Ì CHALUIM CHILLE
CO-LABHAIRT EADAR-DHREUCHDAIL
9-10 AN DÙBHLACHD 2021

Columba and Iona: An Interdisciplinary
Conference, 9-10 December 2021

Papers and sessions

Keynote Lectures

Prof Thomas Charles Edwards 'Iona and the Sea'

Dr Heather Pulliam 'The Tabernacle in the Sun: St. Martin's Cross, the Book of Kells, and Iona's Viewscape'

Dr Tomás Ó Carragáin 'From Seascape to Interior: monastic landscapes of Iona's contemporaries in the Irish midlands'

Session 1: Adomnán's *Vita Sancti Columbae*

1.1 'The discovery of a new continental version: The Berlin fragment of the *Vita sancti Columbae Adamnani*'
Stefanie Bellach, Freie Universität Berlin / Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut

Abstract: This paper focuses the discovery of a new manuscript fragment of the Vita sancti Columbae Adamnani in the Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin. The fragment is an excerpt from the (far more numerous surviving) abridged version of the vita, that I date to the beginning of the 11th century. Based on the names of persons and places used, this paper presents clues to the period of origin as well as to a possible context of origin – although not conclusively. Its relationship to the other text versions can be deduced primarily because of the reproduced errors and their corrections. Since the Berlin Fragment is probably the fifth oldest copy, its age points to a hitherto unknown intermediate stage in the tradition of the vita and provides a new perspective on the continental transmission and dissemination of the Vita Sancti Columbae.

1.2 'Columba, Adomnán, and John: Signs of the Fourth Gospel in the *Vita Columbae*'
Prof Elizabeth M. G. Krajewski, Colby-Sawyer College

Abstract: Examinations of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* have identified dependencies on Sulpicius' *Vita Martini,* Gregory's *Dialogi,* Evagrius' *Vita Antonii* and others, with the majority of scholars emphasizing its roots in Hellenistic aretalogy and a broad tendency to categorize episodes *per species.* To date none have identified structural dependency on any part of the Bible. This paper will examine parallels between the Fourth Gospel and the *Vita Columbae,* arguing that while verbatim dependence may be limited, there is ample evidence of imitation in the form of structural patterning. Close reading of the *Life* reveals significant structural patterning on the Gospel of John, including the organization of the Fourth Gospel into Prologue – Book of Signs – Book of Glory – Epilogue. Adomnán's division of his text into a Book of Prophecies followed by a Book of Miracles and a Book of Visions may be seen as imitative of the gospel structure, beginning with a prologue

identifying the saint's holy origin, and concluding with a death narrative which emphasizes signs of divine "glory." Parallels with the Fourth Gospel magnify appreciation for the scope of the *Life.*

1.3   "You won't get better": Adomnán's strategies for defending monastic enclosure
Gilbert Márkus, University of Glasgow

Abstract: There are various aspects of Adomnán's Vita Columbae which suggest that Columba was concerned to limit the access of lay visitors to the monastic island of Iona. Bearing in mind that this is a work by the ninth abbot about the first abbot, we may assume that the stories he tells us about Columba's abbatial strategies reflect his own agenda as abbot of the same monastery.
There is a gross imbalance in the provision of place-names recorded in the Life, with vastly more place-names elsewhere in Britain and in Ireland being recorded than those on Iona itself, as if even naming places on Iona might encourage visitors and threaten its clausura.
The abbot supervises very strictly what happens at the harbours – the point of access to the monastic space. There are several stories about visitors: they might be welcomed on certain conditions, kept at a distance, or simply sent away.
The power of Columba to heal the sick and injured is certainly stressed, but his healing miracles are part of a rhetoric of distancing for lay people and proximity for monks.

