already absorbed the Malo traditions? The latter is much more likely: late medieval Welsh poets are not known to have engaged in the manipulation of complex Latin hagiographical sources, and in any case the 1352 record indicates that the creation of the composite saint was the work of churchmen of previous generations. I suggest that the *ystoria* was an existing Life of Mechyll into which the Malo traditions had already been incorporated. It may well have been a document of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, though that cannot be demonstrated.

By at least the later Middle Ages, then, and probably sooner, Mechyll-Machutus had acquired a thoroughly composite character. This, however, was simply one episode in the long and convoluted history of the cult of Malo-Machutus, to which I turn next.

## St Malo-Machutus

The saint of St-Malo features in a substantial body of hagiography, beginning probably with a Life composed c.870 by Bili, a deacon of the saint's church, and two anonymous Lives dating shortly after that (Poulin 2009, 142–198). Malo's cult spread far beyond Brittany. The Lives themselves relate that he retired to Saintes in Aquitaine in later life. By the tenth century his feast had become established in Anglo-Saxon England, and it was recognized in the calendars of Sarum, York and Hereford (Yerkes 1984, xl; Farmer 1978, 259). Those episodes in the Welsh poem which derive from the Malo dossier are common to all of Malo's early Lives, except for the miracles of the hot coals and the candle: these are lacking in Bili, but are found in the anonymous Lives (*Vita anonyma longior S. Machutis*, 301–302; Poulin 2009, 176). Whatever the route by which this material found its way into the poem, then, the ultimate source was this late ninth-century hagiography from Brittany.

The name of St Malo or Machutus is a complex matter. It is generally agreed that the saint's full name was *Machlow* (< *maccu-lowe*, with the same first element as *Mechyll*) (see Loth 1909, 140–141), from which the modern French *Malo* derives. It appears in a few places in the dossier of texts attributed to Bili: lightly Latinized as *Machloüs* (Bili, 345), in the vocative as *Machlouue* (ibid. 379), and undeclined as *Machlou* (ibid. 347), *Mahlou* (ibid. 360). However, apart from these isolated examples the Bili texts regularly employ *Machu* in the nominative case and *Machutem*, *Machutis*, *Machuti*, *Machute* in the oblique cases, following the Latin third declension. How *Machu* relates to *Machlow* is unclear unless it is some kind of hypocorism. The declined forms have been discussed by Harvey who suggests that Bili derived his oblique stem *Machut-* from the 'obviously hypocoristic form "*Machutu*"' (1999, 58–59). This may not be correct, however, since there is no evidence that the hypocorism *Machutu* or *Mochutu* was used for Malo. It belongs properly to St Carthach of Lismore in Ireland (Ó Riain 2011, 470–473). Bili, moreover, uses *Machu* as the nominative and never *Machutu*. It might be easier simply to assume that he started from *Machu* and modelled the stem in *Machut-* on such Latin words as *salus* (genitive *salutis*) and *virtus* (genitive *virtutis*). There is one instance of nominative *Machut* (Bili, 403) which may be an error. The shorter anonymous Life retains the *Machut-* forms and coins a new nominative singular on their basis, namely *Machutes* (*Vita anonyma brevior S. Machutis*, 267–293). This is what we find in the longer anonymous Life as well (*Vita anonyma longior S. Machutis*, 294–329).

Though Bili's immediate successors accepted his third declension forms, there are a very few instances in Bili's text where the name is declined according to the second declension. Such are genitive singular *Machuti* (Bili, 383) and nominative *Machutus* (ibid. 353 and 386, but with variant reading *Machu* in 353). The source is

