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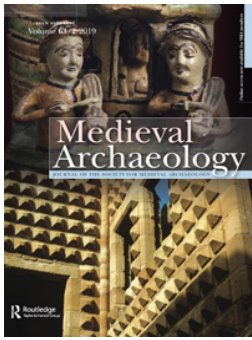
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## Furnishing an Early Medieval Monastery: New Evidence from Iona

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# Furnishing an Early Medieval Monastery: New Evidence from Iona

By EWAN CAMPBELL<sup>1</sup> with COLLEEN BATEY<sup>2</sup>, GRIFFIN  
MURRAY<sup>3</sup> and CYNTHIA THICKPENNY<sup>4</sup>

*THIS PAPER DESCRIBES and discusses the significance of a number of metalwork and glass finds from the important early medieval monastery on the island of Iona, Argyll and Bute, Scotland. The finds mainly come from previously unpublished excavations, especially those by Charles Thomas from 1956–63. They include unique items such as an 8th-century lion figurine, and a 12th-century human head, both in copper alloy. These finds attest, for the first time, to the production of complex ecclesiastical metalwork such as reliquaries at Iona, and are some of the few such items to be recovered from excavated contexts. Fragments of early medieval window glass demonstrate that the buildings of the early monastery were more sophisticated than previously believed, and moulds and a reticella rod indicate decorative glass-working. A number of copper-alloy pins, strap-fittings and other decorative pieces of 9th- and 10th-century date show significant Norse-period occupation, and probably continuing metalworking traditions throughout the early medieval period. Taken together, these new finds begin to reveal that Iona was furnished with richly decorated shrines and reliquaries similar in sophistication to the illustrated manuscripts and sculptured monuments known to have been produced in the monastery.*

The early medieval monastery on the island of Iona is an iconic site, one of the most important intellectual and artistic centres in north-western Europe in the later part of the first millennium AD, despite its apparently remote and peripheral location off the western coast of Scotland (Fig 1). Iona was situated within the Gaelic-speaking kingdom of *Dál Riata* in western Scotland. The monastery was founded by the Irish monk Columba around AD 563 and became the head of a network of monasteries which achieved widespread influence in Scotland, Ireland and northern England, particularly during the 7th and 8th centuries. Much of this influence is associated with Adomnán, the ninth abbot of Iona, in the latter part of the 7th century, who is increasingly recognised as a major figure in Insular spiritual and political life.<sup>5</sup> Adomnán's intellectual products include the *Vita Columbae*, which provides many incidental details of life in the early monastery, and *De Locis Sanctis*, an account of the Holy Land. Both of these works are now recognised as embodying sophisticated theological discourse, and were influential in defining the concept of the earthly monastery as a reflection of the Heavenly

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<sup>5</sup> Wooding 2010.

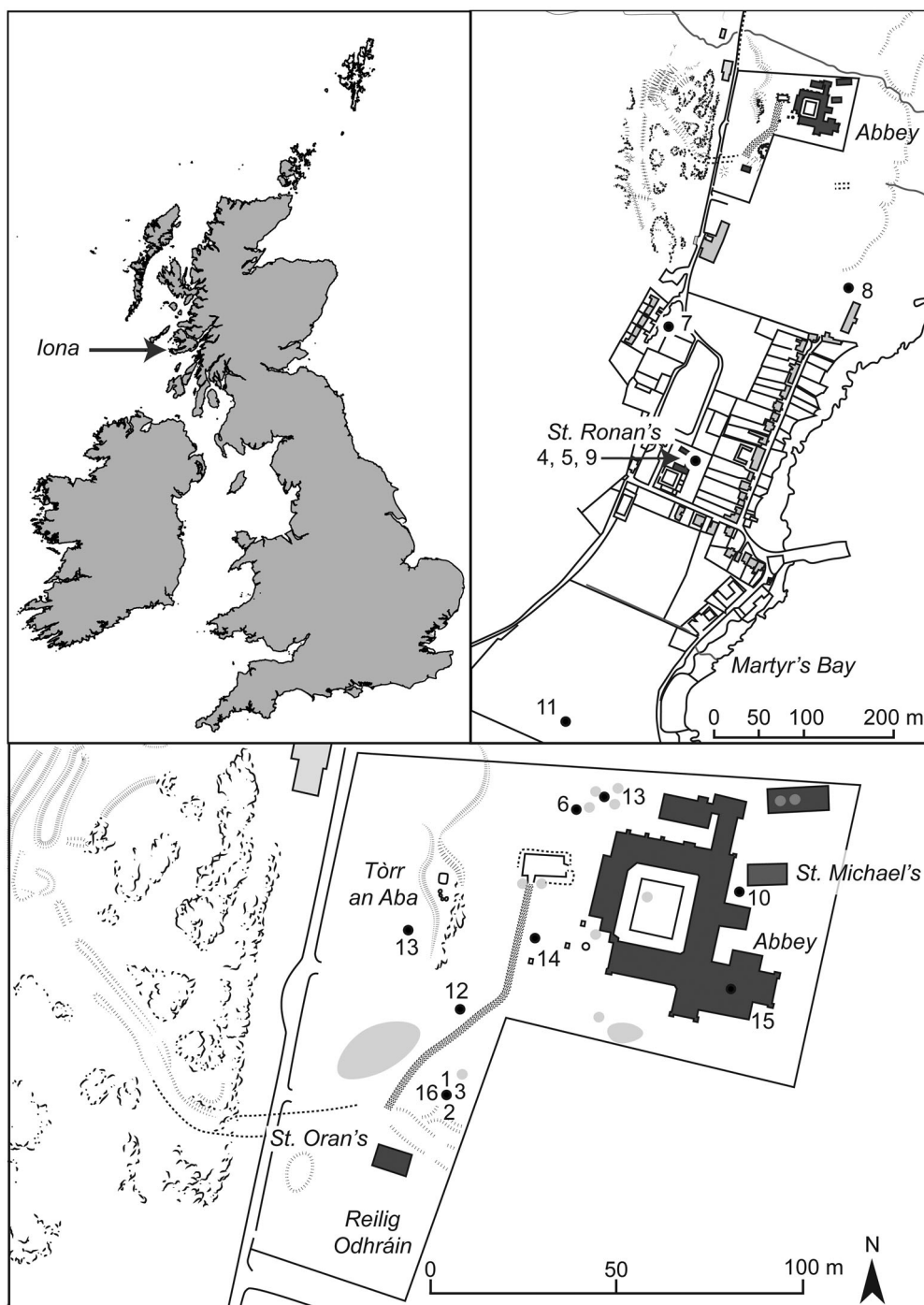


FIG 1

Location of Iona Abbey and finds discussed. (1) Lion; (2) Rod; (3) Possible Cross-arm; (4) Strap-fitting; (5) Possible Strap-fitting; (6) Silver boss; (7) Polyhedral-headed pin; (8) Stick pin; (9) Stick pin; (10) Stick pin; (11) Ring-headed pin; (12) Human head; (13) Window glass; (14) Glass cylinder; (15) Bead; (16) Glass reticella rod. Metalworking finds and spreads of slag shown in grey. *Drawing by Heather Christie.*

Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Adomnán's extensive political influence is shown by his enactment of *Cáin Adomnáin* in AD 697, an early treaty on human rights in warfare, which was witnessed by numerous kings and bishops from Ireland and Scotland.<sup>7</sup> The monks of Iona were also producers of poetry, early annals, and were at least partly responsible for the first codification of canon law, the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*.<sup>8</sup>

More relevant to this paper was Iona's role in the development of the Insular art style in the 7th and 8th centuries, with the production of manuscripts such as the *Cathach of Columba*,<sup>9</sup> and possibly the *Book of Durrow*.<sup>10</sup> Although there is no proof that the *Book of Kells* was produced on Iona, most scholars accept that it was at least partly produced there.<sup>11</sup> The Iona High Crosses, however, were definitely created on site, and share the same elements of the Insular style. These works are some of the most accomplished European works of art of the period.<sup>12</sup> However, despite contemporary 9th-century documentary references to Columba's reliquary shrine by Strabo in his account of the martyrdom of Blathmac on Iona in AD 825 — 'the precious metals wherein lie the holy bones of Columba' — until now there has been no physical evidence that works of art in metalwork were produced on Iona. Religious metalwork such as reliquaries, communion vessels, croziers and processional crosses are well known from Insular contexts, and are particularly abundant in Ireland, so it might be suspected that similar items were made on Iona.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, although there is documentary evidence that some monks were accomplished metalworkers, until recently there has been little excavated evidence to show which Insular monastic centres were involved in the production of complex metalwork artefacts, as almost all the surviving metalwork pieces are stray finds. However, the evidence for the production of chalices at Portmahomack (Highland) in north-eastern Scotland, and the almost industrial scale production of bronze-coated iron handbells at Clonfad (Co Westmeath), in eastern Ireland, have begun to show that Insular early medieval monasteries were major production and distribution centres of religious metalwork.<sup>14</sup> The evidence presented below, though fragmentary, reinforces this developing picture, and suggests that Iona was producing shrines and reliquaries of sophistication equal to that of the known sculpture and illuminated manuscripts made on the island.

Recent reassessment of the archive material from Charles Thomas's unpublished excavations around the buildings of the reconstructed Benedictine abbey on Iona,<sup>15</sup> carried out in 1956–63, resulted in the discovery of some important metalwork, glass and ceramic artefacts that deserve full description and discussion. A series of more recent small-scale interventions around the medieval abbey complex have produced further metalwork finds that are also unpublished or undiscussed. Taken together, these finds throw new light on the types of religious object present on Iona in the period of the early medieval monastery, the processes of craftworking at the site, and the furnishings of buildings, and enable a reappraisal of the Norse impact on the site.

<sup>6</sup> Adomnán, *Life of Columba*; O'Loughlin 2007; O'Reilly 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Ní Dhonnchadha, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Clancy and Márkus 1995; Bannerman 1974; Flechner 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Herity and Breen 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Moss 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Meehan 2012; Brown 2003, 224.

<sup>12</sup> Meehan 2012; Fisher 2010; Stalley 1990.

<sup>13</sup> Jennings 1998, 37; Youngs 1989, 66–74.

<sup>14</sup> Carver et al 2016; Stevens 2012.

<sup>15</sup> NGR: NM 287 245.

TABLE 1  
Radiocarbon dates from Iona. Calibrated from OxCal 4.10.

Lab code	Excavation context	Sample material	Lab age BP	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$	Calibrated dates	
					1-Sigma	2-Sigma
SUERC-72329	Thomas 1963, Cutting 57, context 334	Charcoal, <i>Salix</i> sp.	1257 ± 32	-28.4‰	AD 690–770	AD 670–870
SUERC-75776	Campbell 2017, Context 208	Charcoal, <i>Betula</i> sp.	1289 ± 31	-25.8‰	AD 680–770	AD 665–770
GU-1262	Barber 1979, Pit 156	Charcoal	1355 ± 55	N/A	AD 630–760	AD 590–770

Thomas was a key figure in the development of early medieval archaeology in Britain, and his seminal books include *The Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain, Britain and Ireland in Early Christian Times AD 400–800*, and *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*.<sup>16</sup> In these, the Iona excavations can be seen to have influenced his thinking on subjects such as the layout of monasteries, shrines, and the cult of relics, to an extent that was not fully apparent until the archives of the Iona excavations were investigated.<sup>17</sup>

The background to this paper was a project to assemble the archive and publish the results of Thomas's excavation campaign around Iona Abbey, supported by small-scale re-excavation of some of his trenches.<sup>18</sup> Thomas's team excavated around 100 separate trenches ('cuttings') but the results were never published, except for those on the Iron-Age fort on Dùn Bhuirg, and those on the Tòrr an Aba (Abbot's Mound) site, the traditional location of Columba's hut.<sup>19</sup> The excavations were not recorded to modern standards, and much material has been lost in the subsequent years, but enough was recovered to enable a reasonable account of the excavations.<sup>20</sup> As most of the finds are effectively unstratified, and as a detailed excavation report to modern standards cannot be reconstructed from the archive material, the most important finds are discussed here, while the wider implications of the excavations are to be published separately.<sup>21</sup> Iona has suffered to an unusual extent from small piecemeal excavations and other interventions.<sup>22</sup> Since the 1980s, these interventions have been associated with building works resulting from the continuing use of the site by the Iona Community, and facilities for the increasing visitor numbers. As many of these excavations are unpublished or inadequately published, the opportunity has been taken to describe a number of metal artefacts, all unstratified, from these excavations. One important larger-scale excavation took place in 1979, when the site of an extension to the Reilig Odhráin burial ground was excavated by John Barber.<sup>23</sup> This open-area excavation uncovered the plan of a large circular post-built structure, and re-excavated several of Thomas's trenches, including the area where several of the finds discussed below were found (see Fig 1).

