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## **Ludovic McLellan Mann and the Cambusnethan Bog Body**

Stephen Mullen

**Abstract** This article considers the circumstances, aftermath and legacy of the discovery of a bog body near Cambusnethan in North Lanarkshire in 1932. The body of a man and a unique jacket were assessed by Ludovic McLellan Mann soon thereafter and removed to Glasgow Museums where they remain today. The body was popularly perceived as a Scottish Covenanter although there is no scientific or historical evidence of this, and Mann himself was vague. In an attempt to provide some clarity, this article traces the interplay between archaeological and historical evidence, as well as contemporary popular memory around the find. There is an enduring belief the body was a Covenanter, exemplified by a cairn in Greenhead Moss Community Nature Park in Lanarkshire which has displayed the story since 1997. Versions have provided the basis for repatriation claims in the last 25 years and have even been recounted in the Scottish Parliament. Thus, Mann's archaeological practice continues to shape opinion today although in this case his work was exemplary. Whilst the 'Covenanter in the bog' was not Mann's myth, this article reveals how the story evolved and why it remains in the popular consciousness across Scotland.

**Keywords – Bog body, Scottish Covenanters, museums, memorialisation, repatriation**

On Wednesday 23 March 1932, Gerard Rolink, a worker for the Benhar Moss Litter Company dug into hard material under the surface of Greenhead Moss near Cambusnethan in Wishaw in modern North Lanarkshire. Around two-and-a-half feet under the surface lay the fully-clothed remains of a man who had been unceremoniously buried under wooden slats. The local police were immediately called and on arrival identified the body as a historic rather than recent deposit. This created a local sensation: one contemporary account described how local people quickly gathered in some numbers looking for the 'Covenanter's grave' (Colville n.d.). The Covenanters were a seventeenth century Scottish Presbyterian group who, according to Ian B. Cowan, were simultaneously viewed as 'political extremists and as martyrs for the cause of religious freedom' (Cowan 1976, preface). With a find supposedly of much importance, famous archaeologist Ludovic McLellan Mann – then President of the Glasgow Archaeological Society – was immediately called (Mann et al 1937; Ritchie 2002, 46). Arriving the next day, Mann examined the body which had by then been removed from the moss to nearby Newmains police station. Two days after the find, Friday

25 May 1932, local newspaper *The Motherwell Times* reported the discovery as a ‘Covenanter Buried in the Bog’.<sup>1</sup> The same day the *Glasgow Herald* claimed the body was ‘presumed to be the remains of a trooper of the Covenanting days, Cambusnethan Parish being rich in its intimate associations with the ‘Killing Times’.<sup>2</sup> Thus, by the time Mann arrived in Wishaw, the ‘Covenanter’ in the bog was well-known. This article provides a historical account of Mann’s archaeological practice and how he continues to influence today. By examining his written outputs – in contemporary newspapers and a final report – this article closely traces the narrative of the find and its aftermath, especially the process between initial hypotheses to full conclusions five years later, as well as a consideration of how the tale of the bog body has percolated into the popular consciousness.

### **The Cambusnethan Find in Context**

The environment at the approximate date of discovery can be identified using modern technology. The National Record of the Historic Environment of Scotland website, Canmore, provides the National Grid reference NS 8143 5467 revealing the find was inside Greenhead Moss, just south of Cambusnethan Kirk. The location of the burial was verified by a local architect, Mr J. Craig, in 1953.<sup>3</sup> Cross-referencing the grid number with the National Library of Scotland’s digital maps – especially the Roy Military Survey of Lowland Scotland, 1747-1755 – reveals the body was buried in an isolated rural area just off Watling Street (originally a Roman road) near the marketplace of Overtown. The small village of Waterloo near the Moss today had not yet built up. In the mid eighteenth century there was already a substantial peat bog and if the geo-reference is accurate, the body was buried at its very edge: a liminal space between earth and water, on unconsecrated ground just next to Cambusnethan Kirk. The parish of Cambusnethan – near Wishaw – was historically a centre of ecclesiastical affairs. As early as the twelfth century, a private chapel dedicated to St Michael (near modern Carbarns) was noted which developed into a more regular place of worship for the community. By 1628, the ‘auld kirk’ was abandoned and a new church erected a few miles away in Greenhead: though a Protestant place of worship, coming after the Scottish Reformation (Brown 1859, 26).