presumably Bili's third-declension *Machut*- forms with substitution of the endings of the more common declension. It must, of course, be borne in mind that we do not possess an autograph copy of Bili, and that the editions which we have to use are old and unsatisfactory. We cannot therefore be certain whether the second-declension forms are Bili's or whether they entered the manuscript tradition later. What is clear is that in later usage the second-declension form *Machutus* became the norm. For instance, in 1144 a charter of David I of Scotland for Lesmahagow church in Lanarkshire names the saint as *sanctus Machutus* (Watson 1926, 196; Barrow 1999, 129). The late-medieval records from Llanfechell likewise treat the name as belonging to the second declension, and this seems to have been usual in high and late-medieval liturgical use, see, e.g., *Sarum Missal*, 346. To trace the occurrences of *Machutus*, given the widespread nature of Malo's cult, would be a mammoth task, and it is sufficient for our purposes to note that it was in use in Scotland in 1144 and is found in the Oxford manuscript of Bili, also probably of the twelfth century (Bili, 353; Poulin 2009, 151; Yerkes 1984, 2). It is found even earlier in the rubric of the Old English translation of Bili's Life (Yerkes 1984, xxv, xli; early eleventh century). It also occurs in the mid-twelfth-century Book of Llandaf in the name of the church of St Maughans, Monmouthshire (*Book of Llandaf*, 320).

The widespread nature of Malo's cult leaves, therefore, no difficulty in accepting that the name *Machutus* would have been well-known in Anglesey in the high and late Middle Ages. The identification of Mechyll with him would have been a natural one, the more so as Malo's Lives all state that he was Welsh by birth, and the saint possessed churches in south Wales (Baring-Gould and Fisher 1907–13, III, 433). It is worth noting that the same must have happened at the Scottish church of Lesmahagow (see Watson 1927, 196–197), where it is shown that the name cannot contain *Machutus* or *Mochutu* or anything like them but probably derives from St Féchín of Fore, Westmeath.

### St Maughold of Kirk Maughold

Thus far we have seen that Mechyll was a composite of two saints. The late-medieval Welsh poem in his honour, however, shows that a third figure had been drawn into the cult. This was the Manx saint Maughold. No Life of Maughold survives, unfortunately, but the two key facts presented in the Welsh poem – that the saint arrived in Man from overseas and was there invested as bishop – are found in documents associated with the cult of St Patrick from the late seventh century onwards. The first of these is the Life of St Patrick by Muirchú Moccu Macthéni, which is dated *c.* 700. It contains a lengthy episode in which the saint confronts one Mac Cuill (Muirchú 102–107). Mac Cuill is a member of the Greccraige dynasty who lives among the Ulaid. He is a pagan bandit who attacks passers-by, and his

base is at Druim moccu Echach. He and his men attempt to trick St Patrick by pretending that one of their number is mortally ill. Patrick, however, sees through their subterfuge, and the ‘sick’ man is then found to be dead in truth. Horrified, Mac Cuill confesses his crime and promises to accept Patrick’s faith. Patrick baptizes him and then imposes a harsh penance on him. Mac Cuill is to go down to the seashore, taking no possession with him except a single garment to wear, and not eating or drinking any product of Ireland. He is to bind his ankles in an iron chain and throw the key into the sea. Then he is to get into a small boat made of a single hide, without rudder or oars, and to sail away. Wherever he lands, he is to live a holy life in that place. Mac Cuill agrees to do all this. His dead follower is then resurrected. Mac Cuill goes down to the sea south of Mag Inis and fulfils all of Patrick’s instructions. The wind takes him southwards to an island called *Euonia*, and there he encounters two holy men, Conindrus and Rumilus, the first missionaries who brought Christianity to *Euonia* and converted the islanders to the faith. These men receive Mac Cuill and treat him honourably. He lives as their disciple until, eventually, he succeeds them in the bishopric (at this point they are specifically described as bishops). The chapter concludes with the following crucial phrase, cited here with Ludwig Bieler’s translation (Muirchú 106–107):

*Hic est Maccuill di Mane episcopus et antestes Arddae Huimonn.*

This is Macc Cuill, bishop of Mane and prelate of Arde Huimonn.