<sup>16</sup> Thomas 1971a; 1971b; 1981.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell and Maldonado 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Excavations took place in 2017 and 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Ritchie and Lane 1980; Fowler and Fowler 1988.

<sup>20</sup> Campbell and Maldonado 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell and Maldonado forthcoming.

<sup>22</sup> O'Sullivan 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Barber 1981.

## EVIDENCE FOR DECORATIVE METALWORKING

Apart from the artefacts discussed below, there is direct evidence for decorative metalworking on Iona in the form of moulds, crucibles and other industrial debris. Fragments of moulds and crucibles for non-ferrous metalworking, similar in form to those from the metalworking workshop at the royal fort of Dunadd (Argyll and Bute, Scotland), the major fort and inauguration site of the kings of *Dál Riata*, and a site with close political links to Iona,<sup>24</sup> have been found in several locations around the Abbey in excavations by John Barber, Richard Reece, and Finbar McCormick,<sup>25</sup> as well as in Thomas's excavations. These suggest widespread areas of craft production, though no actual workshop site has yet been identified. The mould fragments, which are important as they give concrete evidence of the types of artefacts being produced on Iona, include some for inlaid glass studs, are discussed below. Similar stud moulds and glass studs have now been found in the metalworking workshop at Portmahomack.<sup>26</sup> Other identifiable items in the moulds from Barber's excavations include rings and rods, one of which exactly fits the bronze rod described below (see also [Appendix](#), no 2).

Thomas's excavations also produced much more extensive evidence of ferrous metalworking. A large spread of 'clinker' was reported by Thomas in the west of the site, covering around 100sq m and representing several tonnes of slag, and a similar layer was found just south of the Abbey in his Cutting 11d. The latter was re-exposed in 2017 and the 0.2 m thick deposit produced a radiocarbon date of cal AD 665–770. A sample less reliably associated with the western deposit produced a very similar date of cal AD 670–870, suggesting a period of intensive iron-working in the 8th century (Tab 1). The Cutting 11d deposit proved to be a very mixed assemblage of tap slag, hearth bottoms, fuel ash slag, bog iron ore, furnace lining and tuyère fragments. The material is unusual for this period in representing all stages of iron production, from smelting to smithing, though similar material has been found in recent excavations at the monastic site of Kinneddar (Moray), and at Whitby Abbey (North Yorkshire).<sup>27</sup> It is interesting that Adomnán mentions some monks on Iona were skilled blacksmiths.<sup>28</sup> This large-scale iron working is similar to that seen on early ecclesiastical sites in Ireland such as Clonmacnoise (Co Offaly) and especially Clonfad (Co Westmeath), which was producing large brazed iron handbells.<sup>29</sup> These rectangular iron bells are a characteristic of early ecclesiastical sites in Scotland and Ireland, and we can speculate that similar bells for liturgical use were being made at Iona for distribution among the Columban monastic network.<sup>30</sup> It is also possible that tools were being produced for specialist activities such as stone carving, which was a major activity on Iona at least from the 8th century onwards, as well as drills and saws for the construction of timber buildings.

The items described below are discussed in chronological order, with full descriptions in the [Appendix](#). The first three metalwork items and one glass item were found in the same context, but during two different excavations. When Barber re-excavated

<sup>24</sup> Lane and Campbell 2000; Campbell 1987; 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Barber 1981, fig 42; Reece 1981, fig III.1b; McCormick 1992, illus 4.

<sup>26</sup> Campbell 2016, 216–18.

<sup>27</sup> Gemma Cruikshanks and Gordon Noble pers comm; Lucas and Paynter 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, Book II, chapter 29, 178, in Sharpe 1995.

<sup>29</sup> King 2009; Stevens 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Bourke 1980; 1983; for a list of Scottish examples see Caldwell et al 2012.



Thomas's Cutting 50 he discovered that Thomas's excavation had cut through a number of postholes and pits without recognising them as such. Barber was able to excavate the remaining portion of one of these (his Pit 156), and found a collection of artefacts, slag and charcoal.<sup>31</sup> These items included several iron objects, but also a lion figurine (no 1), one half of the copper-alloy rod (no 2), a possible copper-alloy cross-arm (no 3), and a reticella glass rod (no 16). Information on the label of the lion figurine enables it to be specifically located to the other part of Barber's Pit 156, and half of the copper-alloy rod from Thomas's trench joins the piece from Barber's excavation, allowing it to be located to the same pit as the lion figurine. Barber dated charcoal from the same context that produced the finds, and this gives a re-calibrated radiocarbon date of cal AD 590–770, using the most recent calibration curve.<sup>32</sup> Barber mistakenly considered this collection of items to be modern contamination of the context. He believed the rod to be composed of brass and to have been produced by a modern draw technique, and was not aware of the other half from Thomas's unpublished excavations.<sup>33</sup> However, XRF analysis shows that the rod is not brass, but rather the same leaded-tin bronze composition as the lion figurine, which is certainly an early medieval artefact. Pit 156 was situated in an area within a large circular post-built structure, which has been interpreted by some authors as the main living quarters of the monks, Adomnán's '*magna domus*', although others are more cautious.<sup>34</sup> The pit shows that early medieval finds were being deposited here, possibly after the circular building went out of use. However, the unusual variety of objects might suggest some symbolic significance to the deposit, or it may represent clearance after a significant fire or other destructive event. Although the charcoal from which the radiocarbon date was obtained cannot be proven to be contemporary with the artefacts, the date does not conflict with the 8th-century typological dates assigned to the artefacts.

#### 1. LION FIGURINE

The modelled figurine of a lion is a unique object, with no close parallels in early medieval metalwork (Figs 2 and 3). The figurine was designed to be attached to a flat surface, and to fit a triangular space when seen in plan view, suggesting that it was part of a complex piece of decorative metalwork. The animal is shown in *couchant* pose and backward looking, with stylised curls of the mane along its back and neck. Although the fleshy lips give the animal a duck-billed appearance, it shares many characteristics with animals clearly depicted as lions in early medieval manuscripts and metalwork, and should be read as a lion. Lions usually have a symbolic significance in Insular art and sculpture, for example representing St Mark, although multiple interpretations of the significance of the lions are possible.<sup>35</sup> On both St Mark's Cross on Iona and the Kildalton Cross on Islay (Argyll and Bute, and which is closely linked to the Iona crosses), lions flank the central roundel of the cross, illustrating their importance. Similar 'leonine beasts' are present around the central part of both St Oran's and St John's crosses on Iona, some of these being backward facing.

<sup>31</sup> Barber 1981, 349, listed under Pit 156, layer 108.

<sup>32</sup> Barber 1981, fig 6, section no 19; 310, tab 4 GU-1262; 1355 ± 55; re-calibrated using Oxcal 4.10.

<sup>33</sup> Barber 1981, 349.

<sup>34</sup> Barber 1981, 299–303 fig 5; MacDonald 1984; cf McCormick 1997, 53; MacDonald 1997, 38.

<sup>35</sup> Meehan 2012, 138–45; Henderson and Henderson 2004, 129–32.





FIG 2

Copper-alloy lion figurine from Thomas's excavations at Iona Abbey. Length 39 mm. © *Historic Environment Scotland*.

Although technically unstratified, the mount comes from an area within the large circular post-built building excavated by Barber. The radiocarbon date of its context does not conflict with a general late 7th- to early 9th-century date range for the lion, which is more likely to date to the later 8th century on stylistic grounds. XRF analysis of the surface of the mount showed it to be a high-tin, high-lead copper-alloy of unusual composition (Copper 23%; Tin 45%; Lead 17%; Zinc 0%). The low copper value is almost certainly the result of differential leaching out of copper due to the acid burial environment.<sup>36</sup> This also accounts for the bubbly, decayed nature of the metal. The result of the analysis is similar to that of the copper-alloy strip described below, which was found in the same context. The original composition of these items was probably a leaded-tin bronze similar to those being used in contemporary metalworking at the royal site of Dunadd, where there was a similar lack of zinc in the composition of the objects being cast there.<sup>37</sup> Metalworking residues at Glastonbury Abbey (Somerset) produced similar high-tin, high-lead copper-alloy compositions.<sup>38</sup>

Fully three-dimensional zoomorphic Insular figurines are rare. Apart from the modelled fish and long-necked beast from the interiors of the Sutton Hoo and Witham hanging bowls, which are rather different in context, the only other one—also a lion—is

<sup>36</sup> Justine Bailey pers comm.

<sup>37</sup> Lane and Campbell 2000, 208–11.

<sup>38</sup> Gilchrist and Green 2015, tab 13.

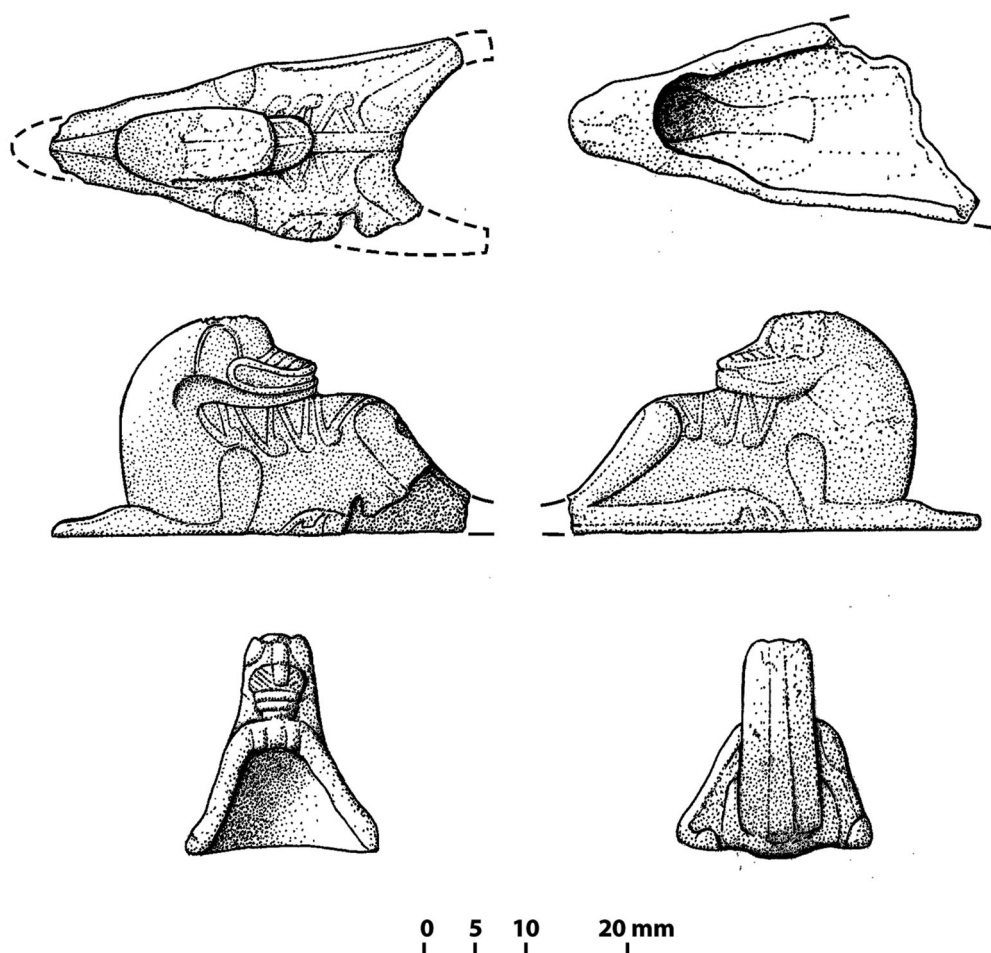


FIG 3  
Drawings of lion figurine. *Drawing by Marion O'Neil.*

an Insular figurine of 8th-century date but uncertain function, which probably came from a single, richly furnished grave (Islandbridge 1866 C) in the Norse burial complex at Kilmainham, Islandbridge (Co Dublin, Ireland).<sup>39</sup> Animals modelled partially in three dimensions are more commonly found on brooches, hanging bowls, bucket mounts, shrines, and other objects, but among these lions are less common, despite being widely represented in manuscript art. Some of the parallels are discussed below, but it should be stressed that there is no close parallel for the Iona lion in metalwork.

The form of the animal can be paralleled in a general sense, although there are unusual features. The legs, with their strongly defined teardrop- or pear-shaped upper limbs and long forelegs with three-toed claws, resemble crouching Style II beasts as seen in the *Book of Durrow* (f. 192v) or the Crundale Downs (Kent, England) sword pommel.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Harrison and Ó Floinn 2014, 204–6, illus 130; 472–3, illus 288.

<sup>40</sup> Speake 1980, fig 8m; fig 3h.