Session 2: Hagiographic Intertextuality

2.1   'Saints Columba and Comgall: Adventurers in Hagiographic Intertextuality'
Dr Carolyn McNamara, University of Glasgow

Abstract: This paper seeks to examine the intertextuality between Adomnán's Life of St Columba and the likely twelfth century Life of St Comgall in Plummer's Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae. Of special interest is §51 of Comgall's Life, wherein Comgall (and Cainnech) are included in Columba's trip to visit King Bruide of Pictland (described in VC II.35), with Comgall undertaking important actions in the story. Taken in the context of the treatment of Columba throughout Comgall's Life, and in consideration of what was going on in and around the Communities of Comgall and Columba during the twelfth century, I will discuss possible reasons why the author of Comgall's Life may have chosen to insert Comgall into the visit to King Bruide and insert Columba into Comgall's Life in the way that they did. This is further intended to examine the possible relationships (or desired relationships) which may have existed between the two Communities during the twelfth century and the composition of Comgall's Life.

2.2   'Sanctus ex machina: Colum Cille in the Lives of Other Saints'
Courtney Selvage, Ulster University

Abstract: The medieval and early modern memory of Colum Cille is most clearly preserved in his own hagiographic tradition between Adomnán's Vita Columbae, his Middle Irish life, and Maghnus Ó Domhnáill's Betha Colaim Chille. Colum Cille appears elsewhere in medieval and early modern Irish literature, and most notably in the medieval and early modern hagiography of other Irish saints. In Vita Sancti Baithini and its Irish translation, the saint is intentionally used to legitimise the sanctity of Baithéne, his immediate successor in the abbacy of Iona. In later lives such as Betha Berach and Betha Máedóc Ferna, Colum Cille is intentionally utilised in the texts to underscore the saints' claim to church land, assist in the interpretation of angelic visions, and to ensure the tribute to be paid to their respective monasteries This paper will therefore explore the understudied and underlying themes of Colum Cille's appearances in the hagiography of other saints in the sense of their representations of the cultural memory of Colum Cille from the later medieval Irish perspective.

Session 3: Columban Tales

3.1   'Columba, Iona and the poetics of place: the poem *Mellach lem bith i n-ucht ailiuin*'
Prof Thomas Clancy, University of Glasgow

Abstract: tbc

3.2   'Colum Cille and the Sod of Death'
Prof John Carey, University College Cork

Abstract: The poem *Trí fótáin nach sechainter*, on the inescapability of fate, is attributed to Colum Cille in Maghnas Ó Domhnaill's Life of the saint. In this paper it will be argued that Colum Cille's association with the concept of the "sod of death" is already reflected in Old Irish, and indeed in Adomnán's *Vita Sancti Columbae*.

3.3   '"*Inter cetera monstra*": Uilebheistean ann an naomh-sheanchas Chaluim Chille' [*Inter cetera monstra:* Monsters in Columban hagiography]
Dr Duncan Sneddon

Abstract: Anns a' phàipear seo, bidh mi a' sgrùdadh nan sgeul ann an naomh-sheanchas Chaluim Chille (an dà chuid ann an Laideann agus anns a' Ghàidhlig) anns a bheil uilebheistean a' nochdadh. Chì sinn mar a tha na sgeulachdan agus na h-uilebheistean annta ag atharrachadh thairis air na linntean, le eadar-obrachadh eadar àrd-litreachas cràbhach agus beul-aithris na Gàidhlig. Beachdachaidh sinn air Vita Sancti Columbae Adomnáin, am Betha Coluim Cille gun urra agus an dà naomh-sheanchas on 16mh linn: an Vita ann am meadarachd le Ruaraidh MacGilleathain agus an t-omnigatherum mòr sin, Betha Colaim Chille le Manas Ó Domhnaill.

This paper will examine the episode in Columban hagiography (both Latin and vernacular) in which monsters appear. We shall see how the stories and the monsters in them change over the centuries, with the interaction of high religious literature and Gaelic oral tradition. The texts under consideration will be Adomnán's Vita Sancti Columbae, the anonymous Betha Coluim Cille and the two sixteenth-century hagiographies: Roderick MacLean's verse Vita and that great omnigatherum, the Betha Colaim Chille of Manus Ó Dhomhnaill.