This episode recurs in later Lives of St Patrick, whose accounts are adaptations of Muirchú’s.<sup>9</sup> The historicity of Muirchú’s story about Mac Cuill is impossible to determine, as is so often the case in retrospective hagiography of this kind. However, the existence of this account carries some quite clear implications. Unless *Maccuill di Mane episcopus et antestes Arddae Huimonn* was a figure who meant something to Muirchú’s intended audience, the episode would be both meaningless and absurd. It is not, therefore, credible that Muirchú invented him

<sup>9</sup> The so-called *Vita Quarta* calls the island *Iuonia*, while Muirchú’s final sentence is adapted into *Hic est de Mana episcopus et clarus antistes*, omitting the name *Arddae Huimonn* (*Vita Secunda* and *Vita Quarta S. Patricii*, 108–109). The *Vita Tertia* names the protagonist as *Magail* (v.l. *Maguil*) and the island *Mana* (*Vita Tertia S. Patricii*, 169–172). The last sentence here is particularly interesting: ... *et in illis regionibus habetur magna ciuitas Magail* (v.l. *Maguil*) *sancti episcopi usque hodie*, translated as ‘... and in those regions the great city of the holy bishop Magail/Maguil remains to the present day’, a statement not made explicitly in other versions. The Life attributed to Probus offers *Hic est Macfil episcopus clarus ac sanctus postmodum effectus in Euonensium ciuitate* (Probus, 208–209). Finally, the Irish-language *Tripartite Life of Patrick* calls the island *Manaind* (accusative, dative), and concludes: *Is hé in so Macc Cuill di Mana, epi[s]copus et antistes clarus Arddae Uimnen, cuius nos sufragia adiuuent sancta* (*Vita Tripartita S. Patricii*, 133–134). For the Life by Jocelin of Furness and the Gloucester *Vita Patricii*, see below.

out of nothing. The following seems to me to be the minimal set of assumptions required in order to render Muirchú's account meaningful. There must have been a prominent saint's cult established on the Isle of Man no later than *c.*700. The name of the saint current at that time was Mac Cuill or something similar enough to inspire the choice of that Gaelic name by Muirchú. The cult was supported by a major church, called Aird Uimninn.<sup>10</sup> This church had bishops. It had a historical memory extending back even further than Mac Cuill to the otherwise unknown Conindrus and Rumilus. It claimed to have played a leading role in the conversion of Man. So where was *Aird Uimninn*? The search for a major church site in the Isle of Man, in existence by *c.*700, having a patron saint with a name rather like Mac Cuill, and located on or near a peak or headland (*aird*), leads us inevitably to Maughold. This view has been set out in Broderick 1980–1 and 1999, 23–25. The *aird* would most naturally be Maughold Head, and Broderick notes that *Ard/Ards* is still found as the name of a piece of land in Kirk Maughold. The second element he interprets as a scribal misreading of *Manann*, though it might also be related to the form *Emain* that occurs in Irish-language texts for the Isle of Man (Muhr 1994, 40). Whether this is accepted or not, the case for Maughold is overwhelming.

Regrettably, this straightforward interpretation of Muirchú's account has not been accepted by all, and this has led to a certain amount of confusion in the secondary literature. In particular, Basil Megaw denied that the Mac Cuill episode had anything to do with Maughold or the Isle of Man, insisting that Jocelin of Furness was the first to make this identification in his *Life of St Patrick* of *c.*1188 (Megaw 1950, 175–176). This is true only in the very limited sense that Jocelin's account is the first one that makes the connection in an absolutely explicit way which we can be sure that we understand.<sup>11</sup> However, Megaw's scepticism is misplaced. He is wrong to state that Muirchú does not mention Man. Muirchú does name Man, both in the Old Irish form *Maccuill di Mane* and in the Latin *Euonia*.<sup>12</sup> Given that fact, he can hardly be talking about any other cult on the island known to us. The only problem is that the place-name Aird Uimninn has dropped out of use. Broderick, however, has presented a strong case for the retention of the first part of the name as Ards in Kirk Maughold.

A fair-minded reading of Muirchú leaves little doubt that Kirk Maughold and its patron saint were the inspiration behind *Maccuill di Mane episcopus et antistes Arddae Huiminn*. That is not to say, of course, that the Patrician figure Mac Cuill

10 The form *arddae* in Muirchú's text is a genitive singular of *aird*.

11 Jocelin states that *Magiul* was also called *Machaldus*, that *Eubonia* is also called *Mannia*, and that Machaldus's settlement in Man is named after him (Jocelin of Furness, 567–568).