The National Covenant, signed in 1638, and the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643 set in motion the persecution of those who refused to conform to Charles I’s favoured

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Newmains Find’, *The Motherwell Times*, 25 May 1932, p.8.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Workman’s Discovery in Benhar Moss’, *Glasgow Herald*, 25 March 1932, p.9.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Greenhead Moss’, *Canmore*, Available: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/46704/greenhead-moss> Accessed: 25 November 2019.

episcopacy. The National Covenant provided the ‘vehicle to confront Royal authority’ of Charles I, King of Scotland and England, and consolidated opposition in Scottish society against arbitrary rule (McIntyre 2016, 2). The Solemn League and Covenant that followed intended to bind other Britons to Presbyterianism. After the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, Charles II’s moves to restore episcopacy compelled a large group of Presbyterian ministers to preach at banned ‘conventicles’ and provoked Covenanters into violent resistance. The defeat of the Bothwell Rising in June 1679 - when 400 were killed and 1,200 taken prisoner - marked the opening of an era of brutal suppression (Coleman 2016, 178). The battle itself was a reaction to government strategy, but also an ‘ideological showdown between nonconforming Presbyterians’. The parish of Cambusnethan, located around 12 miles from Bothwell, hosted rebel groups prior to the defeat of the Covenanting forces. (McIntyre 2016, 210, 218). The persecution that followed is commonly known as the ‘Killing Times’, principally led by Captain John Graham of Claverhouse who became known as ‘Bluidy Clavers’. Indeed, the Royal Regiment of North British Dragoons were formed in 1678 to suppress Covenanters. They became known as the ‘Scots Greys’ and although the origins of the term are contested, it is possible this was due to the jacket made from cloth (sometimes known as ‘Galashiels Grey’) which was imported by General Dalzell and Claverhouse in the early 1680s (Cannon 1840, 5, 28; Hall 1898, 273). However, like other aspects of this story, these events have become embellished. Indeed, Claverhouse was subsequently involved in three executions at most (Linklater 2004).

In the immediate aftermath of the Bothwell Rising, Claverhouse’s dragoons were said to have summarily executed individuals near Cambusnethan. Reverend Robert Wodrow, Church minister and historian of the Covenanters, recorded the murder of local man Arthur Inglis:

I shall end this melancholy subject [the massacres after Bothwell] with a well vouched account I have of Arthur Inglis, a pious, sober, honest man, in the Nethertown of Cambusnethan. He had not been at Bothwell, but, upon Monday, June 23d, he was looking after his own cattle feeding upon a ley, and had sit down in a fur among his own corn, and was reading upon the Bible; the place was two or three miles from Bothwell, and the high road came near it. Some of the soldiers were coming that way, and perceiving him reading, concluded he was a whig; and, when at a little distance, one of them discharged his piece at him, but missed him. The good man, conscious of no guilt, and probably not knowing the shot was directed at him,

only looked about to the soldiers, and did not offer to move; they came straight up to him, and, without asking any questions, clave him in the head with their swords, and killed him on the spot (Burns 1829, 108–9).

Although historian Mark Jardine (2006) questions aspects of Wodrow's account, he noted how Inglis, and by extension Covenanting, has been memorialised in the Wishaw area. At the supposed burial spot in old Cambusnethan Church (the initial church dedicated to St Michael) a gravestone was erected in 1733 with an inscription that made reference to Claverhouse. In 1837, a memorial followed in the enclosure which is today known as the 'Covenanters Graveyard'. This type of memorialisation was common in nineteenth and twentieth century Scotland with various monuments and obelisks erected to commemorate both Covenanting events and the individuals concerned (Coleman 2016, 178). And as late as 1932 – around the time of the Cambusnethan find – conventicles were held in Carluke in South Lanarkshire as a means to 'commemorate the faith of the Scottish Covenanters'.<sup>4</sup> The memorialisation of the Covenanting tradition, therefore, passed into Scottish collective memory via monuments around the country including in Lanarkshire. The unearthing of bog bodies seemingly added a new dimension by providing the commemorators with the relics they craved.

