

Bishop Reid of Orkney
(founder of Edinburgh University)

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In 1150 or 1151, King David I founded a Cistercian monastery at Kinloss. The original charter has been lost but the royal endowment was confirmed to Reinerius, the second abbot in 1174 by a bull of Pope Alexander III. Malcolm IV granted a mill on the Altyre burn to the monastery, while William I granted the lands of Burgie and tofts in Inverness, Auldearn, Forres, Elgin and Aberdeen to Kinloss. In 1196 William, sitting at Elgin, granted Strathisla to the monks and later he granted more tofts in Banff, Berwick, Montrose, Perth and Stirling. From Alexander II the monks received confirmation of their lands of Burgie, and from Robert I they received the valuable rights of the salmon fishing on the Findhorn.

Although Kinloss was a well endowed abbey it did not compare in wealth with Melrose, for in 1530 the Abbot of Glenluce was appointed to collect 10 ducats from Melrose and 3 ducats from Kinloss for the needs of the order. Nevertheless, Kinloss was a rich prize for the young man, Robert Reid, who was nominated to be Abbot by his predecessor, Thomas Crystall, some seven years before the latter's death.

Robert Reid was born at Aitkenhead. The locality of this Aitkenhead is not known. There was an Aitkenhead (now Oakenhead) in Moray and another in Lanark. But as Reid's mother's family came from the Cupar/Kirkcaldy district and as he was educated at St. Andrews, it is reasonable to assume that Aitkenhead was in Fife. Robert's father, John, died at Flodden in the blustering rain and evening darkness of the 9th of September 1513. Robert was probably aged about 15 when his mother, Bessie Shanwell, was war widowed.

By 1524 Robert was a Subdean at Elgin and three years later he was an Official. In 1528 he was anointed Abbot of Kinloss by Bishop Gavin Dunbar in Greyfriars, Edinburgh. In 1530 he received the Abbey of Beaulieu and in 1533 he and

Bishop William Stuart of Aberdeen arranged a peace treaty with Henry VIII of England. In 1541 the same pair of peace makers were again satisfactorily negotiating with King Henry.

At Kinloss he built a fire proof library and he had a barge or pleasure boat in which he could sail along the Moray Firth from Findhorn to Beaully. Robert introduced new varieties of fruit trees and a master gardener from France to tend them. This gardener, William Lubias, planted his fruit trees on top of flags so that the tap root could not strike downwards and so reduce the yield. To this day, isolated flags turned up around Kinloss are attributed to Robert Reid's gardener.

On 5th April 1541 King James V was writing a letter to Rome asking that Robert Reid be appointed to the Bishopric of Orkney, which had become vacant on the death of Bishop Maxwell. The concomitant of the appointment was that Robert had to provide a pension of 800 marks to John Stewart, one of the king's many illegitimate sons. James's application to Rome was successful and Abbot Robert was elevated to Bishop. For a while he also remained Abbot of Kinloss but in 1553 he had his nephew, Walter, admitted to that office.

In Orkney, Robert built a handsome tower at the north end of the bishop's palace and he also enlarged the cathedral. Besides restoring the physical fabric of the cathedral, Bishop Robert attempted to reconstruct the administrative fabric by reconstituting the Cathedral Chapter with its canons, chaplains, and choristers. The physical and administrative reorganisations diverted money away from the parishes where unlettered vicars substituted for absent priests.

Kirkwall had been raised to the dignity of a Royal Burgh in 1486 and, simultaneously, St. Magnus Cathedral was given, in perpetuity, to the burgh. Fifty years later, James V confirmed the earlier charter, but within three years of the king's death, Bishop Robert seized the revenues of the Prebendary of St. John, which had been specifically allocated by the charter for the upkeep of the fabric of the cathedral. He also seized other town lands and diverted the money to diocesan but not to pastoral activities.

Despite these typically Renaissance activities there is evidence that Robert Reid believed that reform of the church was necessary. In modern parlance he was a liberal. His motto was *moderate* and the contents of his library at Kinloss indicates that his motto was reflected in his choice of reading. According to Stuart:— “His writings seem to have commended themselves to those of the Reformed who were desirous of some comprehensive scheme which should keep in one communion the members of the Roman and Protestant Churches.”

In addition to his ecclesiastical activities, Robert was a judge in the Court of Session and President of the High Court. In 1555 he was appointed a commissioner to establish new and universal Scottish standard weights and measures. Next year he was in Carlisle negotiating with the English on a border dispute and in 1558 he went to France as one of the Commissioners to arrange the marriage of Mary with the Dauphin. In April 1558 the Commissioners left Dieppe, but a violent storm and an outbreak of sickness compelled the ship to return to port. Three of the nine Commissioners died, some say by poison, and Bishop Reid was among the dead.

In his will he left 8,000 merks for the foundation of a college in Edinburgh. Edinburgh town council petitioned for a university but it was not until 1582 that the privy council allowed the town council's petition and agreed to the use of Reid's bequest. A year later, in the buildings of St. Mary in the Fields, the first students started to study at the institution which was eventually to become the University of Edinburgh.

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Grabbing the Future by the Tail
A Conference of University Teachers of Scandinavian Studies

John Simpson

This conference was the first of its kind for Great Britain and Ireland, and was held in Aberdeen from 23rd to 27th March 1975. Most of the participants were university teachers in Britain and Ireland, but there were also some librarians, and some visiting speakers from Britain and Scandinavia; and we benefitted from the presence of Mr Agerbak from the Danish Embassy, Mr Neumann of the Norwegian Embassy, Dr Zettersten from the Swedish Embassy, and Mrs McNaught of the Danish Institute in Edinburgh.

Like many conferences, this one provided a splendid chance to see old friends and meet new ones. Unlike some conferences, it also had a clear and worthwhile purpose. There was general enthusiasm for furthering Scandinavian studies. Just as important in financial hard times, there was a mood of solidarity about defending the achievements that have been made. We hadn't forgotten that a member of the last Conservative government, for reasons that were perhaps not wholly academic, singled out Swedish as the sort of minority subject that ought not to expect too many more crumbs from the UGC cake.

The conference began with an account, from Professor Duncan Mennie, of the development of Scandinavian studies in