12 *Mane* can be taken as a regular short dative of an *n*-stem, see Thurneysen 1946, 209–213. Muhr attempts to explain it as a corruption of *mare* (1996, 40), but this is not necessary. On *Euonia* as a name for Man see *ibid.* 38–41.

and the saint of Kirk Maughold were one and the same in fact, nor even that the Patrician story and identification of the saint of Maughold with Mac Cuill of the Greccraige was current in Man at the time. Megaw's scepticism was driven by his disbelief in the historical identity of Mac Cuill and Maughold. We can share that scepticism without, however, resorting to convoluted interpretations of Muirchú's words. O'Rahilly believed that Mac Cuill was originally a pagan deity (1946, 66, 471). He derived the name from *coll = goll* 'one-eyed', an interpretation supported by Muirchú's description of him as *cyclops*. Moreover, a Mac Cuill is mentioned in *Lebor Gabála Érenn* IV, 122–127 as one of the Tuatha Dé Danann and a grandson of the Dagda. So O'Rahilly's suggestion is quite plausible, but if it is true, Muirchú has carefully deprived Mac Cuill of all supernatural associations and made him into no more than a wicked man (*homo ualde impius*). The by-name *cyclops* is explained as deriving from his nature as a tyrant (*saevus tyrannus, ut cyclops nominaretur*).<sup>13</sup> Certainly in his confrontation with Patrick he displays no supernatural powers whatsoever. He is, moreover, attached to a familiar human lineage, the Greccraige. His identification with the saint of *Aird Huimnonn* may be part of this process of euhemerization.

Apart from the hagiographers of Patrick, the chief written evidence for Maughold is found in the *Cronica Regum Manniae et Insularum* f. 38<sup>r-v</sup>. This Latin chronicle was put together c.1257 at Rushen abbey in Man (MacDonald 2007, 37). Under the year 1158 it records a lengthy miracle in which St Maughold appeared to an evildoer, brandishing his pastoral staff (*baculum pastorem*). This staff seems to have been a prized relic of the church at Maughold. Its possession clearly implies that the saint was thought to have been a bishop. The same implication lies behind a statement in the list of bishops of Sodor (i.e. Man and the Isles) attached to the chronicle, f. 50<sup>v</sup>. Here we find mentioned one Bishop Roolwer, the first known bishop in recent times, who lies buried at the church of St Maughold. The Manx Traditional Ballad, datable to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, makes Maughold a successor of Patrick and Germanus as bishop of Man (*Manx Traditional Ballad*, 538–540). It is in fact quite likely that Maughold was the see of the island before the construction of St German's cathedral at Peel (Megaw 1950, 174).

A word may be said here about the theory that St Maughold represents the cult of Mochaoi or Caelán of Nendrum, county Down. Various associations between Mochaoi and Mac Cuill are advanced in Fitzsimons 2003, but the case is unconvincing. It is not intrinsically implausible: certainly Nendrum was a major church in the seventh century, and it is no great distance from the Isle of Man. Yet there is no positive evidence for the theory. No known source makes this

13 On the understanding of *cyclops* in medieval Ireland, see Greene *apud* de Paor 1979, 120–121.

identification. That both Mochaoi and Mac Cuill are associated with south-east Ulster is not significant. They have quite different names and genealogies, and quite different stories were told about them. Both feature in the *Tripartite Life of Patrick*, where they are kept quite separate. Mochaoi is there a swineherd who accepts Christianity and the monastic tonsure at the hands of Patrick (*Vita Tripartita S. Patricii*, 25–26). Fitzsimons attempts to argue that Druim moccu Echach, the lair of Mac Cuill in Muirchú’s account, is really Nendrum, an identification which fails to account for Muirchú’s description of the place *in montosso aspero altoque sedens loco*: Nendrum is on an island in Strangford Lough (Muhr 1996, 108). The supposed genealogical and calendrical connections between Mac Cuill and Mochaoi cited by Fitzsimons are tenuous at best. It is not impossible that Mochaoi of Nendrum was the first saint culted at Maughold, and that he had by Muirchú’s time been displaced by Mac Cuill. In the absence of any evidence for this, however, it should not be accepted.