Discoveries of bog bodies in peat bogs – some presumed to be Covenanters – were not uncommon in Scotland. Cowie et al. (2011) suggest that bog body discoveries were more extensive than has previously been understood, identifying at least 43 sites containing some 66 separate individuals across Scotland, although many are known as 'paper bog bodies' since the physical remains are no longer preserved. Several are said to be of the Covenanting period, albeit based upon tenuous evidence. In 1826–7, during the erection of a monument in New Cumnock in East Ayrshire to three Covenanters killed in 1685, bog bodies were discovered and were presumed to be of those being commemorated. Other finds were connected to Covenanters in Kirkcudbrightshire in the 1830s and in 1905, and another in Selkirkshire in 1907 (Cowie et al. 2011, 15). In the first two cases, the Rev. Robert Simpson claimed the bodies were Covenanters with vivid accounts such as this description of the discoveries at New Cumnock:

In digging the foundations, workmen came upon the bodies of the martyrs, imbedded in the moss. They were lying in their clothes, which were undecayed – the identical

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<sup>4</sup> *Carluke Gazette*, 19 August 1932, p.2.

apparel in which they were shot. The raiment was a sort of strong home-made cloth of the colour of the moss, and appeared in some parts as if originally dyed with heather. The bodies themselves, in a state of good preservation, were of a dull, sallow appearance. Part of the garments, and a lock of long yellow hair, were preserved as relics by the labourers. The hair was obviously that of a young man – very fine and soft (Simpson 1846, 132).

Cowie (et al. 2011, 15) have questioned the empirical foundation of Simpson's 'ideology of martyrdom'. In fact, it seems the only connection between bog bodies said to be from the Scottish Covenanting period is that there is no scientific evidence they were ever Covenanters at all.

In contrast with the seemingly well preserved remains at New Cumnock, the Cambusnethan find was not *really* a bog body as such. Although the depositors of the body were unlikely to have known at the time, sphagnum peat bogs have distinctive preservation qualities although the variation in chemistry defines what artefacts survive (Turner 1995, 121). In terms of body tissue in Greenhead in 1932, all that remained was fragmentary skeletal remains and locks of hair. Clothing items, including a remarkably well-preserved jacket (Figure 1), were claimed by Ludovic McLellan Mann and taken to the Kelvingrove Museum. They are now stored in Nitshill Resource Centre in Glasgow.

### **Mann's *modus operandi***

With the local association to the 'Killing Times', the ongoing memorialisation of Covenanting as well as bodies and relics in bogs in the west of Scotland, describing the find in Greenhead Moss as a Covenanter must have seemed like an obvious and even compelling explanation. The truth, however, seems more mundane and Ludovic McLellan Mann was sceptical from his first written commentary. J.N. Graham Ritchie (2002, 46–8) described Mann as an 'indefatigable investigator of the past' yet one who had no formal training in archaeological studies. Mann was a wealthy, self-taught antiquary whose often outlandish theories led to disagreements with the professional academic community. Mann also preferred a non-conventional style of disseminating data from his research. Not always speedy with publications, his *modus operandi* involved courting the national press with basic field notes which guaranteed his ideas reached a broad audience. Mann sometimes sent details of his finds via young lads to newspaper editors ensuring his findings were published in the next available edition (Ritchie 2002, 52–3). As already noted, the day after Mann

arrived on the scene, *The Motherwell Times* reported the discovery as a ‘Covenanter Buried in the Bog’ on 25 May 1932.<sup>5</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that Mann supported this view since he was equivocal in his own detailed field notes published soon thereafter. Mann’s 1,000-word report in *The Glasgow Herald* on 26 May 1932 provides excellent descriptions of location, the body, site, and clothing. Given the outstanding condition of the latter, Mann suggested in this article that it was possible to remodel a figure to ‘get a glimpse as real and as large as life of the appearance of ordinary men in Scotland of 250 years ago’. Thus, in a matter of a few days, Mann provided early conclusions:

It would be dangerous to suggest that he was an unknown trooper who had been sent to harass the Covenanters during the 30 troublous [sic] years towards the end of seventeenth century. The buttons seemed to bear some design, which, when cleaned, may throw light on this question of whether he was a peasant, tinker, or other traveller, or a Royalist soldier, which last suggestion appears to be the most probable.<sup>6</sup>

In the first written report that can be attributed to him, Ludovic McLellan Mann therefore endorsed the view that the find originated in the late seventeenth century. However, he complicated the debate about the identity of the man. At no point did he say the body was a Covenanter. Instead, in a contradictory paragraph, he said it would be dangerous to assume it was an ‘unknown trooper’ but ‘most probable’ the body was a Royalist soldier. Mann’s views were communicated to the Wishaw public via a local newspaper on 31 March 1932.<sup>7</sup> Two main theories persist to present-day and can be summarised as: a) the Covenanter hypothesis, and b) the Royalist hypothesis. Mann subsequently commissioned other practitioners to interrogate these two hypotheses in greater detail, although, as will be shown, his endorsement of a narrow chronology ultimately became a self-fulfilling conclusion.

Ritchie described the report of the Cambusnethan find as ‘Mann at his best’ (2002, 54). Consistent with his favoured methods, there was a clearly defined evolution from newspaper article to published academic text. Firstly, Mann’s initial hypothesis was published in *The Herald* of 26 May 1932. Secondly, he presented his findings on 16 February 1933 to the Glasgow Archaeological Society. A report in *The Scotsman* the next day titled

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Newmains Find’, *The Motherwell Times*, 25 May 1932, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> ‘The Cambusnethan Burial’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 26 March 1932, p.9

<sup>7</sup> *The Wishaw Herald*, 31 March 1932, quoted in Colville, n.d., n.p.

‘Body of a Royalist Soldier’ suggests Mann had concluded the body was not a Covenanter but instead a soldier in the Scots Dragoons.<sup>8</sup> Thirdly, a final article – published in the *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society* – was more detailed and provided several new insights (Mann et al. 1937). Principally, Mann concluded the fellow had been murdered. Based on the isolated burial spot he suggested it would have taken at least four people to carry him to the location on the wooden slats discovered with the body. There were deep cuts on the cap and shoes which Mann suggested was a result of sword thrusts. Valuables such as shoe-buckles had been removed which inferred robbery was a possible motive.<sup>9</sup> Mann completed his report with a drawing of a fellow in the style of dress from around 1680–1690.

In addition to his own views, Mann invited three separate experts to examine the osseous remains and rest of the clothing. Professor John Graham examined the remains and concluded the body was of a man around 50 years of age. William Martin of Albion Leather works in Glasgow remade shoes in the style of the preserved leather, of which there was a large gash in the front. Interestingly, Martin refrained from providing a date instead noting they were long out of fashion. Robert G. Eskdale of Bradford was commissioned to examine the nature of the cloth and dyes involved. He opened his expert commentary by concluding the textiles were from 1680 to 1690. He went further and suggested the coat, which was perfectly preserved, was a Galashiels Grey which supported the Royalist soldier hypothesis. Eskdale had earlier provided a statement to the *Wishaw Press* newspaper that provided historical context, initially arguing the body was ‘one of the troops under Dalziel’ (the leader of the Dragoons) and that the clothing was one of the ‘Scots Greys’.<sup>10</sup> In his final conclusion of the article published in 1937, Mann, however, sat on the fence: ‘it cannot be stated definitely whether this killing episode was connected with the fighting induced by the religious disturbances prevalent in the district in the later part of the 17th century’ (Mann et al. 1937, 55).

With such ambiguous conclusions, it is useful to retrace the evolution of Mann’s decision-making process, by comparing his field notes published in *Glasgow Herald* with the media reporting and final publication. Within a day of arriving in Wishaw, local newspaper

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Cambusnethan Find: Body of a Royalist Soldier’, *The Scotsman*, 17 February 1933, p.6.

<sup>9</sup> May Jackson (my now sadly deceased neighbour in Waterloo in Wishaw) told me in the early 2000s how she was part of large crowd at the scene. She recounted seeing the body’s shoes in the grave and silver buckles glinting in the sun. However, the picturesque little snippet of oral history from an event seventy years previously is not supported by documentary evidence.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Cambusnethan Moss Discovery’, *The Wishaw Press and Advertiser*, 17 February 1933, p.3.



*The Motherwell Times* defined the discovery as a ‘Covenanter Buried in the Bog’.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it was already in the local imagination by the time he arrived. Mann, however, authored an alternative version in the *Glasgow Herald* on 26 May 1932. He endorsed the chronology, but not the Covenanter hypothesis.<sup>12</sup> *The Scotsman* report on his presentation to the Glasgow Archaeological Society on 16 February 1933 suggests he was convinced by then of the Royalist hypothesis.<sup>13</sup> By 1937, he commissioned experts, at least one of whom endorsed the rough dating the 1680s–1690s. With the weight of evidence seemingly in favour of the Royalist position, Mann nevertheless remained equivocal in his final conclusions in the 1937 publication

Less than forty years after publication, however, the dating of the body was challenged by costume experts. In 1975, Helen Bennett, then in charge of costumes and textiles at the National Museum of Antiquities (now part of the National Museums of Scotland), noted the Cambusnethan clothing had been dated to the late seventeenth century although, in her opinion, this was inaccurate. For the author, a ‘date closer to 1800 would be more appropriate’ (Bennett 1975, 180). In that case, of course, the young man could not be a Covenanter or a Royalist (unless he was wearing clothes from the future!). Glasgow Museums have broadly endorsed this dating and maintain the jacket was typical of the late-eighteenth century. In 2010, Helen Hughes, Textile Conservator at Glasgow Museums, detailed aspects of the jacket’s conservation and underlined the uniqueness: the usual garments that survive from this period are expensive items worn by elites. Hughes endorsed the late-eighteenth century position and stated that (unnamed) costume historians broadly agree (Hughes 2010). There has been limited public engagement explaining the new dating (other than official refusals and commentary in newspaper reports), and so the story of the Covenanter remains a quotidian feature of life in Wishaw today.

### **Perpetuating the Narrative of the ‘Covenanter in the Bog’**

Bog bodies across Europe in general and Scotland in particular have attracted popular and literary interest (e.g. Glob 1969; Cowie et al 2011). The Cambusnethan find is no different. The story of the Covenanter first passed into local mythology in a popular publication by Margaret Colville around the 1930s. An entire section is devoted to tragic tales of young men killed during the ‘Killing Times’ and the author noted large numbers still attended

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Newmains Find’, *The Motherwell Times*, 25 May 1932, p.8.

<sup>12</sup> ‘The Cambusnethan Burial’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 26 March 1932, p.9

<sup>13</sup> ‘Cambusnethan Find: Body of a Royalist Soldier’, *The Scotsman*, 17 February 1933, p.6.

Conventicles at that time. Connecting local events with the bog find, the booklet concludes with a discussion of Ludovic Mann and the circumstances of discovery (Colville n.d). The story also made its way into one of the few modern literary works set in 1930s Wishaw in North Lanarkshire. The novel, *Lost Sowls*, published in 2009, leaned towards the Royalist hypothesis. The author, Robert Smith, was quoted in the *Daily Record* in publicity for the novel:

I think the most likely explanation is that the victim was a royalist agent or sympathiser who knew too much about Covenanters and was murdered. These were bloody times. The penalty if you were caught was execution.<sup>14</sup>

The novel itself is prefaced with the historical context of the find and contains a reference to Mann's article in the *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society* (Mann et al. 1937). Chapter 10 of the novel provides a fictionalised account of a Royalist agent's murder – sent to Cambusnethan by Claverhouse – by local Covenanters including a 'fanatical preacher' (Smith 2009, 72–9).

Assessing the impact of popular historical works and literature is an impossible task although there are more tangible reminders of the supposed Covenanter. The modern redevelopment of Greenhead Moss meant the tale of the bog body is now disseminated to new audiences on a daily basis. In 1989, the park was designated a Local Nature Reserve by the then Motherwell District Council which prevented any development on the area. It is now known as Greenhead Moss Community Nature Park, a 100-hectare site with woodlands and walkways around the remnants of a raised peat bog. In 1997, a cairn was erected by Wishaw Community Council dedicated to the body found in the bog and remains in place at time of writing (June 2020) (Figure 2). The inscription reads:

Experts have ascertained that at the time of discovery the body had been buried for over two hundred years. There are two opinions as to the origin of the body discovered. The first is that the body is that of a Royalist soldier or Bounty Hunter employed to hunt down Covenanters. The second, supported by experts, is that it was the body of a Covenanter who had been carried by at least four friends to his shallow

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<sup>14</sup> 'Wishaw body discovery is given new life by local author', *Daily Record*, Available: <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/wishaw-body-discovery-given-new-2596810> Accessed: 2 October 2019.

grave on Greenhead Moss, which at the time had been the scene of many skirmishes between Covenanters and their persecutors.

The Royalist and Covenanter hypotheses are disseminated and although it remains unclear who the experts are who support the latter hypothesis, it is clearly prioritised in the public domain. In 2014, visiting schoolchildren were told about ‘the body and clothing (thought to be of a Covenanter) ...so well preserved that it is now in Kelvingrove Museum’.<sup>15</sup> The narrative – with some variation – reached the Scottish Parliament in January 2017. During a debate on the ‘Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology’, Clare Adamson, MSP for Wishaw & Motherwell, quoted Mann’s conclusion in the *Glasgow Transactions* paper of 1937 (thus recounting both Royalist and Covenanter hypotheses) but mistakenly attributed the seventeenth century dating to Helen Bennet of the National Museum of Antiquities. Presumably, the citation of a modern expert confirmed to those listening in the Parliament that Mann’s conclusions were accurate.<sup>16</sup> Even Historic Environment Scotland accept Mann’s rough chronology. Authoritatively citing Mann, the Canmore entry for the discovery is listed under the site type category ‘Bog Burial (17th Century)’. The Archaeology Notes for this site make no mention of whether the body was a Covenanter or a Royalist, but Mann’s date is documented through the inclusion of this quotation: ‘the body of a man, dressed in clothes datable to 1680–90’<sup>17</sup> taken from Mann et al. 1937. In different ways, the tale of the body in Greenhead Moss has percolated into the popular consciousness across Scotland for almost a century which explain the continued fascination and attempts to repatriate the remains.

### **Requests to Repatriate the Covenanter’s body**

For almost a quarter-century, Glasgow Museums have faced requests to repatriate the remains of the Cambusnethan body. In August 1997, the Secretary of Central Wishaw Community Council, Mr Sam Love, wrote to Glasgow Museums and requested ‘a small part of the bones of the body’, so that they could be ‘placed in a sealed container and placed within a Cairn’ which was dedicated to the local Covenanting tradition and due to be unveiled on 15 September that year (Figure 2). Glasgow Museums refused the request

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Greenhead Moss, Wishaw Visit – August 2014’, Available:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/nl/coltnesshssfl/2015/01/13/greenhead-moss-wishaw-visit-august-2014/>

<sup>16</sup> MSP for Motherwell & Wishaw Clare Adamson, ‘Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology - Part of the debate’, Scottish Parliament, 31 January 2017. Available: <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/sp/?id=2017-01-31.5.43> Accessed: 25 November 2019.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Greenhead Moss’, *Canmore*, Available: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/46704/greenhead-moss> Accessed: 25 November 2019.

initially based on timescale. Mr Love submitted another request in October: ‘as Christians that it is our duty and responsibility to have the remains of this young man returned to the place where his friends laid him to rest so long ago’.<sup>18</sup>

Various correspondence reveals how the campaign progressed into the twenty first century. The Central Wishaw Community Council produced a ‘Request for the Return of an Object from Glasgow City Council’s Museum Collections’ (undated but around 2000) which provides the rationale for the request. Religious beliefs were at the forefront and Scripture was cited directly in the document. The document states that ‘This young man probably lost his life in the pursuit of his Christian beliefs and an appropriate Christian burial is what was intended for him all these years ago’. The repatriation request contains two historic newspaper articles which form the basis of the claim: a) *The Motherwell Times* reporting the discovery as a ‘Covenanter Buried in the Bog’ on 25 May 1932,<sup>19</sup> and b) Ludovic McLellan Mann’s field notes published in the *Glasgow Herald* on 26 May 1932 (although the included version is undated, it was photocopied from a local newspaper which reprinted the *Herald* article in its entirety). In other words, the repatriation claims are based upon Ludovic McLellan Mann’s initial field notes written and published within a few days of the find. In these notes, he does not actually conclude the body was a Covenanter!

Despite these uncertainties, a high-profile repatriation campaign predicated on the Covenanter hypothesis has attracted major political support over a long period. On 6 October 1997, then MP for Wishaw & Motherwell, Frank Roy, wrote to the Lord Provost of Glasgow, Pat Lally, requesting the repatriation of the body as ‘myself and the people of my constituency feel that we should now re-inter the remains of the Covenanter where his friends laid him so long ago’.<sup>20</sup> *The Herald* reported MP Roy’s letter to the Lord Provost under the heading ‘Wishaw wants its Covenanter relics returned’.<sup>21</sup> On 28 October 1999, MP Frank Roy and Jack McConnell, the then recently elected MSP for Motherwell & Wishaw and future First Minister of Scotland, followed up with a joint-letter of support that was included in Central Wishaw Community Council’s request for repatriation. The letter states: ‘on 23 March 1932, the body of a young man believed to be a covenanter buried over 200 years ago previous was found in a shallow grave...we both agree with the people of our constituency in

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<sup>18</sup> Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport Minutes of Evidence: ‘Memorandum submitted by Glasgow City Council’, April 2000, Available: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmcmds/371/0051808.htm> Accessed: 3 October 2019.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Newmains Find’, *The Motherwell Times*, 25 May 1932, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> *Glasgow Life*, Freedom of Information Request FOI GL056\_Q3\_19-20, 4 November 2019.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Wishaw wants its Covenanter relics returned’, *The Herald*, 9 October 1997.

that we should now re-inter the remains of the Covenanter'.<sup>22</sup> However, MP Roy's correspondence on 3 December 1997 to Cllr Liz Cameron, Acting Chair of Arts and Culture, suggests the request was refused not because of dating but because 'it is difficult to say' if the remains were of a person who lived locally or otherwise (as there was no way of proving if the body had a connection to the local community).<sup>23</sup> Later, in September 2000, *The Scotsman* newspaper reported the position of the then director of Museums and Galleries in Glasgow, Mark O'Neill who 'claimed tests had established that the skeletal remains could not have been those of a Covenanter and said the committee was unable to establish a clear link with the community in Wishaw'.<sup>24</sup> If these scientific tests were ever carried out, and it is possible O'Neill was misquoted, it does not appear the findings were ever made public which has had the effect of prolonging the debate.

The Covenanter repatriation movement endures to present day. On 4 August 2015, Wishaw Community Council granted permission to pursue the matter of repatriating the human remains to a 'satisfactory conclusion'.<sup>25</sup> On 6 August 2019, Wishaw Community Council again discussed the 'issue of the Covenanter' and that the necessary action was required to 'demand the return of these historic remains'.<sup>26</sup> This preceded a request to Glasgow Life by an (unnamed) councillor for the Wishaw area. On 10 September 2019, an enquiry was submitted regarding 'the Covenanters body which was found in the bog at Greenhead Moss Wishaw in 1932 being returned to Wishaw...where the Community Council wish him to have a Christian burial in the Covenanters graveyard in Cambusnethan'.<sup>27</sup> Despite the lack of any evidence that the Cambusnethan bog body was a Covenanter, it is thoroughly embedded in local mythology via a cairn, school visits, the community council, and is disseminated by local and national politicians at the highest levels.

## Conclusion

The continuing fascination with the 'Covenanter' in Greenhead Moss has its origins in the memorialisation of the Covenanting tradition in Scotland, itself a legacy of the Scottish

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<sup>22</sup> 'Frank Roy and Jack McConnell Letter of support', *Central Wishaw Community Council: Request for the Return of an Object from Glasgow City Council's Museum Collections*, 28 October 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Glasgow Life, Freedom of Information Request FOI GL056\_Q3\_19-20, 4 November 2019.