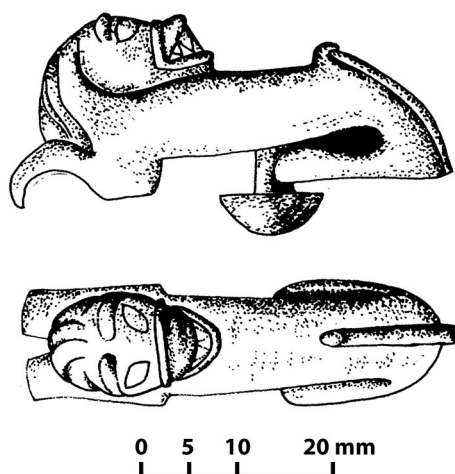


FIG 4

Hanging-bowl escutcheon of couchant lion from female grave at Gausel, Norway. Drawing by Graham Rice.  
© Oxford University Press.

In later examples, the pear-shaped upper limb becomes a motif in itself.<sup>41</sup> Backward-biting beasts are of course also a feature of Style II animal art (though simple backward-facing beasts are less common), and were being incorporated in Insular metalwork by the 7th century, for example at Dunadd.<sup>42</sup> General resemblances to the Iona lion can be seen in many depictions of lions in the *Book of Kells*, where there are backward-facing beasts (e.g. f. 183v). Similar parallels can be drawn with the lion symbol in the *Book of Armagh* evangelists' symbol page dated c 800.<sup>43</sup> The limbs on these beasts are generally more fluid than the Iona lion, lacking the pear-shaped upper limb, but seem to belong to the same family. The strong differentiation of the head from the body is also seen on manuscript illustrations, both in the lion symbols on the *Book of Durrow* and *Book of Armagh*, and in the *Book of Kells*. It seems likely that the person who made the mount was familiar with manuscript illustrations of lions, and the object could well have been made on Iona.

Although described by Ragnall Ó Floinn as having Pictish characteristics, Niamh Whitfield sees the Islandbridge lion as having been made in Ireland, or in Scotland outside of Pictland.<sup>44</sup> This lion differs in many respects from the Iona beast, but it shares the moulding in the round, the schematic mane curls, the thick jaws, and the flat basal attachment. The Iona lion is hollow and has been cast by the lost wax process, as has the Islandbridge lion. This method is unusual in this period, as most objects were cast in two-piece moulds.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Whitfield 1995, 95, fig 6b.

<sup>42</sup> Lane and Campbell 2000, 152–4, fig 4.57.

<sup>43</sup> Whitfield 1995, fig 16a.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 204; Whitfield forthcoming.

<sup>45</sup> Eg Lane and Campbell 2000, 201–4; though the lost wax technique was also used, for example in the Steeple Bumpstead animals (Youngs 1993, 149).

Another example of a lion figurine comes from a female burial, ‘the Gausel Queen’ from Gausel (Rogaland, Norway), of the mid-9th century (Fig 4).<sup>46</sup> This grave contained Insular metalwork including a fragmentary hanging bowl with two surviving lion hook-escutcheons.<sup>47</sup> These animals are unique in the hanging-bowl corpus of hook-escutcheons in being fully three-dimensionally modelled animals. The Gausel animals share many features of the Iona piece: they are hollow and cast, the pose is *couchant* with backward-facing head, the jaws have thick lips, and the head is bulbous. They differ in the presence of ears and teeth, and the mane is represented quite differently. Raven dates the Gausel bowl to the 8th or early 9th century.<sup>48</sup> What is especially intriguing about the Gausel grave is that it also contains (among a wealth of other Insular metalwork) fragments of a shrine finial that is identical to the well-known complete finials from Saint-Germain-en-Laye (Île-de-France).<sup>49</sup> These finials are so similar to each other that both must have been cast from the same mould and would have decorated a large shrine, presumably dismembered by Norse raiders with fragments ending up in France and Norway.<sup>50</sup> The decoration on the finials has been compared to the snake-boss ornament in the *Book of Kells* and on St John’s Cross in Iona, making it likely that this shrine was originally from Iona.<sup>51</sup> These two parallels show that three-dimensional modelled figures of lions were being produced in Insular contexts around the 8th century for both religious and secular metalwork.

In manuscript art, metalwork, and sculpture there are many instances of two-dimensional animals being fitted into triangular spaces, but the Iona figure is unique in being fitted into a three-dimensional space. This is done so skilfully that the triangular form is not immediately apparent. Cast-in moulded animal figures are found on brooches such as one from Rogart (Highland), and also on the Steeple Bumpstead (Essex) boss,<sup>52</sup> but these are not formed fully in the round nor made as separate pieces. A recent metal-detected find from Kennet (Wiltshire) also has cast-in beasts with similar poses to the Iona lion.<sup>53</sup> The early 8th-century Donore (Co Meath) door handle has a solid lion’s head with thick lips, though much more detailed ornamentation than the Iona lion.<sup>54</sup>

The head of the beast is unusual in lacking eyes and ears, but it does have an interesting parallel in an unprovenanced shrine ridgepole with backward-facing zoomorphic ends (Fig 5). This is in private hands and unfortunately its find-spot is unknown. This beast has strong similarities to the Iona head: a bulbous forehead, thick lips, vestigial eyes, no ears, ridging on the snout, and a curve delimiting the back of the face. It differs in having teeth. Unfortunately, there is no provenance or date for this object, but its form is similar to ridgepoles from other tomb-shaped shrines of the 8th century. The ridging on the snout of the Iona lion is paralleled on the unprovenanced mount as well as other Insular animal heads.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Sørheim 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Bruce-Mitford and Raven 2005, 370–1, figs 558–60.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>49</sup> Youngs 1989, 145, illus p 166.

<sup>50</sup> Bakka 1993.

<sup>51</sup> Fisher 2001, 15; Kruse 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Youngs 1993.

<sup>53</sup> Portable Antiquities Scheme WILT-E637D0.

<sup>54</sup> Youngs 1989, no 64, 66–9.

<sup>55</sup> Eg Harrison and Ó Floinn 2014, 176, illus 104c.



FIG 5

Unprovenanced shrine ridge and finial, with detail of head. Size unknown. © *National Museums of Scotland*.

The Iona lion is clearly intended to be affixed to a flat surface, though no means of attachment survives. It is possible that there were rivets at the corners of the triangular base. These would have been in areas now damaged, but even so there does not seem sufficient room. It could have been soldered on, but the decay of the surfaces could have removed all traces. It is difficult to point to any surviving larger object which might have had triangular fittings such as this. The function of the figure is therefore unclear, though it must have been attached to some substantial piece of composite metalwork. The backward-facing pose suggests it was looking at something, with the hind legs clasping a vertical element. Presumably it was one of a pair or series flanking a central object, a very common motif in Insular art.<sup>56</sup> House- or tomb-shaped shrines often have backward-facing beasts as finials at the ends of the ridge, but these are almost always cast-in, and never have a triangular form. Only the Melhus shrine from Trøndelag, Norway has separate finials, although it is not clear if, due to the poor state of the object, these are replacements.<sup>57</sup>

## 2. ORNAMENTAL ROD

This small D-sectioned bar decorated with transverse grooves is an unusual item. It is now in two pieces, each recovered from a different campaign of excavation (Figs 6 and 7). One half came from Thomas's Cutting 50, the other from the re-excavation of this trench by Barber.<sup>58</sup> As discussed above, XRF analysis showed this to be a leaded-tin bronze, and there can be no doubt as to its early medieval date. The rod was found to fit exactly into a mould uncovered by Barber in a location a few metres to the north,

<sup>56</sup> Whitfield 1995, 92.

<sup>57</sup> Blindheim 1984, 44, fig 39; Heen-Pettersen and Murray 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Barber 1981, 349, no 108/20.

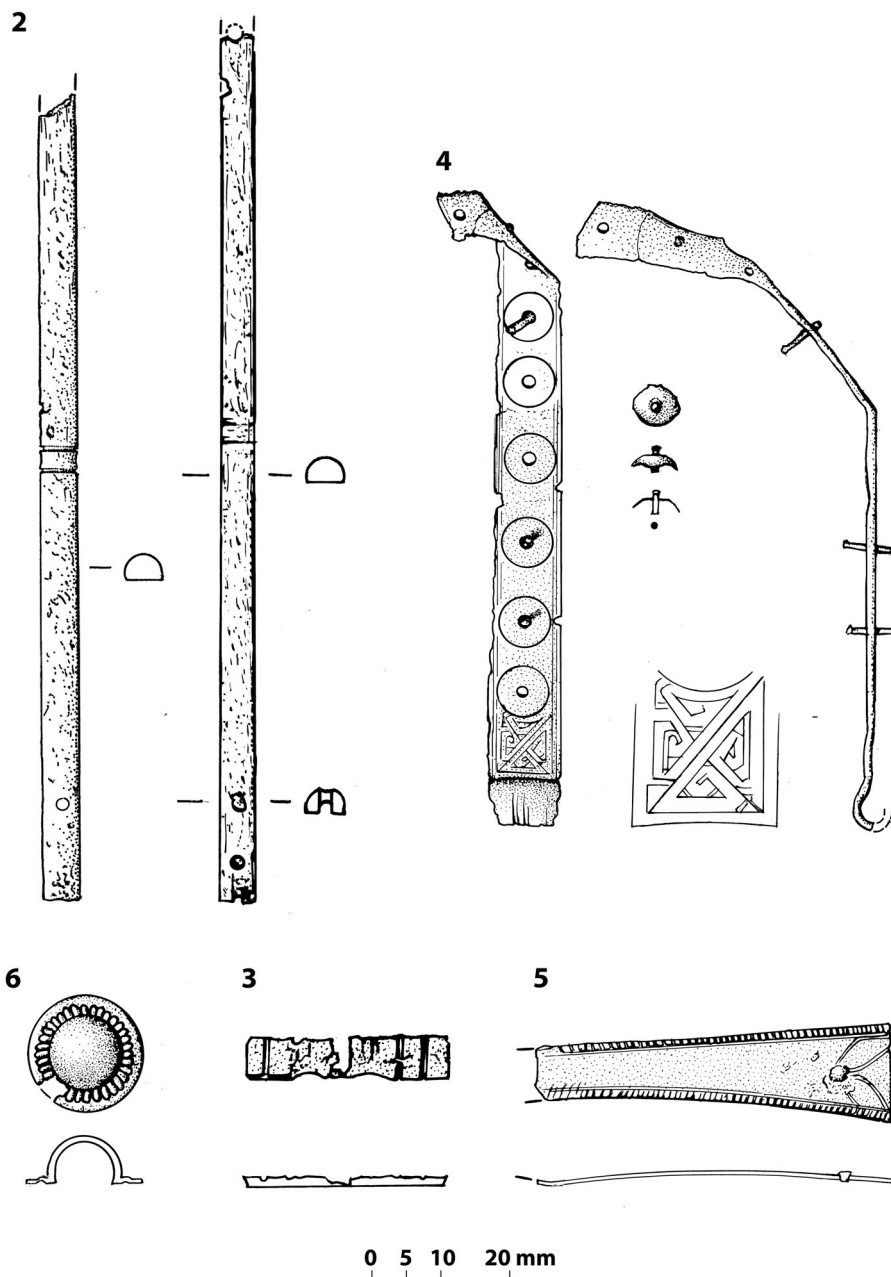


FIG 6

Objects from Iona. Copper alloy: (2) Rod; (3) Cross-arm; (4) Strap-fitting, with detail of mitre pattern; (5) Strap-fitting. Silver: (6) Ornamental boss. *Drawings by Marion O'Neil.*



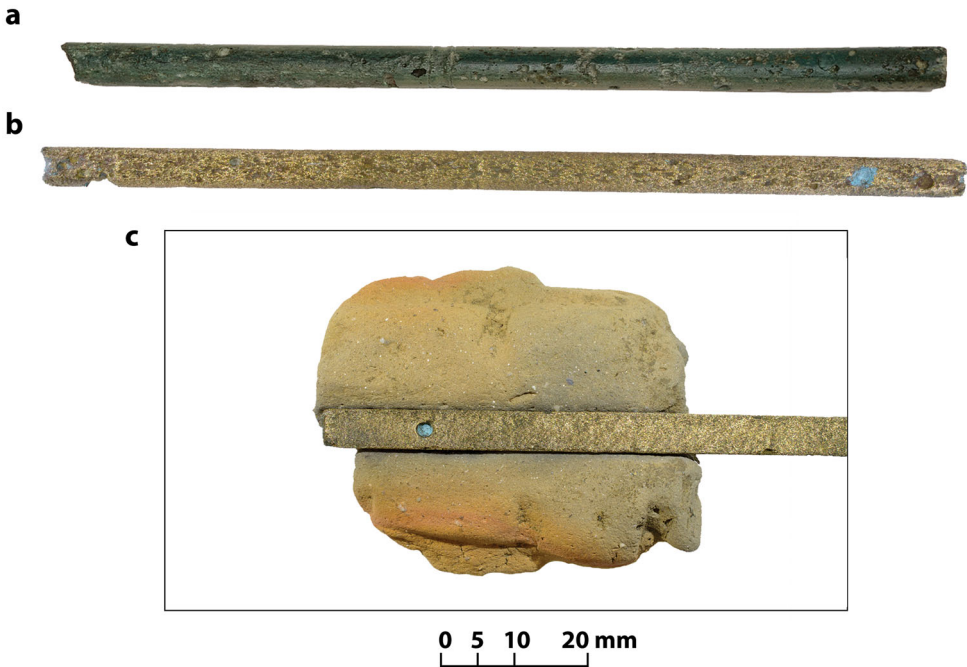


FIG 7

Two parts of copper-alloy rod (total length 243 mm) found in separate excavations: (a) Front view of Thomas SF0998; (b) back view of Barber SF108/20; (c) rod with fitting mould fragment. Photographs (a) and (b) © Historic Environment Scotland; (c) by Heather Christie.

showing that the rod was made on Iona.<sup>59</sup> The rod was clearly intended to be fixed to a flat surface, as it has hidden rivets at both ends, and there was another in the middle where the two sections have broken apart. Joining the two pieces would make the original length 243 mm. It was associated with the lion figurine discussed above, as Thomas's part was found on the same day as the lion, in the same context. This context, which has a radiocarbon date of the 7th/8th century, also produced a reticella glass rod of a type used to decorate 8th-century glass vessels. Although the superficial appearance suggests a binding strip such as those found on reliquaries, these are always hollow if found on the edges of panels, and flattened strips if on surfaces, so no real parallels can be suggested. The strip is of a size to have decorated a book shrine, such as the Lough Kinale shrine (Co Longford, Ireland), though the bindings on that also appear to be tubular rather than solid.<sup>60</sup> The strip was also found in the same context as the lion figurine, suggesting it belongs to the same date, around the 8th century.

### 3. POSSIBLE CROSS-ARM

This small copper-alloy bar (Figs 6 and 8) was recovered by Barber in 1979, but not published in his report. It was found in the same context as the rod described above,

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, fig 42, 304/1.

<sup>60</sup> Kelly 1993.



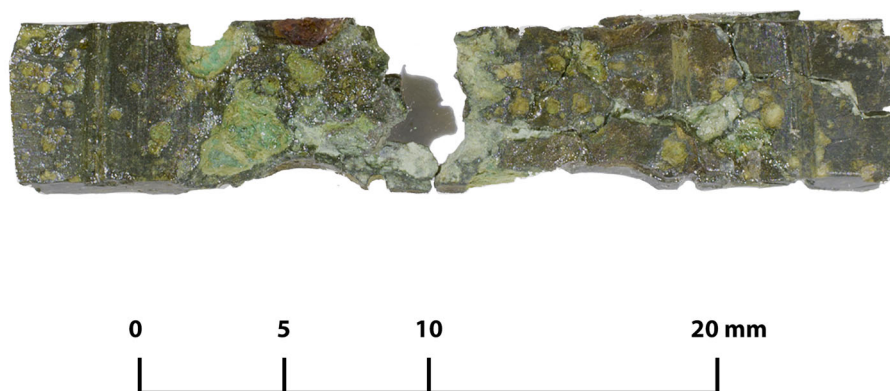


FIG 8

Copper-alloy? cross-arm, note cusped arms. Length 29 mm. *Photograph by Heather Christie.*

and is therefore also associated with the lion figurine. The form of the arms, with cusps on both sides, suggests that this is the horizontal arm of a small decorative cross with elongated arms. The long, thin proportions of the arm (length to breadth at 1:6) make it thinner than St John's Cross from Iona, which has the longest arms of any stone cross, but similar to metalwork crosses. The form, where the cusps are not semicircular, mimics that of the 8th-century Tully Lough Cross (Co Cavan, Ireland), and the Rupertus Cross, Bischofshofen (Salzburg, Austria), also of the 8th century.<sup>61</sup> These processional crosses are much larger and more elaborate pieces of metalwork, but they demonstrate that metalwork crosses of this form were being produced. It could be suggested that the Iona cross was from a book cover, reliquary, or similar item. The decoration on the terminals is unusual, however, and no exact parallels can be suggested.

#### 4. STRAP-FITTING AND RIVETS

This copper-alloy riveted strap-fitting with unique incised decoration (Figs 6 and 9) was recovered from Jerry O'Sullivan's excavations within St Ronan's chapel in 1994, believed to be the medieval parish church of Iona, which is situated immediately adjacent to the Augustinian Nunnery.<sup>62</sup> The present 13th-century structure was found to be built over, and incorporate parts of, an earlier clay-bonded stone chapel of early medieval date, itself overlying earlier burials. Although a drawing and short description of the strip was published in the excavation report, the find was not identified and its significance was not noted, perhaps because it came from an unstratified context, which had been disturbed by post-medieval burials.<sup>63</sup> The form of the fitting closely resembles a series of small buckles and strap-ends known from 9th-/10th-century Norse period burials around the Irish Sea and Scottish Islands, which will be fully discussed in a forthcoming paper by Caroline Paterson and Craig Stanford.<sup>64</sup> A key feature of the type is a series of rivets along the length of the fitting. The Iona example has nine rivet holes,

<sup>61</sup> Kelly 2003; Fisher 2001, 172A.

<sup>62</sup> O'Sullivan 1994.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 336, illus 5, 114.

<sup>64</sup> Paterson and Stanford forthcoming; see also Paterson 2001.



FIG 9

Copper-alloy strap-fitting and domed rivet from St Ronan's church excavations. Length 50 mm. *Photograph by Heather Christie.*

each outlined with a double incised circle. The decoration of circles around the rivet holes suggests that the rivets originally had domed heads, and a separate find of a domed rivet from the site almost certainly comes from the same object.<sup>65</sup> The fitting lacks its buckle and appears to have been forcibly torn from its leather strap, as only three bent rivets are still attached.

In Scotland, related examples of the type are known from Cnip (Western Isles), Whithorn (Dumfries and Galloway), and Auldham (East Lothian).<sup>66</sup> These fittings have been attributed to the 9th or early 10th century and are believed to have been manufactured in the Atlantic area. Most have been described as harness mounts, though the Cnip example is from a female burial and may have been a belt fitting.<sup>67</sup> The Iona example differs somewhat from others in this group in both its decorative scheme and its form, as the sides are straight rather than being waisted with expanded ends. However, the overall design, and the row of multiple rivets, show it is closely related to this group of artefacts. A function as a female belt set might be appropriate for the context. St Ronan's was used as a burial ground into the post-medieval period, and was traditionally regarded as a female burial ground. Only women and children were identified in the surviving skeletal material, and it has been argued that the association with a segregated women's burial ground may have extended back into the early medieval period, on the basis of Irish parallels.<sup>68</sup>

It is possible that the belt fitting was disturbed from a Norse grave within the cemetery. Examples of poorly furnished Norse-period graves from churchyards are fairly common in Ireland, the Isle of Man and England, but rarer in Scotland.<sup>69</sup> Scottish examples are known from Newark (Orkney); Kirk of St Ola (Shetland); and St Cuthbert's (Dumfries and Galloway).<sup>70</sup> Other Norse-period artefacts were found in the St Ronan's excavations, including an 11th-century Hiberno-Norse silver coin, the strip discussed below, and a bronze pin (Pin 5, Object 11 below), which is paralleled by others from Iona.<sup>71</sup> The unique decorative scheme of the Iona belt fitting, which is paralleled in the *Book of Kells*, raises the possibility that the fitting was manufactured on Iona as a local example of a widespread Atlantic type, adding to other evidence presented here that Iona was an important artistic and craftworking centre throughout the Norse period.

#### *Discussion of the Strap-Fitting's Decoration*

*By Cynthia Thickpenny*

The fitting is decorated with a single square-shaped field of Insular key pattern. This key pattern composition was chased into the metal, and its angular spiral units are unembellished except for some small triangular shapes located where their lines intersect. There are many different varieties of Insular key patterns; this specific variety has recently been recognised and termed 'mitre pattern'.<sup>72</sup> Mitre patterns are key patterns composed solely of special structures that occur only in the corners of

<sup>65</sup> O'Sullivan 1994, 338, illus 5, 384.

<sup>66</sup> Welander et al 1987, illus 8.10; Hill 1997, 623, illus 10–57.4; Walton-Rogers 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Batey 1987, 170.

<sup>68</sup> O'Sullivan 1994, 359–60.

<sup>69</sup> Harrison and Ó Floinn 2014, 294.

<sup>70</sup> Harrison 2008, 408–9, 528.

<sup>71</sup> O'Sullivan 1994, 340, no 292; illus 5, no 224.

<sup>72</sup> Thickpenny 2019.

much larger key patterns. George Bain referred to these corner structures as ‘mitring’, but he did not recognise the distinctiveness of mitre pattern as a more general type.<sup>73</sup> Recent study of the structure of these patterns has shown that there are two distinct types of mitre pattern: those derived from key pattern rows arranged in two-fold rotational symmetry, and those from key pattern rows which are mirror symmetric.<sup>74</sup> The mitre pattern on the Iona strip is of the two-fold rotational symmetric type.

Insular artists did occasionally apply key patterns of various types to metalwork. Examples include the Pictish scabbard chape from St Ninian’s Isle (Shetland, Scotland),<sup>75</sup> the Athlone crucifixion plaque (Co Westmeath, Ireland),<sup>76</sup> the chip-carved and openwork panels on the Ardagh Chalice (Co Limerick, Ireland),<sup>77</sup> and others, though key patterns were used rarely compared to interlace and spiral patterns. However, the author is not aware of any other surviving mitre patterns like that on the Iona strip in metalwork, making the Iona piece unique. Mitre patterns with two-fold rotational symmetry are nevertheless common in Insular manuscripts. While conspicuously absent from the *Lindsifarne Gospels* and the *Book of Durrow*, they are found in decorative borders in the 8th-century *Lichfield Gospels* (also known as the *St Chad Gospels*). Mitre patterns with two-fold rotational symmetry are also common in the *Book of Kells*, as within the incipit ‘E’ in the ‘Gospel of Mark’ (f. 183r) and the top left arm of the chi on the ‘Chi-Rho’ page (f. 34r). This is of significance as most specialists accept that the *Book of Kells* was made, at least partly, on Iona. They are also present on more than one folio of the late 9th-/early 10th-century *Mac Durnan Gospels*, even filling the entire cross on the ‘cross-carpet’ page (fol. 1v).<sup>78</sup> These manuscript decorations suggest that the mitre pattern on the Iona fitting was in vogue in the 8th to 10th centuries in Insular monasteries.

Mitre patterns like that on the Iona metalwork strip were also widespread in sculpture throughout early medieval Britain and Ireland. They were numerous and displayed most prominently (with two or more mitre-pattern compositions per sculpture) in Wales,<sup>79</sup> Pictland,<sup>80</sup> and in western Scotland at Keills and Kilfinan (both Argyll and Bute).<sup>81</sup> In Ireland, they cluster on the 9th- to 10th-century high crosses at Kells (Kells Market Cross, Co Meath), Monasterboice (Clonmacnoise South Cross, Co Louth), and Clonmacnoise (Muiredach’s Cross, Co Offaly), with multiple compositions typically decorating the undersides of the rings.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, on the basis of its key pattern’s physical structure and its parallels in other artworks dating to these centuries in Ireland, northern Britain, and Wales, the Iona strip was likely produced no earlier than the 8th century, and certainly no later than the 12th century, with a 9th- or 10th-century date most probable.

<sup>73</sup> Bain 1951, 75, pl 1.

<sup>74</sup> Thickpenny 2019.

<sup>75</sup> Small et al 1973, vol 2, pl 30, no 16.

<sup>76</sup> Youngs 1989, illus 141.

<sup>77</sup> Organ 1973, 254, fig 32; Walker 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Hull 2003, 105, fig 4.12.

<sup>79</sup> Edwards 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Allen and Anderson 1903.

<sup>81</sup> Fisher 2001, 44, 145.

<sup>82</sup> Harbison 1992.

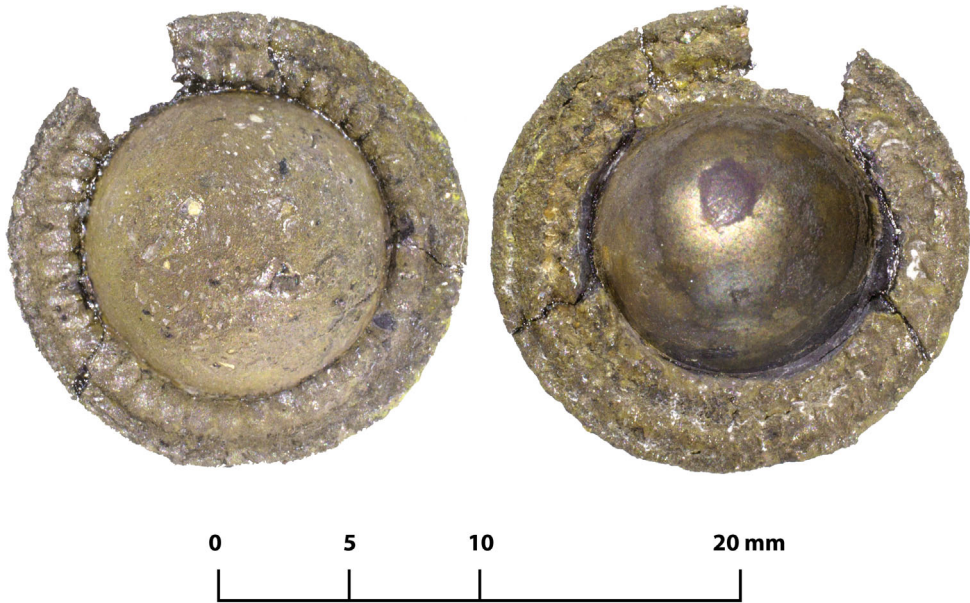


FIG 10

Silver decorative boss from Iona Abbey. Diameter 17 mm. *Photograph by Heather Christie.*

#### 5. STRAP-FITTING

Another possible strap-fitting was found in the same excavations as the previous example, no 4. This tapering copper-alloy strip has decorated borders of rope moulding, and two crudely incised lentoids around an iron rivet at one end. The narrow end is broken and bent over; it may have been a strap-end for a small buckle. No real parallels are known, but its association with a number of other Norse-period artefacts from St Ronan's suggests that it may be a local product of this period.

#### 6. SILVER ORNAMENTAL BOSS

This silver, domed boss has a flange with beaded decoration (Figs 6 and 10). It appears to have been formed by stamping from sheet silver, as the beaded decoration appears as impressions on the underside of the flange. There is no indication that this boss had a rivet, so it must have been attached by some other mechanism, such as soldering. The boss was found in McCormick's 1988 excavations in an area just north-west of the medieval abbey buildings, and was effectively unstratified. The original excavators could find no parallels, and it seems to be a unique piece in an Insular context.<sup>83</sup> However, the formal shape is similar to that of silver riveted bosses found on some Hiberno-Norse bossed penannular brooches, although these almost all have separate filigree collars rather than being made in one piece. At least some of these, one of unknown provenance, have bosses of a size approaching that of the Iona piece, and one other is soldered rather than riveted.<sup>84</sup> Further afield there are close parallels in a stud from a grave at Haugen (Ostfold, Norway), on the leather saddle from Borre (Norway),

<sup>83</sup> McCormick 1992, 86–8, fig 9, 40.

<sup>84</sup> Johansen 1973, figs 10, 58, 62.

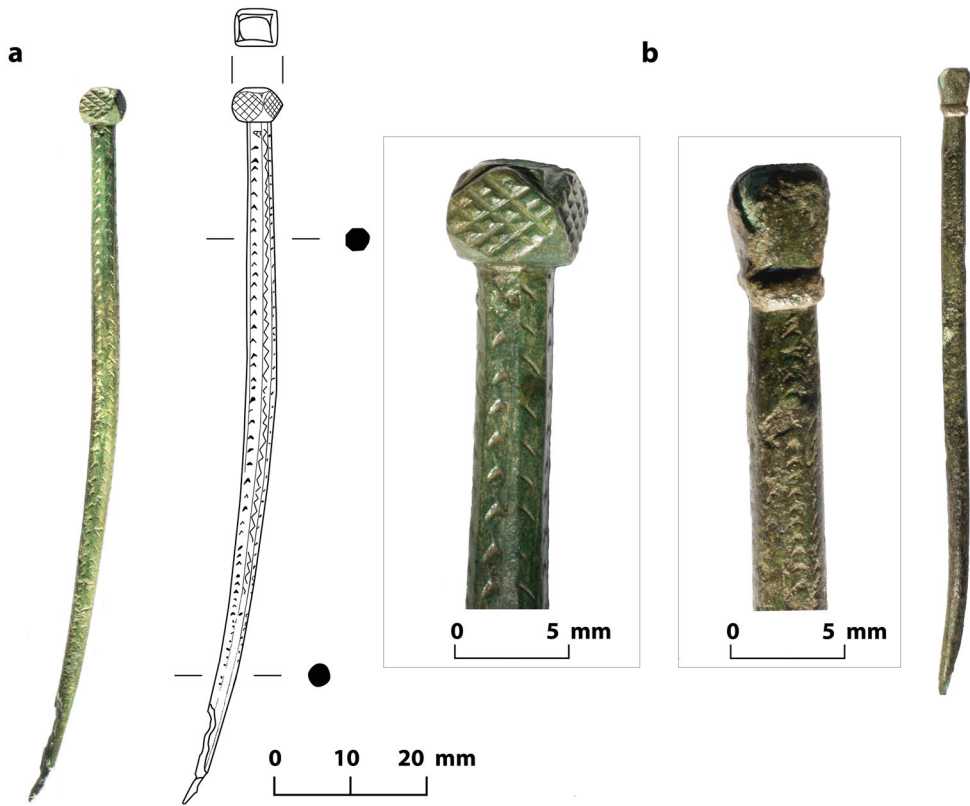


FIG 11

Decorated copper-alloy stick-pins from Iona: (a) Pin 1; (b) Pin 2. *Drawing* © Guard Archaeology Ltd., *photographs* by Heather Christie.

and on the Osberg ship's woodwork (Vestfold, Norway), though these are of pewter.<sup>85</sup> These parallels all strongly suggest a Norse milieu for the production of the boss.

## PINS

*With Colleen Batey*

Four stick-pins and a ringed-pin have been recovered from sites within and around the medieval abbey in recent years.

## 7. PIN 1

The largest and most decorated pin is a polyhedral-headed stick-pin with brambled decoration on the head, and a decorated shank (Fig 11). The faces of the octagonal shank are decorated with punched chevrons and triangles throughout the length of the pin. In its form and decoration this type of stick-pin is clearly related to the series of ringed-pins common in Hiberno-Norse contexts of 10th-/11th-century date, though it lacks the ring

<sup>85</sup> Maixner 2014, Abb 25, 35; these are of pewter. Thanks to Caroline Paterson for these references.



(there are no holes for a missing ring).<sup>86</sup> The polyhedral head form on plain ringed-pins appears in the early 10th century with a floruit around the mid-10th century, and Thomas Fanning suggests that the form was developed in Dublin.<sup>87</sup> The brambled decoration, formed by punching a grid of cross-hatched lines, however, is only found on kidney-ringed pins which have a slightly later (late 10th- or early 11th-century) floruit.<sup>88</sup> This later dating can probably be safely applied to the Iona pin. These ringed-pins are common in Ireland in both native and Norse contexts, but are also found in the Western and Northern Isles of Scotland.<sup>89</sup> The ringed-pins are often decorated on the shanks with similar motifs to the Iona pin. However, stick pins of this polyhedral-headed form are not found in Dublin, or in the later 12th-/13th-century levels at Waterford. Pin 1 also differs from the ringed-pins in the Irish corpus in a number of ways. On the Dublin ringed-pins with decorated shanks, the decoration is never found on the whole shank, but usually on the lower half, or the upper quarter, or both. None of the Dublin ringed-pins have octagonal shanks; the triangular stamped decoration is not found; and those pins with brambling usually have decoration on the side facets of the head as well as the four main faces. These differences suggest that the Iona stick-pin was produced in a local western Scottish context, using the Dublin ringed-pin as a model.

The pin has several similarities with Viking-Age metal pieces. The crude stamped decoration found on the shank has similarities with the more precise stamping found on a silver annular neck-ring from the Skaill hoard, deposited c AD 950–970 (Orkney, Scotland).<sup>90</sup> The only possible parallel to the Iona pin is a much cruder example, with a brambled head but an undecorated shank, which was found at St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, where it was noted that parallels were difficult to find.<sup>91</sup> A different type of polyhedral-headed pin is also known from York in 10th-/11th-century contexts, but these do not have brambled decoration or decorated shanks; they have ring-and-dot decoration or are plain, and they always have rounded shanks.<sup>92</sup> This York type is fairly widespread in England, for example at Meols (Merseyside), although they commonly have collars or filets below the head and are also decorated with ring-and-dot.<sup>93</sup> Lloyd Laing called the Iona type 'facet-headed stick-pins' and noted their relationship to the Hiberno-Norse ring-pins.<sup>94</sup> Much earlier early Anglo-Saxon facet-headed stick-pins are apparently an unrelated development.<sup>95</sup> The slightly bent form, which could be a result of post-depositional pressures, could equally be a deliberate design feature that could have assisted in securing the pin to the clothing. A number of similarly bent examples have been noted in the Dublin assemblage.<sup>96</sup>

In terms of the decorative style of the Iona pin, it is noticeable that an 8th-century pin from Tirefour Broch, Lismore (Argyll and Bute) has an octagonal shank.<sup>97</sup> Another

<sup>86</sup> Fanning 1994.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, fig 15.

<sup>90</sup> Graham-Campbell 1995, 114, no 24–1 and plate 34 lower.

<sup>91</sup> Graham-Campbell in Freke 2002, 311, fig 103, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Mainman and Rogers 2000, 2577, fig 1274.

<sup>93</sup> Griffiths et al 2007, eg pl 10 nos. 356–61.

<sup>94</sup> Laing 1975, 331.

<sup>95</sup> Ross 1991, Type IV.

<sup>96</sup> Eg Fanning 1994, DRP 169, fig 63; DRP173, fig 64.

<sup>97</sup> Campbell forthcoming.



pin with some of the decorative features of the Iona pin is the 7th-/8th-century silver and garnet pin from Kilellan Farm, Islay (Argyll and Bute), which also has a partly octagonal shank, decorated with rows of punched dots.<sup>98</sup> These sparse examples perhaps indicate a local metalworking tradition in western Scotland which affected local production of Hiberno-Norse types of pin.

The pin was unstratified, from an excavation in advance of new housings in the Glebe Field, 250 metres to the south of the Abbey and just outside the monastic valium.<sup>99</sup> The site also produced a fragment of a steatite bowl and a hone of Norse type, suggesting Norse occupation, possibly a market site.<sup>100</sup>

#### 8–10. PINS 2–4

These simple frustum-headed (or squared spatulate) stick-pins of copper alloy, are examples of a well-recognised type which has a wide date range. Hiberno-Norse examples are recorded from the Irish Sea region in 11th- to 12th-century contexts, from sites such as Dublin and Waterford,<sup>101</sup> and in Scotland from Whithorn.<sup>102</sup> They are usually undecorated, but here the shank of Pin 2 is decorated using a similar all-over triangular punched technique as on Pin 1, indicating that this was a local Hebridean tradition. Some Irish examples have decoration on the top quarter of the shank, but there are no pins where the entire shank is decorated, and triangular punch marks are unknown. Examples of the general type have been discussed by Batey in relation to the pin from Urquhart Castle (Grampian), where the balance of evidence available at that time suggested a proposed date range of the 11th–13th centuries.<sup>103</sup> Pin 2 is clearly of the same form, and comparable in length to the example discussed by Batey from Loch Boralie (Highland).<sup>104</sup> It is, however, less robust and the patina is less complete. Pin 3 is similar to Pin 2 in form, though slightly larger and undecorated, and is of the same date. Pin 4 is identical in form to Pin 3.

#### 11. PIN 5

Another unstratified pin, this time found in topsoil in a trench near the landing place at Martyr's Bay, was excavated during a National Trust for Scotland Thistle Camp in 2014.<sup>105</sup> This pin is from a ringed-pin, as there are bored indentations on either side of the head to hold the ring. This simple form of ringed-pin is the commonest type, found widely in Insular Hiberno-Norse contexts, especially in Dublin, though also on Irish native sites. The type has a floruit in the mid-10th century and a range from AD 920 to 1050.<sup>106</sup> In Scotland, they are found mainly in the Northern and Western Isles in areas of Norse settlement.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Ritchie 2005, 143–4, illus 90.

<sup>99</sup> Will 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Campbell and Batey 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Dublin, O' Rahilly 1973; Waterford, Scully 1997, 439–40.

<sup>102</sup> Hill 1997, 365.

<sup>103</sup> Batey 1992.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, illus 1.

<sup>105</sup> Alexander et al 2015, 10.

<sup>106</sup> Fanning 1994, 25–36.

<sup>107</sup> Fanning 1983.

## 12. HUMAN HEAD OF CAST COPPER ALLOY: STYLISTIC ANALYSIS, DATING AND DISCUSSION

*By Griffin Murray*

One of the most unusual finds from the excavation is a small cast copper-alloy human head (Fig 12). The figure is unstratified, found in dark soil lying beneath the ploughsoil immediately west of the 'Street of the Dead'. XRF analysis has shown it to be a high-tin bronze (Copper 65%; Tin 24%; Lead 2%; Zinc 0%). Although the XRF readings in this case, like the lion figurine, may be affected by corrosion, the lack of zinc in both objects is noteworthy. The head's long face and bulging eyes, although stylised,

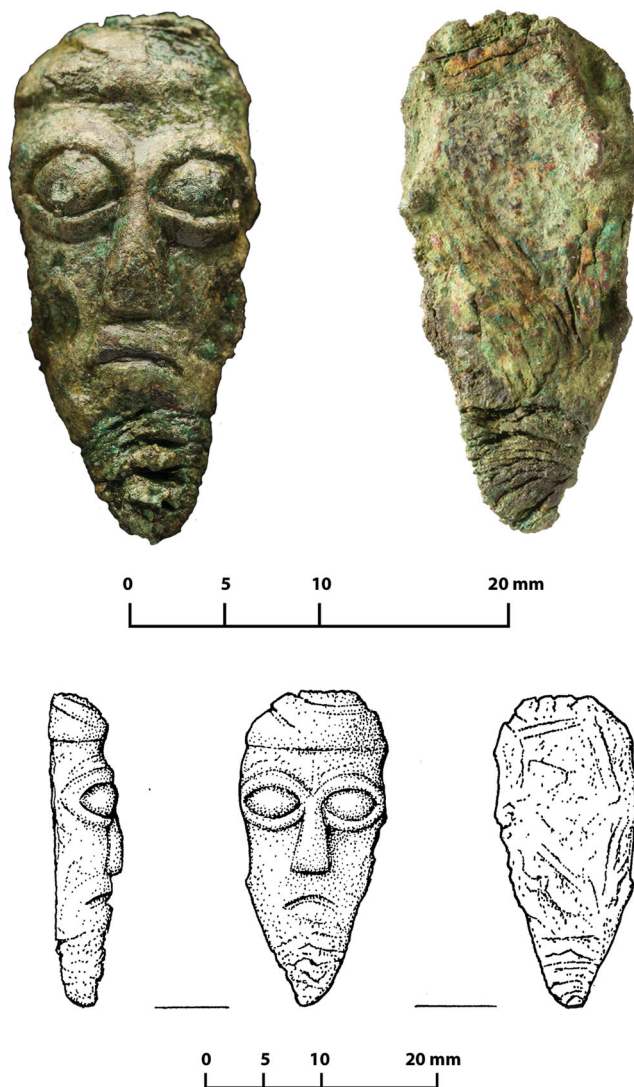


FIG 12

Copper-alloy head from Thomas's excavations. Height 26 mm. Photograph © Historic Environment Scotland; drawings by Marion O'Neil.



FIG 13

Ecclesiastical figures on St Manchan's shrine, Lemanaghan, Co Offaly. *Photograph by Griffin Murray.*

have considerable force. It is a welcome addition to the corpus of Insular figurative art, and is significant in being one of only a few examples of human representations in metal from the Christian period in Scotland before the year AD 1200. It is relatively small, measuring 26 mm long, 11 mm wide, and 4 mm thick. Stress fractures at the base of the head suggest it has been broken off something, and the flat back shows it was probably attached to a larger complex piece of metalwork.

The general features and expression of the face are typical of early medieval Insular art as exemplified, for example, on the 8th-century crucifixion plaque from St John's, Rinnagan (Co Roscommon, Ireland).<sup>108</sup> The bulbous eyes with raised rims, the straight fringe and the slightly downturned mouth are shared between the Iona head and the figures on this well-known piece. Other examples from the 8th or 9th centuries could be cited, such as the Insular figure from Myklebostad, Nordland, Norway.<sup>109</sup> However, the heads of these early examples tend, for the most part, to be broader than the Iona head. Indeed, its elongated shape sets it apart from them, and is more in accordance with later Insular examples. This may be seen in particular in the shape of human heads on a series of cast copper-alloy appliqué figures from 12th-century Ireland. Some examples comparable to the piece from Iona are the ecclesiastical figures surviving on St Manchan's shrine from Lemanaghan (Co Offaly, Fig 13).<sup>110</sup> These gilt figures are made of copper alloy and are hollow cast. The heads exhibit many of the features of the Iona piece: long visage, short hair style, bulging oval eyes, prominent nose, and beards.

<sup>108</sup> National Museum of Ireland; Harbison 1984; Youngs 1989, 140, cat no 133.

<sup>109</sup> Historisk Museum, University of Bergen; Youngs 1989, 61, cat no 51.

<sup>110</sup> Now at Boher, Co Offaly; Murray 2014a, 230–61, cat no 3.



FIG 14

Crucifix figure found during renovations of the cathedral at Iona, now at Inveraray Castle. Size unknown.  
© *Historic Environment Scotland*.

St Manchan's shrine is a complex reliquary made of a wooden core with metal mounts and sheeting. It is the largest surviving reliquary from medieval Ireland, measuring 59 cm long, 38.5 cm wide and 51 cm high, and was made to enshrine the corporeal relics of the saint. It was originally decorated on its main faces with a total of 50 appliqué figures, although only 11 now remain, which have been rearranged on one side. St Manchan's shrine is closely related in style and technique to the Cross of Cong, a processional cross now in the National Museum of Ireland, and there can be no doubt that it was made by the same master craftsman, Mael Ísu mac Bratáin Uí Echach, whose workshop appears to have been based at the monastery of Roscommon in Co Roscommon. The Cross of Cong was made in 1123 under the patronage of Turlough O'Connor, high king of Ireland; St Manchan's shrine must also date from around that time and may share a similar patronage.<sup>111</sup>

Other comparable examples to the Iona head include the cast copper-alloy figures from: St John's Priory (Co Dublin), Ballyhacket Toberclaw (Co Derry), a lost example from Co Roscommon, and a figure of a bishop from an unknown Irish site.<sup>112</sup> The similarity between these figures and those on St Manchan's shrine suggests that the group as a whole probably dates from the first half of the 12th century. It seems most likely that these single examples also derive from large complex reliquaries and that they were made in the same workshop. While these comparisons allow for an approximate dating for the Iona head, there are a number of things that mark it out as being different to these figures. For example, it does not feature the prominent ears or the straight expressionless mouths, and it also has a raised rim encircling the eyes, something not shared by the Irish figures. In addition, most of the above have far larger heads and all were hollow cast, whereas the Iona head was not.

<sup>111</sup> Murray 2014a.

<sup>112</sup> NMI; Murray 2014a, 279–2, 286, 289–90, cat nos. 6, 7, 10, 12.



FIG 15

Crucifix from Skellig Michael, Co Kerry. Height 103.5 mm. *Photograph courtesy of National Museum of Ireland.*

The narrower shape of the Iona head and those to which it has been compared above may be influenced by continental Romanesque crucifix figures. A series of Insular crucifix figures from Scotland and Ireland demonstrate this influence.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, one such figure was discovered during renovations in the ‘Cathedral’ at Iona itself (Fig 14) and is likely to date from the time of the foundation of the Benedictine monastery there around AD 1200.<sup>114</sup> While it displays the elongated head, other Irish examples such as those from Skellig Michael (Co Kerry) (Fig 15), Abbeyderg (Co Longford), and an example from Co Tyrone are more comparable stylistically to the Iona head.<sup>115</sup> Notably, the Co Tyrone figure features a very similar crown to that found on some of the Lewis chess pieces, which are generally dated to the later 12th century.<sup>116</sup> However,

<sup>113</sup> Caldwell 1982, 23–5; Ó Floinn 1987; Glenn 2003, 94–105.

<sup>114</sup> Inveraray Castle, Argyll; Caldwell 1982, 25, cat no B35.

<sup>115</sup> Ó Floinn 1987; Murray 2014b, 117–19, pls 4–6.

<sup>116</sup> Eg see Glenn 2003, 160–1, 164–5, cat nos. L1c, e. See also Caldwell and Hall 2015.

the more simplistically modelled head on the crucifix figure from Skellig Michael (Co Kerry) is the closest stylistic parallel. Like the Iona head, the head of this figure is earless and has bulging eyes, a downturned mouth, and is of similar size, measuring 29 mm long and 19 mm wide. In contrast, however, it features a crown and has a more fully modelled head measuring 15.5 mm in thickness.

It is conceivable that the Iona piece could have been a single appliqué head. Indeed, isolated heads of a similar size are relatively common on early Irish crosiers and bell-shrines. Examples include the crosier from Lismore (Co Waterford), dated to before AD 1113, and the broadly contemporary *Bearnán Chúláin* bell-shrine, from Glenkeen (Co Tipperary).<sup>117</sup> However, these heads tend to be cast with other elements rather than separately made. Nevertheless, what appear to be stress fractures on the chin or beard suggest that it was attached to something. It could well have formed the terminal of an elaborate binding strip, and its width and thickness would be in accordance with such a use. An example of this occurs on the binding strip carrying the inscription on the late 11th-century crook of the Insular crosier in the British Museum.<sup>118</sup> The use of human heads to form terminals has a long pedigree in Insular metalwork. Earlier examples include the binding strips from Wren's Island on the River Shannon (Co Westmeath),<sup>119</sup> and on a pin from Golspie (Sutherland, Highland, Scotland).<sup>120</sup>

It also remains a possibility that it formed part of a full appliqué figure. It is unlikely to have derived from a crucifix figure, as the heads of these tend to be modelled in the round, whereas the Iona head has a flat back and is more mask-like. It may have come from a shrine figure, similar to the Irish examples it has been compared to above, although it has been noted that they are far larger in scale. Nevertheless, while not directly comparable to the Iona head, a number of other cast appliqué figures from Scotland and Ireland demonstrate that such figures were not uncommon in the 12th century. These include: the figure of St John on the bell-shrine from Guthrie Castle (Angus, Scotland), which Virginia Glenn suggests was originally from Iona;<sup>121</sup> a detached figure found near the Premonstratensian abbey at Holywood (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland);<sup>122</sup> a detached example from Athenry (Co Galway, Ireland);<sup>123</sup> a detached figure of a bishop, probably originally from the Co Sligo (Ireland) collection of Roger Chambers Walker, and now in Alnwick Castle;<sup>124</sup> and a damaged figure on the side of the *Fiacail Phádraig* reliquary from Cong (Co Mayo, Ireland).<sup>125</sup>

The latter two figures are closest in scale to the Iona head. The figure now at Alnwick Castle shares the narrow head of the Iona piece and, allowing for the fact that it wears a mitre, out of all of the shrine figures its head comes closest in size to it, being 36 mm long, 23 mm wide, and 10 mm in thickness. Unfortunately, the details of its face are no longer discernible. However, it is the damaged figure on the side of the *Fiacail Phádraig* that is the best match in scale for the Iona head, demonstrating that such small

<sup>117</sup> NMI; Murray 2007; BM; Murray 2016.

<sup>118</sup> MacDermott 1955, 66, pl XXIX.

<sup>119</sup> NMI; Youngs 1989, 30, cat no 13.

<sup>120</sup> NMS; Close-Brooks 1975.

<sup>121</sup> Glenn 2003, 94–9.

<sup>122</sup> Dumfries Museum; Caldwell 1982, 26, cat no B38; Anon 1882, 417–18.

<sup>123</sup> BM; Bourke 1988, 116–17, 119, 121, pl 3a–b; McEvansoneya 2013.

<sup>124</sup> Alnwick Castle, Northumberland; Bourke 1988, 114–16, 117, 119, fig 1.

<sup>125</sup> NMI; Murray 2014a, 268, fig CAT 4:7.



figures existed. Although now headless, the remaining body of the figure measures only 33 mm long, 14 mm wide, and 5 mm in thickness. Despite the fact it was attached to the reliquary with a single nail or rivet, its narrowness suggests that it is also flat backed, like the Iona head.

All of the 12th-century appliqué figures most likely represent ecclesiastical individuals, be they saints, apostles, prophets, etc. Similar figures are also known from England,<sup>126</sup> and their occurrence there and in Scotland and Ireland is probably a result of influence from contemporary continental ecclesiastical metalwork.<sup>127</sup> This influence is very apparent in an Insular context in the case of the *Breac Maedhóg*, a reliquary from Drumlane (Co Cavan, Ireland).<sup>128</sup> This object, although portable, is clearly based on the large church-shaped reliquaries, decorated with naturalistic-looking religious figures on their sides and ends, which were made in the 11th and 12th centuries on the Continent. However, the series of shrine figures found on St Manchan's shrine and those closely related to it, although displaying influence from continental Romanesque art, are distinct in being made in a confident Insular style. In this respect, the figures on St Manchan's shrine are heavily stylised, setting them apart from the naturalistic figures on the *Breac Maedhóg* and related contemporary continental reliquaries.

One may conclude that the Iona head probably derived from a complex piece of ecclesiastical metalwork, such as a reliquary or a crosier. It may have formed the terminal of a decorative binding strip, such as occurs on the Insular crosier in the British Museum, or formed part of a small appliqué figure, as on the *Fiacail Phádraig*. A date in the 12th century seems likely on the basis of its comparanda. Stylistically, it is closely related to material found in Ireland, which may suggest that it was made there, or in Scotland under Irish influence. The head is unlikely to date as late as the foundation of the Benedictine monastery at Iona around AD 1200. It is more likely to relate to a period of activity represented by the building of the Romanesque St Oran's Chapel, sometime in the mid-12th century. Notably, this was at a time when Flaithbertach Ua Brolcháin, Abbot of Derry, was head of the Columban *familia*. Flaithbertach was responsible for a major building programme at Derry, so it would not be surprising to see new commissions for Iona at this time under his influence. In fact, officials from Iona came to Derry in 1164 to ask Flaithbertach to take up the abbacy of Iona, though he was prevented from doing so.<sup>129</sup> This brings added significance to the fact that one of the shrine figures that the Iona head was compared to was reused on a late-medieval cross found at Ballyhacket Toberclaw, not far from Derry.<sup>130</sup>

## EVIDENCE FOR GLASS-WORKING

As mentioned above, evidence for the production of glass studs inlaid with silver wire, used to decorate complex metalwork objects, was recovered from Reece's excavations in an industrial area located about 50 m north of Columba's shrine chapel.<sup>131</sup> Three moulds were found in close proximity, and were associated with a large section of

<sup>126</sup> Zarnecki et al 1984, 238, 241, cat nos. 226, 227, 231.

<sup>127</sup> Swarzenski 1967; Lasko 1994.

<sup>128</sup> NMI; Murray 2014c.

<sup>129</sup> Flanagan 2010, 167; *Annals of Ulster* 1164.

<sup>130</sup> Murray 2014a, 279–80, cat no 6.

<sup>131</sup> Reece 1981, 24, figs III.1a,b.



a 7th-century E-ware vessel and a small bell of a type which pre-figures a common Norse type.<sup>132</sup> The decorative scheme of the three moulds is identical, but is not paralleled on any existing studs. However, the design is very close to that on a roundel illustrated in the *Book of Kells* (f. 29r), suggesting close links between that manuscript and Iona. Similar studs are known to have been manufactured on monastic sites such as Iona and Portmahomack, but also on secular royal sites such as Lagore (Co West Meath, Ireland) and Garryduff (Co Cork, Ireland), although most of these have rectilinear decoration.<sup>133</sup> A smaller example which shares the curvilinear decoration of the Iona studs was found in a 7th-century Anglo-Saxon grave at Camerton (Somerset, England), and another parallel is found on the central roundels of the Ardagh Chalice.<sup>134</sup> The size of the Iona roundels (diameter 29 mm) is closer to that of roundels used to decorate house-shaped shrines than the smaller studs found on chalices and patens. It is interesting that moulds for three separate roundels were found, as most house-shaped reliquaries have three roundels. However, none of the known surviving roundels from Insular reliquaries are made of inlaid glass, though some have enamelled borders.<sup>135</sup> As with the lion figurine discussed above, these moulds are an indication that there were many types of object being produced in monasteries that have not survived.

A glass reticella rod, of green glass wound with an opaque yellow spiral trail (Appendix, no 16), was found in the same context as the lion figurine and the copper-alloy rod. Such rods were used to decorate glass vessels in the period around the 8th century, and fragments of several of these rods or vessels have been found on Insular monastic sites at Whithorn, Portmahomack, Inchmarnock, Armagh (Co Down, Northern Ireland), Brough of Birsay (Orkney, Scotland), Whitby, Monkwearmouth (Tyne and Wear, England), Beverley (East Yorkshire, England), Barking (Essex, England) and Flixborough (Lincolnshire, England), suggesting that this type of vessel may have been manufactured in monastic contexts.<sup>136</sup> Whatever its final use, the presence of such a rod proves glass-working on the site, as these rods represent a stage in the manufacture of decorative objects.

### 13. WINDOW GLASS

A group of window glass sherds (Fig 16) was one of the most unexpected finds uncovered in Thomas's assemblage. Not surprisingly, the glass was not recognised as being of early medieval date by Thomas, as early medieval window glass from Britain was only recognised following the later excavations at Jarrow (Tyne and Wear).<sup>137</sup> The manufacturing features of the glass—a pale green soda-lime-silicate, cylinder-blown with fire-rounded straight edges and grozed sides—are matched by the glass from Jarrow and other monastic sites in England, and they are easily distinguished from later-medieval window glass which is of potash composition. In Scotland, the only other early medieval window glass comes from around the 8th-/9th-century Northumbrian-period burial chapel at Whithorn.<sup>138</sup> Especially close in colour and appearance is the 7th-

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 19, fig III.1b; Campbell 2007, fig 28, E108; Schoenfelder and Richards 2011, 151.

<sup>133</sup> Carver et al 2016, 218, illus 5.7.8 and 5.7.9.

<sup>134</sup> Leeds 1936, pl xxxi, grave 5.

<sup>135</sup> Blindheim 1984.

<sup>136</sup> Campbell 2016, D99. The Inchmarnock sherd is from a Valsgärde 6 bowl.

<sup>137</sup> Cramp 1970; 2000.

<sup>138</sup> Cramp 1997, 326–32, fig 10.26.

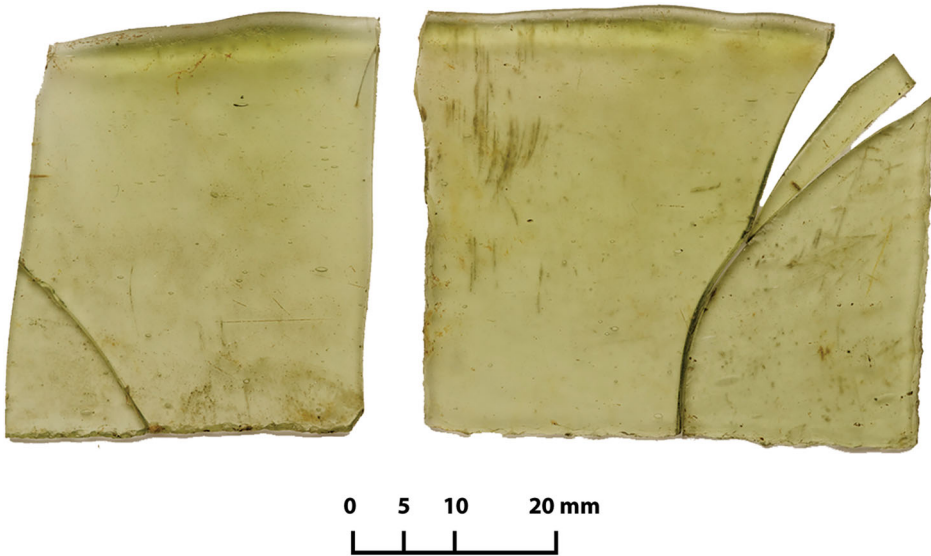


FIG 16

Sherds of early medieval window glass from Thomas's excavations, forming rectangular quarries, one with grozed edge, size 48 x 42 mm. © *Historic Environment Scotland*.

century window glass from Glastonbury Abbey (Somerset), which was probably manufactured there.<sup>139</sup> Although the Iona glass cannot be dated precisely, it must fall in the period between the reintroduction of window glass to Britain in the 7th century, and the late 9th century, when glass compositions changed to potash-rich unstable types which rarely survive. This of course is the period of the first flowering of Iona as an artistic centre and the putative period of construction of St Columba's shrine chapel.<sup>140</sup>

The glass is unstratified, being found at the base of the ploughsoil, lying on the peaty old land surface, just west of Tòrr an Aba. Unless it had fallen from a small building on the Tòrr, which seems highly unlikely, it must have been deposited as rubbish in this area and therefore gives no indication of where the glazed building stood. Nevertheless, the glass is of outstanding significance as the first early medieval window glass from Gaeldom. A lead calme for mounting glass in a window was recovered from Thomas's Cutting 24, but this is likely to be medieval and was associated with medieval stained window glass found in Reece's adjacent Old Guest House excavations.<sup>141</sup> The Whithorn glass had no associated lead calmes, and a wooden frame and calmes were suggested by Cramp, and the same could have applied at Iona.<sup>142</sup> A further two fragments of window glass from Reece's excavations to the north-west of the abbey buildings are less distinctive, but likely also to be of early medieval date as they evidence typical layering in section.

<sup>139</sup> Evison 2000; Gilchrist and Green 2015, 236.

<sup>140</sup> Ó Carragáin 2010, 78.

<sup>141</sup> Reece 1981, 36.

<sup>142</sup> Cramp 1997, 329.



FIG 17

Glass objects from Iona: (a) Blue and white cylindrical glass object from Thomas's excavations, size 18 x 10 mm; (b) Decorated bead found in the walls of Iona cathedral, diameter 15 mm. *Photographs: (a) © Historic Environment Scotland; (b) © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.*

#### 14. GLASS OBJECT

At first sight this small blue glass object, decorated with white spirals and blue and white reticella (Fig 17a), appears to be a fragment of a glass bangle of a type known from the Roman Iron Age, but it is in fact part of an ornamental cylinder or tube. Glass bangles with the same blue and white decorative elements (Kilbride-Jones Type 2) are known from central Scotland and northern England.<sup>143</sup> There is no exact parallel to the shape of the Iona object, but the colour combinations are found in beads and bangles of both the Iron Age and early medieval periods. A large annular bead from Traprain Law (East Lothian) has the same spiral spots and central twisted rod, though the rod is wavy and the body is green.<sup>144</sup> Blue beads with blue and white twisted herring-bone decoration are also known from the early medieval period — there is a fine example

<sup>143</sup> Stevenson 1956; 1976.

<sup>144</sup> Cree 1924, 269, fig 17.

from Dunadd — however, tubular beads are unknown at either period in Scotland or Ireland.<sup>145</sup> While there are tubular types of bead found in early Anglo-Saxon contexts, these are very different from the Iona example. Glass bangles were also produced in the early medieval period in Ireland, often with twisted blue-and-white cables with flanking dots, though these dots are never spirals.<sup>146</sup> However, an early medieval glass pinhead from Dromore (Co Down, Ireland) also has the combination of blue and white spiral dots and twisted cable, and another from Dundurn (Tayside, Scotland) has blue and white spiral dots, so an early medieval date cannot be ruled out for the Iona piece.<sup>147</sup> XRF analysis showed traces of antimony and tin, presumably from the opacifier used in the opaque white components. This might support a Roman-period date, as tin tended to be used as the main opacifier in the early medieval period.<sup>148</sup> Otherwise, the object may be from a complex piece of ecclesiastical metalwork, as some croziers and crosses incorporate glass studs, but there is no real parallel for the Iona object.

The findspot is residual, from soil build-up on top of the paving of the medieval, northern part of the Street of the Dead. The very battered nature of the object suggests a long period of post-depositional abrasion, perhaps ending as the keepsake of a visitor to the site.

## DISCUSSION

In contrast to the situation on the Continent, almost no Insular church furnishings survive from the early medieval period, with the exception of some church plate, mainly chalices, and reliquaries for items such as books, bells and croziers.<sup>149</sup> Documentary evidence makes it clear that some Insular monastic churches were lavishly furnished and decorated. For example, Cogitosus, in his 7th-century account of St Brigid's chapel at Kildare, mentions paintings, wall hangings and tombs adorned with gold, silver and gems, as well as foreign vestments and silver vessels.<sup>150</sup> We also know that some religious were expert craftspeople capable of producing these items: the anchorite Billfrith of Lindisfarne created the decorative cover of the Lindisfarne Gospels,<sup>151</sup> and the decoration of other illuminated manuscripts attests to the artistic skills of monks of this period. However, archaeological evidence of where these materials were produced has been lacking until recent years. The evidence presented here demonstrates that complex decorative metalwork was being produced on Iona in the 8th century, probably incorporating decorative glass items, as shown by the stud moulds. The recently published excavations at Portmahomack (Highland, Scotland) provide contemporary evidence of further glass-working, vellum production, and possible chalice making, while at Whithorn, glass vessel-making has been posited.<sup>152</sup> In Anglo-Saxon England, glass-working has been established at early monasteries such as Glastonbury (Somerset), Jarrow (Northumberland), Whitby (North Yorkshire), and Barking (Essex), suggesting that

<sup>145</sup> Mannion 2015, type 10A, fig 35; Lane and Campbell 2000, pl 23.

<sup>146</sup> Carroll 2001.

<sup>147</sup> Mannion 2015, fig 80; Alcock et al 1989, illus 14, 26.

<sup>148</sup> Henderson 2000, 150.

<sup>149</sup> Ryan 1989.

<sup>150</sup> Connolly and Picard 1987, 25–6.

<sup>151</sup> Gameson 2013, 25.

<sup>152</sup> Campbell 1997, 314, Group E vessels.

ecclesiastical sites were important production centres for church furnishings. Evidence for fine metalworking at monastic sites is much sparser, with only scattered debris from Glastonbury and Whitby, although moulds for decorative plaques from Hartlepool (Cleveland, England) suggest that this activity may have been more widespread.<sup>153</sup> As at Iona, the actual workshops have not been located, and may have lain in peripheral areas of the sites.

The lion figurine is a unique object which expands our understanding of the types of artefact being produced at this period. The close parallels in the decorative features of the lion to images in the *Book of Kells*, and the prominent lion figures on some of the Iona crosses, suggest that the figurine could well have been produced on Iona. There is growing evidence that the 8th century saw a period of large-scale restructuring of the ritual landscape at Iona, with the construction of high crosses, a paved roadway, an impressive vallum, shrine chapels and other features related to pilgrimage activities.<sup>154</sup> Along with the evidence for extensive iron working at this period, the new metalwork finds suggest that Iona was also furnishing these shrines and chapels with complex religious metalwork which would have rivalled the well-known contemporary pieces from Ireland. The new finds add to the sparse physical evidence for production of ecclesiastical metalwork known from monasteries such as Portmahomack, Whithorn, and Armagh.<sup>155</sup>

The window glass from Iona is the first evidence that early medieval buildings in the Gaelic-speaking world of Ireland and western Scotland had glazed windows, like their Anglo-Saxon contemporaries. It may be that Iona is a special case, perhaps because of its close links with Northumbria, or it could be that glass sherds have not been recognised on other sites due to their similarity to modern glass. Whatever the case, it adds to an emerging picture of much greater sophistication of architecture in early medieval Iona than has been previously suspected.

Most of the other metalwork discussed here, including the five pins, the binding strip, the silver boss, and the human figurine, date to the Norse period, and some are distinctively Hiberno-Norse in style. While it could be argued that these are all casual losses, there are a number of reasons to suspect that they derive from Norse or hybrid Norse/Gaelic settlement on Iona. Firstly, reassessment of the historical sources has overturned the idea that Iona was abandoned as a result of Norse raids from around 800, and has shown that Iona remained the head of the Columban *familia* at least into the 10th century.<sup>156</sup> Certainly, by the late 10th century it had become a 'holy isle' for the Norse ex-king of Dublin Amlaíb Cuarán (Olaf Sihtricsson), a promoter of the Columban cult, who retired to the monastery on Iona as a penitent, and was buried there in 980.<sup>157</sup> Secondly, these add to an already impressive assemblage of metalwork of the 10th to 12th centuries from Iona. This includes a late 10th-century hoard of coins and bullion from the abbey as well as gold and silver artefacts, including a Hiberno-Norse coin and a gold ring, from St Ronan's Church.<sup>158</sup> There is also an unpublished late 10th-century Scandinavian bead of Callmer's type B090 from the cathedral

<sup>153</sup> Daniels 1988.

<sup>154</sup> Campbell and Maldonado forthcoming.

<sup>155</sup> Carver et al 2016; Hill 1997, 400–4; Gaskell-Brown and Harper 1984.

<sup>156</sup> Clancy 1996; 2004; 2011; 2013; Dumville 1997; Márkus 2017, 244–7.

<sup>157</sup> Downham 2007, 190–1.

<sup>158</sup> Curle 1924; Stevenson 1951; Graham-Campbell 1995, 22, 49–50, 147, 166–7.

(Fig 17b, Appendix, no 15). Thirdly, the Glebe Field excavations that produced Pin 1 also produced a fragment of a steatite vessel and a Norse-style hone, strongly suggesting occupation, possibly associated with a beach market.<sup>159</sup> Lastly, many of the grave-slabs and at least one high cross from the monastery date from the 10th/11th centuries. This collection of both high-status and more mundane items surely must derive from more than casual visits. The fact that the strap-fitting and Pin 1 both show stylistic features which indicate local production, as do the gold fillets and the 12th-century Guthrie bell-shrine, which has been suggested as an Iona product,<sup>160</sup> reinforces the evidence of the human head figurine that production of decorative metalwork such as shrines was ongoing at Iona into the late Norse period. We should not be surprised that secular as well as ecclesiastical artefacts were being produced, and presumably traded, on an important monastic site, as evidence from Ireland is revealing industrial-scale production of secular artefacts at monasteries such as Armoy (Co Antrim) by the 9th century.<sup>161</sup> The distribution of these Norse period items is of interest, as four of the five pins have been found in areas outside the monastic enclosure (see Fig 1), suggesting widespread secular occupation of the island at this period.

## CONCLUSIONS

It has been proposed here that complex decorative metalwork and glass artefacts were being produced on Iona from at least the 8th century, that this work was situated within the monastic enclosure, and that it probably included pieces from reliquaries or shrine fittings. The assumption is that this craftwork was being carried out by monks, and the fact that decorative details on the lion figurine and the glass roundels are closely paralleled in the *Book of Kells* supports this view. The lack of exact parallels for the objects being produced is illustrative of the partial nature of the surviving record of ecclesiastical artefacts from the early medieval period. It seems that at Iona the church buildings were furnished with impressive shrines similar to those described by Cogitosus at Kildare. Metalworking continued on the site into the Norse period, and the human head figure could also represent local production of shrines at this time, alongside the more mundane and secular pins and strap-fittings which show local variations on more general Hiberno-Norse types. As in some of their more important contemporary Anglo-Saxon monasteries, church buildings were furnished with glass windows, and glass studs were used to decorate liturgical vessels. The evidence from Iona adds to a small but growing group of early monastic sites which have produced evidence of production of decorative fittings, and point to these ecclesiastical sites as major craft centres similar in scale to those known from major secular power centres.

Finally, it is notable that several of the objects discussed here were effectively unstratified, but despite this they have revealed a great deal of important information. Unstratified material is often not given the full attention it deserves, for example in not being sent to specialists along with the stratified material. The author has encountered several examples where unstratified material has completely transformed understanding of a site; for example, the recognition of a middle Anglo-Saxon glass inkwell at

<sup>159</sup> Campbell and Batey 2017.

<sup>160</sup> Glenn 2003, 67.

<sup>161</sup> Stevens 2017.



Auldham proved that the site was monastic rather than a small chapel, and led to a complete reinterpretation of the excavated evidence.<sup>162</sup> The re-examination of older excavation archives and museum collections, combined with new scientific dating techniques, has thrown significant new light on how Iona and other Insular monasteries were decorated, and emphasises their role as important craft centres.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

An [appendix](#) of a detailed catalogue of the artefacts is available online.

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<sup>162</sup> Crone and Hindmarch 2016, 138.



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*Résumé*

**Ameublement d'un monastère du haut Moyen-Âge : nouvelles données provenant de l'île d'Iona** par Ewan Campbell avec Colleen Batey, Griffin Murray et Cynthia Thickpenny

Ce papier s'attache à décrire et à examiner la signification de plusieurs objets en métal et en verre provenant de l'important monastère du haut Moyen-Âge sur l'île d'Iona, en Écosse (Argyll and Bute). Les objets sont issus principalement de fouilles antérieures n'ayant jamais été publiées, particulièrement celles de Charles Thomas entre 1956 et 1963. On y trouve des objets uniques tels qu'une figurine de lion du 8<sup>e</sup> siècle et une tête humaine du 12<sup>e</sup> siècle, toutes deux en alliage de cuivre. Ces trouvailles attestent pour la première fois d'une production ecclésiastique à caractère complexe faisant intervenir le travail du métal, comme des reliquaires à Iona, et figurent parmi les rares objets de ce genre ayant été découverts dans le contexte de fouilles. Des fragments de vitre du haut Moyen-Âge montrent que les bâtiments de l'ancien monastère étaient plus sophistiqués qu'on ne le pensait, et des moules ainsi qu'une canne de verre « a reticello » pointent en direction du travail décoratif du verre. Plusieurs épingles en alliage de cuivre, des attaches de sangle et d'autres pièces décoratives datées du 9<sup>e</sup> et 10<sup>e</sup> siècles montrent une occupation significative à la période scandinave, et probablement des traditions de travail du métal qui se poursuivent tout au long du haut Moyen-Âge. Prises ensemble, ces nouvelles découvertes révèlent que le monastère d'Iona renfermait des tombeaux et reliquaires richement décorés, aussi sophistiqués que les manuscrits illuminés et les monuments sculptés dont on sait qu'ils étaient produits dans le monastère.

*Zusammenfassung*

**Die Innenausstattung eines frühmittelalterlichen Klosters: Neue Zeugnisse aus Iona** von Ewan Campbell mit Colleen Batey, Griffin Murray und Cynthia Thickpenny

Dieser Artikel beschreibt und diskutiert den Stellenwert einiger Fundstücke aus Metall und Glas aus dem bedeutenden frühmittelalterlichen Kloster auf der Insel Iona, Argyll und Bute, Schottland. Die Funde stammen hauptsächlich aus bislang unveröffentlichten

Ausgrabungen, insbesondere jenen von Charles Thomas aus den Jahren 1956-63. Unter den Fundstücken befinden sich einzigartige Gegenstände wie eine Löwenfigur aus dem 8. Jahrhundert sowie ein menschlicher Kopf aus dem 12. Jahrhundert, jeweils aus Kupferlegierung. Die Funde belegen erstmals die Herstellung komplexer kirchlicher Metallarbeiten wie Reliquierschreine in Iona und zählen zu den wenigen Gegenständen solcher Art, die aus Grabungskontexten gesichert wurden. Frühmittelalterliche Fensterglasfragmente zeigen, dass die Bauten der frühen Klöster raffinierter waren als bisher angenommen, und Gussformen und ein Fadenglasstab deuten auf dekorative Glasarbeiten hin. Eine Reihe von Nadeln, Riemenbeschlägen und anderen dekorativen Gegenständen aus Kupferlegierung aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert lassen eine signifikante Besetzung während der altnordischen Zeit erkennen, und deuten auf das Fortbestehen von Schmiedekunsttraditionen durch die frühmittelalterliche Periode hindurch hin. In ihrer Gesamtheit zeigen diese neuen Funde erstmals, dass Iona mit kunstvoll verzierten Schreinen und Reliquieren ausgestattet war, die ähnlich raffiniert wie die illustrierten Manuskripte und gemeißelten Monumente waren, die bekanntermaßen im Kloster hergestellt wurden.

*Riassunto*

**Gli arredi di un monastero altomedievale: nuove testimonianze da Iona** di Ewan Campbell con Colleen Batey, Griffin Murray e Cynthia Thickpenny

In questo studio si descrivono diversi manufatti in metallo e in vetro provenienti dall'importante monastero altomedievale dell'isola di Iona nell'area amministrativa di Argyll e Bute in Scozia e se ne discute l'importanza. I reperti provengono per la maggior parte da scavi precedenti non pubblicati, specialmente quelli condotti da Charles Thomas tra il 1956 e il 1963. Ne fanno parte oggetti unici nel loro genere, quali la statuetta di un leone dell'VIII secolo e quella di una testa umana del XII secolo, entrambe in lega di rame. Questi reperti attestano per la prima volta la fabbricazione a Iona di elaborati oggetti ecclesiastici in metallo quali i reliquiari e sono tra i pochi del loro genere a essere stati recuperati nel contesto di scavi. I frammenti di vetro di finestre altomedievali

rivelano che gli edifici dei primi monasteri erano più raffinati di quanto si credesse prima, e gli stampi e un'asta in vetro con filigrana a reticello denotano la lavorazione decorativa del vetro. Diversi ardiglioni in lega di rame, fermagli per cinghie e altri oggetti decorativi del IX e X secolo attestano un impiego rilevante durante il periodo vichingo e la probabile continuazione delle tradizioni

di lavorazione dei metalli durante tutto il periodo altomedievale. Nell'insieme questi nuovi reperti cominciano a mettere in luce il fatto che Iona era dotata di tabernacoli e reliquiari riccamente ornati paragonabili, quanto a raffinatezza, ai manoscritti miniati e ai monumenti scolpiti prodotti, come è noto, nel monastero.