### St Maughold and St Machutus

By now it should come as no surprise to learn that Maughold too was identified with Malo-Machutus. The Latin *Cronica Regum Manniae et Insularum* regularly calls St Maughold *Sanctus Machutus*. It is the earliest source for this choice of Latin name, which does not appear in the Patrick materials. Within a Gaelic cultural context, it must be regarded as a possibility that the form derives from the hypocoristic *Mochutu*, i.e. St Carthach of Lismore in county Waterford. However, given the widespread nature of the cult of St Malo, the most plausible assumption is that *Machutus* has been taken over from his cult, just as happened at Llanfechell and Lesmahagow.<sup>14</sup> One fairly clear sign of St Maughold’s composite nature is that he had two feast days, 11 August and 15 November (Kneen 1925–8, 273). 15 November is of course the feast of St Malo. In this light, attempts to find an etymological link between the Latin and vernacular names of the saint seem unnecessary.<sup>15</sup> Outside of the Latin sources there is no evidence that the name of the saint of Kirk Maughold contained *ut-*, and plenty of evidence for *-l*. In addition to Machutus, the form *Machaldus* occurs at least once in the *Cronica regum Manniae et Insularum* (f. 39<sup>r</sup>). The modern Manx form is *Maghal* (Broderick 1999, 22). Just as in the case of *Mechyll*, the similarity between the vernacular name and the Latin *Machutus* was a purely superficial one.<sup>16</sup> In the case of Maughold,

14 In the last instance we have to admit that St Carthach might have been the inspiration at Lesmahagow too, but hardly at Llanfechell.

15 Kneen thought that *Machud* was the vernacular form and *Machutus* a regular latinization of it (1925–8, 273), but his source for the form *Machud* was the Irish Martyrology of Donegal under 15 November, which surely refers to St Malo.

16 Broderick sees *Machutus* as derived from misreading *-l* as *-t* (1999, 20–21), implying that the vernacular form had *-l(l)*. This is possible, but the name *Machutus* was so

however, matters are greatly complicated by the fact that we are far from sure what his vernacular name was. This will be the subject of the last section of this article.

### Conclusion: Maughold, Mac Cuill, Maghal, Machaldus, Mechyll

It is a reasonable assumption, based on the existence of Kirk Maughold, that there was a historical individual whom we can call St Maughold, its founder. Yet it is not possible to know what name he used for himself. Since the linguistic situation in the Isle of Man is not clear before the growth of documentation during the late Norse period, we simply do not know whether Maughold was a speaker of Brittonic or Gaelic or both. Nor is his name preserved in early sources. The earliest is the *Mac Cuill* of the Patrick dossier, yet as we have seen, there is no guarantee that Muirchú's identification of Mac Cuill with the Manx saint was correct, and hence no certainty that the saint's name was *Mac Cuill*, as opposed to merely something similar to it.

Later attested forms of the name are also no guide, for Maughold's cult has survived tenaciously through many changes of language and culture from the seventh century down to today. The Latin *Machutus* we have seen to be an importation from Brittany. In Manx he is *Maghal*, a name that would be spelled *Machall* in Gaelic orthography (Broderick 1999, 21). It may be identical with *machall* or *maccall*, a name for plants of the genus *Geum* ('avens' in English).<sup>17</sup> This may lie behind the Latinized form *Machaldus* and the English name *Maughold*; compare such common Latinizations as *Dovenaldus* for *Domnall*.

What, finally, of Mechyll of Anglesey? Given the close and enduring links between Anglesey and Man during the Middle Ages (MacDonald 2007, 101–107), it is quite easy to see how a Welsh author might come to associate Mechyll with Maghal of Man. The association is not evidenced before the late-medieval Welsh poem in honour of St Mechyll. Or is it? There is a brief *Vita Patricii* in a manuscript of c.1200, preserved in Gloucester. The manuscript may well have come from Leominster in the Welsh Marches (Bieler 1971, 348). In it, the Mac Cuill character is called *mechil* (Bieler 1971, 354–355). This is a perfectly acceptable Old Welsh spelling of *Mechyll*, but is it merely a chance scribal corruption or a positive identification of the Patrician character with the Welsh saint, in a manuscript compiled no great distance from Wales? Further work on this neglected Life and manuscript are needed.