Session 4: Politics and cult in the Columban familia

4.1   'Contested Succession at Iona (704–26)'
Patrick McAlary, University of Cambridge

Abstract: The first eight successors of Columba (from Baithéne to Adomnán) succeeded to the abbacy of Iona without comment from the annalists. Adomnán's successor, Conamail, fits this pattern — the only thing recorded for him is an obituary notice for 710. However, an entry for the year 707 exhibits something unusual: a succession notice. This anomaly kicks of a short-lived phenomenon where obit and succession notices are recorded for Iona's abbots.
This break with established practice suggests that something was happening on Iona. That it was not simply a change of fashion is exhibited in an entry for 724, which combines an obit and a succession in a single entry which looks like it was designed to signal that normalcy had been restored to the abbacy. From 726, the standard practice (of only recording obits) is resumed.
Despite this, the evidence is not robust enough to explain what exactly was happening, and why. Many attempts have been made to solve this conundrum and explanations have included the Easter

Controversy, dynastic strife in Dál Riata, organisational change, aging abbots, and the sentiment that we can never know.

While previous commentators have focused on eligibility criteria for the abbacy (most abbots had a Cenél Conaill affiliation), there is a tendency to gloss over questions about how the abbacy passed from one holder to his successor. This paper proposes to view the period of contested succession through this lens and will provide a new framework for understanding this peculiar period in Iona's history.

4.2   'Dunkeld, St Columba and the Eleventh-Century Scottish kingdom'
Dr Neil McGuigan, University of St Andrews

Abstract: In the eleventh century the offspring of an abbot of the Columban house of Dunkeld secured the kingship of Scotland, establishing the ruling dynasty that presided over the polity until the 1280s. In this paper we will look at evidence for the church of St Columba of Dunkeld c. 1000 suggesting that it had become the major focus of the cult of St Columba in northern Britain and also a monastic site of under-appreciated international importance. We will try to understand how the significance of the institution may have intersected with the forces that led to the rise of the 'House of Dunkeld' in the Scottish kingdom, and with the expansion of the family's power into neighbouring regions of Britain.

4.3   '"The Iona of the East": Inchcolm, Dunkeld and the cult of Columba in eastern Scotland'
Dr Simon Taylor, University of Glasgow

Abstract: There were two foci for the cult of Columba in eastern Scotland: Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth and Dunkeld in Stormont. This paper will concentrate on Inchcolm, first exploring its close links with Dunkeld, rooted in their shared dedication to Columba. It will then examine the role Inchcolm played in the maintenance of the cult of Columba in eastern Scotland.

Session 5: Iona in its wider maritime context

5.1   'Where next with the archaeology of the Columban monastery?'
Dr Ewan Campbell, University of Glasgow

Abstract: Recent years have seen a large amount of work on the archaeology of Iona, including surveys and excavations, much of it based on unpublished archive material. A number of major publications have resulted from this work, but there is much unpublished material still coming to light, as well as new excavations being undertaken the University of Glasgow around the Abbey and around the nunnery by Claire Ellis. This paper takes the opportunity to discuss some of the issues raised by this work and point to further work that could be carried out.

5.2   '"Rowing Through the Infinite Storm": Iona's mental map of its Ocean geography in the Life of Columba'
John Angus Macaulay

Abstract: Iona used a series of mental maps to understand its political and spiritual relationships in the British Isles and the wider world. This phenomenon has been observed previously in Adomnán's Life of Columba and De Locis Sanctis. A mental map of concentric circles can be applied to Iona's understanding of its ocean geography. Those nearby waters of Dál Riata provided little risk; the waters of Pictland challenged the monks and had the possibility of monsters; the open ocean and the far Atlantic, the 'infernal zone', was a far more existential test. How the monks interacted with

each 'circle' surrounding their island reveals an essential anxiety for the monks of Iona. A rogue wave, a rising whale, a heavy storm that could sink their boats: these reveal how Iona understood its ocean surroundings. The peril of maritime travel these monks feared was not the risk to life, but the temptation to break one's faith. To break faith in their religious mission, in the power of Columba, in salvation itself. This danger increased as the monks strayed from the power of St Columba, step by step away from Iona, to where he alone could not help you.

5.3 'Ecclesiastic continuities and discontinuities in Iona and the wider North Channel, c.AD500–1400'
Dr Russell Ó Ríagáin

Abstract: This paper will present some of the outcomes of a ten-year transdisciplinary research project on settlement and socio-political dynamics in the Iron Age and medieval North Channel, the body of water that has separated and connected northern Ireland and western Scotland. Taking a source-critical and first-principles approach, the paper will treat a variety of categories of dating evidence (radiocarbon curves, artefact chronologies, documentary references) visually, quantitatively and quantitatively. It will then compare these combined representations of the evidence with those from other North Channel sites such as Bangor, Movilla, Downpatrick, Lismore and Kingarth paying particular attention to the continuities and discontinuities in the evidence. Having done that, the paper will finish by situating the evidence from Iona and its neighbours within the wider context of the events and processes ongoing c.AD500–1400. These include the transition from viking raiding to the formation of Scandinavian-diasporic settler communities, ecclesiastic reforms in the twelfth century, and the competing projects of state- and empire formation involving a variety of North Atlantic magnates and kings across the entire period, not least those in the thirteenth century involving the kings of Scotland, England and Norway, and a variety of regional actors.

Session 6: Saintly seascapes: Comparative perspectives on island and coastal monasteries

6.1 'Early medieval monasticism on the North Sea coast of England'
Dr David Petts, University of Durham

Abstract: tbc

6.2 'Coastal monasteries in the Viking Age: The view from Scotland'
Dr Adrián Maldonado, National Museum of Scotland

Abstract: The first recorded Viking raids in Scotland occur on Iona. The transferral of relics of St Columba to two inland sites at Kells, Co. Meath and Dunkeld, Perthshire in the ninth century has often been read as a diminution of the status of Iona after these initial Viking raids, but historical work has not borne this out, and archaeological evidence supports an unbroken occupation of Iona through the medieval period. Repeated archaeological investigations at Iona have found no evidence convincing evidence for attacks, but burning layers and blade wounds have been attributed to Viking raids at the affiliated monastery of Portmahomack. Thanks to recent excavations at Iona and Portmahomack, we can begin to chart the changes of the 8-12th centuries more widely beyond searching for Vikings, and a complex picture emerges of economic transformation rather than decline. In Scotland more widely, a number of church sites, including Iona, display evidence of Viking-age memorials, from furnished burials to runic grave markers. This paper will synthesise recent archaeological evidence from coastal monasteries across Scotland before, during and after the age of raids, in order to assess the changing relationship between power, faith and the sea at the turn of the millennium.

6.3 'Facing the Sea: hagiography and early monasticism in Iona and Landévennec'
Dr Anouk Busset, Universities of Glasgow and Lausanne

Abstract: The early archaeology of the monastery of Landévennec, Brittany, is obscure. Indeed, most studies of the site have so far focused on the Romanesque period and later, when major manuscripts were being produced in its scriptorium. Amongst its most famous documents is the Cartulaire, which records the hagiography of its founding saint, St Guénolé. Following the written sources and the early archaeology of the place, there seems to be many similarities with the establishment and development of Iona. This paper will therefore explore and compare the foundation myths and archaeology of both monasteries and their development in the early medieval period. It will particularly focus on the role of their founding saints, St Columba and St Guénolé, and how their names and myths contributed to establishing the prominence and influence of the monasteries in the following centuries. This paper will further explore the special relationship between the sea and the monasteries, intrinsically connected to their foundation myths.

Session 7: The Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells

7.1 'Finding Columba in the Book of Kells (Referencing Relics and Recycling Motifs)'
Dr Donncha MacGabhann

Abstract: The idea that the Book of Kells is connected with Saint Columba has a long history. The earliest evidence may date back to a 1007 entry in the Annals of Ulster. This mentions 'the Great Gospel of Colum Cille,' past interpretations of which suggest that this book (probably Kells) was written by the saint (or belonged to him). Scholars now generally agree that this is palaeographically impossible and there is support instead for the notion that this eighth/ninth century book was created to celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of the saint's death (597).
The paper investigates the possibility that there may be two tangible sources of evidence, within the manuscript, linking it with Columba. In the first instance, the iconography of ff. 2v-3r in Kells' Canon Tables may reveal references to relics traditionally associated with the saint (including his white robe, his flabellum, his stylus and a house-shaped reliquary). In the second instance, an unusual motif, used to decorate many of Kells' letters, may be linked with the Cathach; this manuscript has long been associated with Columba (himself a prolific scribe), and, unlike Kells, may be contemporary with him

7.2 'The "Pictishness" of the Book of the Kells, Revisited'
Dr Victoria Thompson Whitworth

Abstract: There are numerous elements in the art of the Book of Kells which resonate closely with Pictish sculpture. These have been catalogued and analysed most carefully by Isabel Henderson (1982), while Julian Brown explored the possibility of a Pictish origin for the manuscript on more palaeographical grounds (1972). While Iona has become generally accepted as the Book's birthplace in the scholarly narrative, the evidence supporting this hypothesis is tenuous, and the manuscript's 'Pictishness' demands acknowledgement. This paper re-evaluates the evidence in the aftermath of the recent excavations at Portmahomack on the Tarbat peninsula. It also examines some of those 'Pictish' instances in the light of convincing new theories about the creation of the Book of Kells (MacGabhann 2015), and it asks how those instances fit into the *modus operandi* of the manuscript as a whole. Given the mobility of scribes and books, as well as the fact that Iona was part of 'Greater Pictland' during the probable period of the Book of Kells' creation, it is impossible to draw firm

conclusions about the manuscript's origin. It is, however, possible to ask why and how the artists chose to work in such a Pictish idiom.

7.3   'An Atmosphere of Pictish Ambience: Assessing the Relationship between the Book of Durrow's Non-Hieronymian Tetramorph and Pictish Stonework'
Alexander D'Alisera, Boston College

Abstract: The Book of Durrow's curious switching of the Markan and Johannine evangelical symbols—contrary to the Hieronymian Tetramorph—has long been dismissed as nothing more than a return to Irenaeus's second-century hermeneutical formulation. This paper rejects the notion that a minor section of an ancient theological text was the primary force behind this major artistic intervention. Instead, following in the scholarly tradition of studying Pictish stonework alongside Insular manuscripts, I reconsider this symbol-switching in light of the Pictish material record. Combining the anthropological frameworks of ambient text and the archaeology of atmosphere into what I call "an atmosphere of Pictish ambience," I argue that this symbolic switch serves as an evocation of Pictish social spatiality, remediated from three-dimensional stonework into an Insular manuscript. I thus demonstrate that the Durrow artist's rendering of the Tetramorph in Pictish terms may be read as a spatialized expression that facilitated Pictish exposure to concepts codified in Columban sacred texts. Concluding with a discussion of the experience of individual mobility between Iona and Pictland along the Great Glen, I argue that the symbolic switch ultimately reveals the Book of Durrow to be the work of an Ionan artist well-versed in the visual vocabulary of his Pictish neighbors.

Session 8: Columban sculpture and architecture

8.1   'Hierarchies of scale in insular tomb-shaped shrines'
Dr Cormac Bourke

Abstract: With reference to the debate about the function(s) of these portable boxes, I propose (i) that a sub-group can be identified as reliquaries (not chrismals) by the presence of a miniature architectural detail at the centre of the ridge and (ii) that Iona was where the iconography was devised.

8.2   'Columban Crosses: Iona and the Development of the Freestanding Cross'
Christina Cowart-Smith, University of Durham

Abstract: This paper reassesses the sculptural relationship between Iona and its monastic neighbours in the archipelagic context of western Scotland. The free-standing ('high') cross assemblage at Iona is undoubtedly one of the finest and most innovative in Britain. However, while St John's Cross, St Martin's Cross, St Matthew's Cross, and St Oran's Cross loom large within Insular sculpture studies, they were not the only free-standing crosses produced on the island. This paper pays particular attention to the less 'famous' free-standing crosses in the series. It assesses their chronological and stylistic relationship to other sites of coeval monumental cross production in Argyll. From here the paper briefly expands its geographic remit for comparison with the surviving free-standing cross output at Lindisfarne, Iona's daughter monastery on the North Sea coast. There, as at Iona, a great many free-standing crosses continue to be erected in the period after the Viking raids. In all, the paper not only reflects the tremendous legacy of the Iona free-standing cross, but also emphasises its continued, unique investment in monumental sculpture throughout the early medieval period.

8.3   'The Iconography of the Drumcliff cross: Reassessing the community's Columban association'
Dr Megan Henvey, University of York

Abstract: While the history of the Columban community at Drumcliff (Co. Sligo) has been explored with reference to texts and archaeological remains, absent from the discussion has been the evidence of the free-standing, stone, figurally carved high cross (Candon, 2006). Long considered part of the anachronistic 'Northern/Ulster' Group of Irish crosses, the Drumcliff cross contains unique carved schemes. Adopting an individualising approach to this iconographic programme demands rethinking the chronology and nature of the Columban association of the community at Drumcliff. A reassessment of the historical evidence together with, for the first time since 1901 (Stokes and Westropp), an iconographic investigation of the cross will underscore the significance of Iona as a source for the carved schemes; illuminate the nature of the connection between the Drumcliff community and the extended Columban familia; and reveal the types of information, ideas and practices that may have been shared between sites in the early medieval period.

Candon, Anthony. "Drumcliff, Co. Sligo," in The Modern Traveller to Our Past: Festschrift in Honour of Ann Hamlin, ed. Marion Meek (Dublin: DPK, 2006), 70–77.

Stokes, Margaret and T.J. Westropp. "Notes on the High Crosses of Moone, Drumcliff, Termonfechin, and Killamery," in The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Vol. 31 (1896/1901), 541-578.

Session 9: Women religious on Iona

9.1   '"A good virtuous woman": Religious women's activities in the Hebrides viewed through place-names'
Dr Sofia Evemalm-Graham, University of Glasgow

Abstract: The paper explores what place-names can tell us about the activities of religious women in the Hebrides through two case studies focusing on Iona and a selection of sites on North Uist and Benbecula.

9.2   'Iona's Embroideresses'
Prof Katherine Forsyth, University of Glasgow

Abstract: Taking as a springboard the Iona place-name *Cladh nan Druineach* ('burial ground of the embroideresses'), I explore the evidence for the role of female ecclesiastical needleworkers in the Gaelic church and what light this may throw on the presence of women religious on Iona in the pre-Viking Age.

9.3   'Iona's nunnery: origins, carvings and modern interpretations'
Dr Rosemary Power, National University of Ireland, Galway.

Abstract: Iona's medieval nunnery has usually been considered an adjunct to the male Benedictine re-foundation in 1203-4. This paper discusses the reasons for this belief, and, in the absence of most of the nunnery's own early records, other evidence regarding its origins. This is taken from both Gaelic and Norwegian perspectives, and include the political and ecclesiastical, together with its architecture, position and orientation. It is argued that together they indicate an earlier date of foundation, which would place its origins during the last period of the Columban monastery.

Session 10: Columban music

10.1   'Sounding Hagiography: the later medieval adaptation of the Vitae Columbae for the Office of St Columba at Inchcolm Abbey'
Andrew Bull, University of Glasgow

Abstract: The Office for St Columba contained in the Inchcolm manuscript fragments (Edinburgh University Library, MS 211, IV) are the only surviving examples of notated music celebrating the saint's life from the medieval period. Textually, they are clearly based upon Adomnán's Vita Sancti Columbae. However, with a large gap of both time and space between them, comparison between the two sources provides a glimpse at how later worshippers viewed the saint, via the transformation between written vita to sung office.
Musically, much has been made of the supposedly 'Celtic' melodies utilised in the office. However, recent research has shown that these supposedly unique musical signifiers are found more broadly across Europe, and in music ranging far from the Celtic period. Instead, what seems clear is that the office is a later medieval creation, utilising melodies already known across Europe. This paper will explore examples of the Inchcolm chants to explore how the hagiography of a local saint was merged with the common pan-European music of Gregorian chant, providing a later-medieval addition to the veneration of St Columba.

10.2   'The Inchcolm Antiphoner – a Columban legacy'
Dr John Purser, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (UHI)

Abstract: The late thirteenth-century Inchcolm Antiphoner (Edinburgh University Library, MS 211.iv.) uniquely contains chants in honour of Columcille with texts echoing words and phrases in Adomnàn's Life and with music exhibiting matching structural elements. Recent research has identified a number of musical concordances, but the significance of these has yet to be fully explored. Questions arise. What are the directions of transmission; how important are the distinctive elements; do they exhibit any particular traits? Also to be discussed is a recent suggestion that these chants were essentially contrafacta, their primary function being to bolster Columcille's status with respect to Saint Andrew. The paper will argue that there is little evidence to support this notion and will emphasise the links from Inchcolm via Dunkeld and back to Adomnàn's Life and Iona itself.

Session 11: Columba in the 19th and 20th century

11.1   'Saint Columba and Iona as Points of Reference for the Art of the Edinburgh Celtic Revival'
Prof Murdo Macdonald, University of Dundee (emeritus)

Abstract: I explore St Columba and Iona as points of reference for the visual artists of the Celtic revival in late nineteenth century Edinburgh. I focus in particular on the work of John Duncan and Helen Hay. Context is given by the publishing and architectural projects of Patrick Geddes and the contrasting approaches of the writers William Sharp and Alexander Carmichael. The link between Ella Carmichael and John Duncan is discussed with respect to Duncan's drawings Anima Celtica (1895) and St Columba on the Hill of Angels (1905). Helen Hay's designs for Celtic revival initial letters made for Patrick Geddes's Evergreen, will be noted as precursors to the initials for Carmina Gadelica (1900) by Mary Frances MacBean (Mary Carmichael). Design inspiration can be seen from The Book of Kells and The Book of Deer in particular. Similarity is noted between letters for Carmina Gadelica and the initial of the title page of the first edition of Dwelly's Dictionary. The significance of other book designs by Helen Hay is explored with respect to Geddes's Celtic Library.

11.2   '"*Àrd dhotair Alba gu leigheas duine agus beothach"* ('High doctor of Scotland for healing man and beast'): Calum Cille, St Columba, in the Gaelic charm tradition'
Dr Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (UHI)

Abstract: A paper outlining how Columba appears in popular belief from the late nineteenth century onwards, with particular reference to healing charms and incantations, drawing mainly upon the Carmichael and Robert Craig Maclagan collections (but looking at early modern sources, and Irish ones too, where they're relevant)

11.3   'Calum Cille in Canada'
Kathleen Reddy, University of Glasgow

Abstract: This paper will draw upon archival recordings and transcripts of hagiographic and etiological tales and blessings to present preliminary findings on how Calum Cille is represented in Gaelic seanchas (oral tradition) from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. The history and context of the use of "St Columba" as a church name will also be examined as evidence of devotion to the saint in Nova Scotian Gaelic communities.

Session 12: Experiencing Iona today

12.1   'Specialness' as a currency of belonging: insights from ethnographic work on visitors to Iona'
Dr Krittika Bhattacharjee, Ashoka University, India

Abstract: This paper presents key findings from ethnographic fieldwork conducted on visitors to Iona in 2015. It focuses one particular 'quirk' in the qualitative data: the lexical preference of many visitors to use the word 'special' in describing the island. The paper notes that the notion of 'specialness' can capture the different strands to Iona's reputation (as a place of religion, history, art, nature, and so on). In this sense, the term appears to be versatile, even weightless. And yet, it is not. Using visitor narratives to reconstruct the meaning of 'specialness' for visitors to the island, the paper argues that this term functions like currency in a contested field. For visitors to Iona, the narrative of 'specialness' serves as a path to participation: a way in which transient subjects can build metaphorical homes, inscribe their own rightful places, and argue their sense of belonging.

12.2   'Stone Lives - breathing life into the Early Medieval Sculpture of Iona'.
Peter Yeoman

Abstract: In The Art of the Picts (p227) Isabel and George Henderson comment on what we should aim for in displaying early medieval carved stones, starting from a basis of respect and accurate historical understanding, which if done well will produce in the viewer a sense of discovery, awe and wonder.
With this in mind, how best to redisplay the Iona Abbey early medieval sculpture, the largest collection in Britain and Ireland, presented considerable challenges. This paper will briefly explore how these challenges, practical and intellectual, could be overcome, to allow visitors to appreciate and to interact with the sculpture, thereby revealing their testimony of artistry, faith, scriptural exploration, cultural contacts, commemoration, and social identities. The key to this was initially provided from new applied research which fundamentally altered our understanding of people and place, while providing an essential context for the sculpture.

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