<sup>24</sup> 'Wishaw relics prompt debate on ethics of displaying remains', *The Scotsman*, 27 September 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Minute of Central Wishaw Community Council', 4 August 2015, Available:

<https://mars.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/egenda/public/kab190.pl?cmte=YAK&meet=43> Accessed: 25 November 2019.

<sup>26</sup> 'Minute of Central Wishaw Community Council', 6 August 2019, Available:

<https://mars.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/egenda/public/kab190.pl?cmte=YAK&meet=65> Accessed: 25 November 2019.

<sup>27</sup> *Glasgow Life*, Freedom of Information Request FOI GL056\_Q3\_19-20, 4 November 2019.

Reformation. Due to the tragic nature of the seventeenth century movement, memorials, such as was once present in Old Cambusnethan Kirk, commemorate the fallen. Simultaneously, writers like Rev. Robert Wodrow and Rev. Robert Simpson authored martyrological accounts which created accounts of Covenanting tragedies and myths about bog bodies; unverified dating of the latter transformed human remains and grave clothing into saintly relics. At the time of the Cambusnethan find in 1932, Conventicles were still being held in the local area whilst two ‘Covenanting bog bodies’ had been discovered in Scotland in the previous 30 years. Although the story endures to present-day, like the other discoveries, there is no scientific evidence that the Cambusnethan body was ever a Covenanter. The current movement for repatriation, buttressed by the cairn in Greenhead Moss, should be viewed as a legacy and extension of a narrative of the Scottish Reformation, and the memorialisation of the Covenanting tradition, rather than a campaign grounded in any evidence, whether archaeological or historical.

The article raises the question of how research can challenge beliefs so thoroughly embedded in a local community for almost a century. I offer no scientific re-dating of the find yet also conclude there is no evidence the body was ever a Covenanter or even originated in the late seventeenth century. Moreover, this article finds that the supposedly expert testimony usually cited to support the Covenanter thesis – that of Ludovic McLellan Mann – does nothing of the sort.

So, how to assess the role of Mann in this saga? Based on modern dating of the jacket, it seems almost certain that he was a century too early with his dating of the body. Ritchie (2002) has discussed Mann’s often-weak methods and amateur scholarship, although to be fair Mann was non-committal as to the background and identity of the find. There is little doubt Mann provided the Cambusnethan bog body with an after-life but a key question arises: can the Covenanter hypothesis even be regarded as Mann’s myth at all? In 1932, the local community in Wishaw looked for a Covenanter’s grave and found one, a statement that remains true today. But at no time did Mann definitively state it was a Covenanter, and in fact, his published work veered towards the Royalist hypothesis. Mann did leave both possibilities open and that ambiguity means different versions have been accepted today as fact, even by Members of the Scottish and British Parliaments. A collective failure (and I include myself, due to time taken from initial research to publication) has allowed this debate to continue. Nevertheless, Ludovic McLellan Mann has provided the evidence to solve the mystery, or at least to allow more details to be known about the body in the bog. As such, Mann should be remembered for his fastidious collection of artefacts and commitment to

preservation rather than for his dating of the find. A detailed, comparative analysis of the unique jacket by a costume historian could rebut Robert Eskdale's view of a 'Galashiels Grey' and provide rationale for Helen Bennet's brief statement in 1975. Scientific analysis of the osseous remains would add further insights and likely confirm date of the body. The man himself will probably never be known, but a narrower window of date of death might allow cross-referencing with contemporary documentary evidence. Yet, without Mann's intervention in March 1932, the Cambusnethan find would have remained a footnote in the *Motherwell Times* in 1932: a 'paper body' whose loss would be lamented today by archaeologists, historians, museum professionals, and the local community. Instead, the unique jacket and osseous remains are preserved, however controversial the latter may be, as well as field notes in newspapers and a published article. It is up to each individual and institution how they interpret the evidence: if they arrive at inaccurate conclusions, that is their own prerogative.

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### **Image captions**

Figure 1: The jacket found with the Cambusnethan bog body ((c) CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collections)

Figure 2: The cairn marking the discovery of the body, erected in 1997 (photo: author)