The drawing of links between saints with similar-sounding names was one of the most fruitful areas of hagiographical pseudohistory in the Middle Ages. The very complex set of associations I have traced here have their counterparts in many

---

widely known as to render the suggestion unnecessary.

17 DIL s.v. *mac(c)all*; Dwelly 1901–11, 620; cf. Ó Cuív 1986, 160 on the use of plant names in Irish personal names.

other saints' cults. In most cases such associations are clearly false: the saints of Llanfechell, Kirk Maughold and Lesmahagow had originally no connection with the patron of St-Malo, for instance. Yet it is worth at least asking whether any might be historically true. Might Llanfechell in reality have been an offshoot of the more important church of Kirk Maughold, and its saint a reflex of Maghal right from the beginning? In that case, Mechyll could be a lightly Welshified version of the saint's original name, whatever that was. Or, even more intriguingly, if Maughold were indeed a speaker of Brittonic, it is not totally out of the question that Mechyll was his original name, replaced in Gaelic with the similar but etymologically unrelated *Machall*. I do not consider either of these ideas very likely, but the lack of an early recording of St Maughold's name means that they cannot be disproved. Here we have passed far into the realm of speculation, alas, and this is the point at which we should prudently retire.

## Bibliography

### Primary sources

- Bili. *Vita S. Machutis*. Ed. F. Lot, 1907, *Mélanges d'histoire bretonne (VIe–XIe siècle)*. Paris: H. Champion, 340–430.
- Book of Llandaf*. Ed. J.G. Evans and J. Rhys, 1893, *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv* Reproduced from the Gwysaney Manuscript. Oxford: privately published.
- Cronica Regum Manniae et Insularum*. Ed. G. Broderick, 1979, *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum: Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles*, BL Cotton Julius Avii. Douglas: Manx Museum and National Trust.
- Jocelin of Furness. *Vita S. Patricii*. Transl. E.L. Swift 1809, *The Life and Acts of Saint Patrick the Archbishop, Primate and Apostle of Ireland*. Dublin: Hibernia Press. Latin text in *Acta Sanctorum I Martii* 17. Antwerpen 1668.
- Lebor Gabála Éirenn*. Ed. R.A.S. MacAlister, 1941, *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland, Part IV*. Dublin: Irish Texts Society.
- Manx Traditionary Ballad*. Ed. R.L. Thomson 1960–2, 'The Manx Traditionary Ballad'. *Études celtiques* 9, 512–48; 10, 60–87.
- Muirchú moccu Macthéni. *Vita S. Patricii*. Ed. and trans. L. Bieler, 1979, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 62–123.
- Probus. *Vita S. Patricii*. Ed. L. Bieler 1971, *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan's Vita Secunda, Quarta, Tertia, and Quinta*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 191–219.
- Sarum Missal*. Ed. J. Wickham Legg 1916, *The Sarum Missal Edited from Three Early Manuscripts*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Vita anonyma brevior S. Machutis*. Ed. A. de la Borderie 1883, 'Autre vie de saint Malo écrite au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle par un anonyme, suivi par observations sur les diverses vies'. *Bulletin et mémoires de la Société archéologique et historique du département d'Ille-et-Vilaine* 16, 265–312.
- Vita anonyma longior S. Machutis*. Ed. F. Lot 1907, *Mélanges d'histoire bretonne (VIe–XIe siècle)*. Paris: H. Champion, 294–329.

- Vita Secunda and Vita Quarta S. Patricii*. Ed. L. Bieler 1971, Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan's *Vita Secunda*, *Quarta*, *Tertia*, and *Quinta*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 47–114.
- Vita Tertia S. Patricii*. Ed. L. Bieler 1971, Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan's *Vita Secunda*, *Quarta*, *Tertia*, and *Quinta*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 115–190.
- Vita Tripartita S. Patricii*. Ed. K. Mulchrone 1939, Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick, 1: Text and Sources. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy.

### Secondary sources

- Baring-Gould, S. and Fisher, J. 1907–13. *The Lives of the British Saints*. Four vols. London.
- Barrow, G.W.S. 1999. *The Charters of King David I: The Written Acts of David I King of Scots, 1124-53 and of His Son Henry Earl of Northumberland, 1139-52*. Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Bartrum, P. 1966. *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*. Cardiff: University of Wales.
- Bieler, L. 1971. 'Eine Patricksvita in Gloucester'. In J. Autenrieth and F. Brunhölzl (eds.), *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff zum seinem 65. Geburtstag*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 346–363.
- Broderick, G. 1980–1. 'Arddae Huimnonn: A Manx Place-name?'. *Bulletin of the Ulster Place-name Society*, Series 2, volume 3, 13–15.
- Broderick, G. 1999. *Placenames of the Isle of Man*. Volume 4: Sheading of Garff. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Carr, A.D. 1982. *Medieval Anglesey*. Llangefni: Anglesey Antiquarian Society.
- Davidson, A. 2005. 'The Early Medieval Church in North-West Wales'. In N. Edwards (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*. London: Maney, 41–60.
- de Paor, Liam. 1979. 'Saint Mac Creiche of Liscannor'. *Ériu* 30, 93–121.
- Dwelly, E. 1901–11. *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary*. Glasgow: MacDonald Co.
- Farmer, D.H. 1978. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Fitzsimons, Eilis. 2003. 'Maughold of Man'. *Nomina* 26, 15–28.
- Harvey, A. 1999. 'Some Observations on Celtic-Latin Name Formation'. In John Carey, John T. Koch and Pierre-Yves Lambert (eds.), *Ildánach Ildírech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*. Andover and Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 53–62.
- Haslam, R., Orbach, J., Voelcker, A. 2009. *The Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd*. New Haven and London: Yale University.
- Henken, E.R. 1991. *The Welsh Saints: A Study in Patterned Lives*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Huws, D. 2004. *Cynnull y Farddoniaeth*. Aberystwyth: Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymreig a Cheltaidd.
- Huws, D. Forthcoming. *A Repertory of Welsh Manuscripts and Scribes*.
- Ifans, D. 1975–6. 'Wiliam Bodwrda (1593–1660)'. *National Library of Wales Journal* 19, 88–102, 300–310.
- Kneen, J.J. 1925–8. *The Place-Names of the Isle of Man with their Origin and History*. Douglas: Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh.
- Lewis, B.J. Forthcoming in 2014. *Medieval Welsh Poems to Saints and Shrines*. Dublin:

- Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Loth, J. 1909. 'Les noms des saints bretons'. *Revue Celtique* 30.
- MacDonald, R.A. 2007. *Manx Kingship in its Irish Sea Setting 1187–1229: King Rognvaldr and the Crovan Dynasty*. Dublin: Four Courts.
- Megaw, B.R.S. 1950. 'The Monastery of St. Maughold'. *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 5, part 2, 169–80.
- Muhr, K. 1996. *Place-Names of Northern Ireland, 6: County Down IV: North-West Down/Iveagh*. Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast.
- Ó Cuív, B. 1986. 'Aspects of Irish Personal Names'. *Celtica* 18, 151–184.
- O'Rahilly, T.F. 1946. *Early Irish History and Mythology*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Ó Riain, P. 2011. *A Dictionary of Irish Saints*. Dublin: Four Courts.
- Poulin, J.-C. 2009. *L'hagiographie bretonne du Haut Moyen Âge: répertoire raisonné*. Paris: Deutsches Historisches Institut Paris.
- Richards, M. 1966. 'Mechyll, Mechell, Llanfechell'. *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 115, 168–170.
- Roberts, B.F. 1974–6. 'Ystoria'. *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 26, 13–20.
- Thurneysen, R. 1946. *A Grammar of Old Irish*. Translated by D.A. Binchy and O. Bergin. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Watson, W.J. 1926. *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Son.
- Wiliam, D.W. 2009. 'Llanfechell yn yr Oesoedd Canol'. *Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club Transactions*, n.n., 51–69.
- Yerkes, D. 1984. *The Old English Life of Machutus*. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto.