

A missing figure on slab fragment no 2 from Monifieth, Angus, the a'Chill Cross, Canna, and some implications of the development of a variant form of the Virgin's hairstyle and dress in early medieval Scotland

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ABSTRACT

Monifieth 2, a late Pictish-style slab, is decorated with a figure identified as female by the position of her brooch. Part of the brooch is missing and the loss is explained by reference to a Virgin and Child scene on the a'Chill Cross, Canna, which suggests the damaged area of Monifieth 2 originally represented a Christ-child of Adorational type. The unusual form of the Virgin's hairstyle at both Canna and Monifieth is also analysed within the context of the development of Iona school iconography. Seven lozenge insignia are identified and examined alongside the brooches. The decoration of the Canna cross is seen to derive from iconography in Angus centred on Aberlemno which is also the epicentre of Madonna icons evolving from Iona models. Aberlemno is thus deduced to be the centre of a ninth-century Columban mission, with Canna as an outpost, for the conversion of Viking western Scotland.

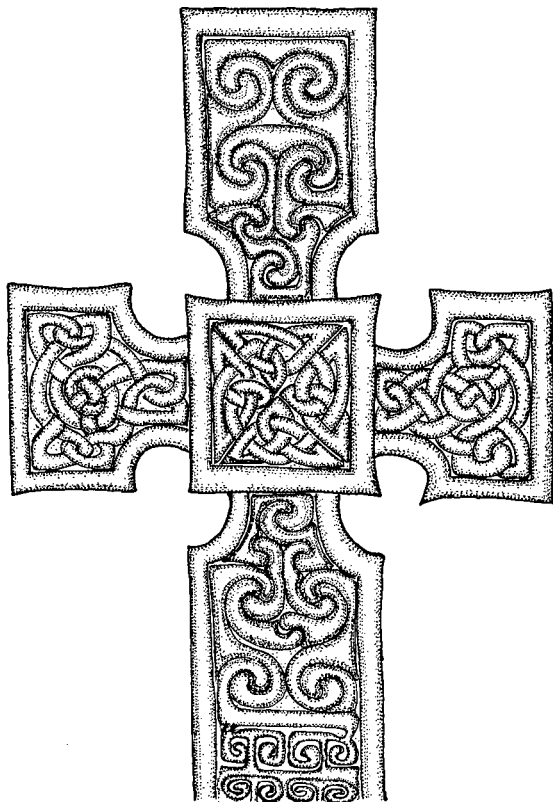
VIRGIN AND CHILD: ADORATION SCENES?

A MISSING FIGURE ON MONIFIETH 2C

Four Class 2 and Class 3 slabs from Monifieth, Angus (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, 228–30, 265, figs 241–3, 275), have been in the keeping of the National Museum of Antiquities (now Royal Museum of Scotland), since the 19th century (Neish 1871, 71–7). Despite their great interest, they have not attracted the close scrutiny that this controlled environment should facilitate.

Amongst these monuments, the small and substantially complete slab, no 2 (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, 229–30, fig 242A/B) is of particular interest. Although now damaged at the base, chipped along the edges and having suffered some abrasion to the broad surfaces, sufficient remains to allow a detailed study of its decorative programme (Appendix 1). Carved in low relief, face A is dominated by a contoured ornamental cross which fills the unbordered face and is rendered more prominent because the flanking quadrants have been left void (illus 1). Decoration on face C is structured more loosely within a framing border of confronting bird-headed beasts (illus 2 & 3).¹ This face is subdivided into three panels by a plain T-shaped

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ILLUS 1 Angus, Monifieth 2A, interpretative drawing of the cross

moulding. The upper panel includes two motifs: to the left stands a quadruped with long neck and tail, selected from a monstrous menagerie. To the right is a deer's head Pictish symbol (RA 155) with almond-shaped eye and pricked ear. The lower right panel contains a Crescent and V-Rod Pictish symbol whose form appears in a state of some decay.

The lower left panel, a focus of this study (illus 4), contains a standing fronted figure (Nieke 1993, 129; Trench-Jellicoe 1995, fig 3) dressed in a long open-fronted gown worn over an undershirt, originally descending to ankle length but now lost below. The gown is fastened on the chest with a large, centrally placed penannular brooch, the lentoid pin head of which is visible in oblique lighting, while a lozenge-shaped motif appears above the brooch on her right shoulder (the brooch and lozenge motif are discussed below). This figure has a flamboyant hairstyle drawn to the sides and fastened up over the crown. The heavy facial features, although abraded and damaged, are still traceable and the chin includes a dimple at its centre which may be considered a diagnostic feature. The combination of elements has suggested to several commentators that the figure should be identified as a woman (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, 230; Nieke 1993, 129; Trench-Jellicoe 1995, 4–5, fig 3).

There is, however, an unexplained aspect to the figure's apparel which becomes evident when the penannular brooch is examined. Initially it looks as though a whole section of the brooch to the viewer's right, amounting to almost half, is missing in an area of damage but the mystery becomes more tantalizing with the realization that this area still stands in high relief, proud of the remainder of the brooch suggesting loss of overlying elements. The area is defined

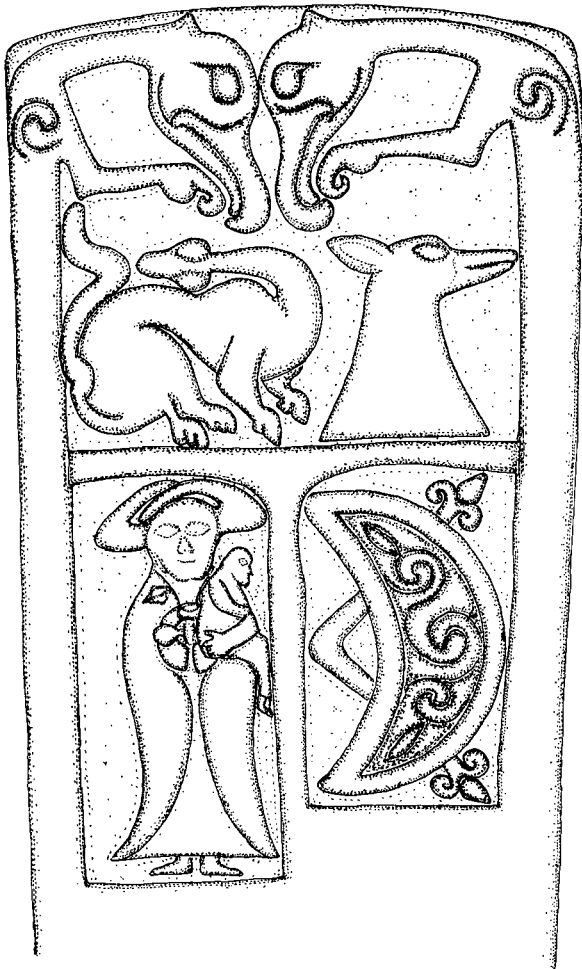


ILLUS 2 Angus, Monifieth 2C

above by a rising curve on the figure's left shoulder extending beyond the line of the body. Below, the limit of damage is marked by a curve passing across the figure then downwards to the right edge of the panel. Beyond the figure the limit of the areas of damage is marked by an absence of the grooved channel which surrounds the figure elsewhere. To the lower right, a rising groove peters out immediately below the damaged section, while above, a groove along the shoulder terminates short of the neck. There is, therefore, an extensive area of surface damage standing in relief of the surrounding decoration, which implies that formerly it held a prominent feature which represented a significant element in the sculptor's original iconographic scheme.

THE VIRGIN, CHILD AND MAGUS ON A'CHILL, CANNA, 1E

In order to make some sense of the damaged area on Monifieth 2C it is instructive to turn to another sculptured monument from the opposite side of Scotland, on the Isle of Canna, Small Isles. Canna's uniquely designed, free-standing a'Chill Cross is now badly damaged (Stuart 1867, pl 50 & 51; Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, 107–9, fig 111; RCAHMS forthcoming) but may have



ILLUS 3 Angus, Monifieth 2C,
interpretative drawing

stood originally within a foundation dedicated to Columba (the iconographic programme of the cross is discussed in Appendix 2).

The western face is decorated with seven panels (originally nine) of low relief patterns of abstract and non-realistic interlacing zoomorphic motifs (illus 31). The narrow (northern) edge extension of the east and west faces includes abstract ornament, two panels containing fronted figures and, above, the unique design of a skeuomorphic supporting device for the cross arms, formed in the likeness of a mannikin, perhaps representing an angel.² By contrast, the eastern cross face includes six registers (originally eight) of high relief narrative and semi-realistic animal carving (described in Appendix 2) (illus 33), but the visually dominant register (E2) contains a narrative scene of three abraded, interactive figures, in which the two larger flank the smaller (illus 5).

In panel E2 the figure to the left is portrayed as if seated, although scant evidence for a chair remains. The head is uncompromisingly frontal, encompassing large, heavy features and almond-shaped eyes. The chin has a heavy jowl with a small central dimple while the groomed hair, lying close to the head, is taken up in loops around the ears and, tapering as it rises, is carried over the

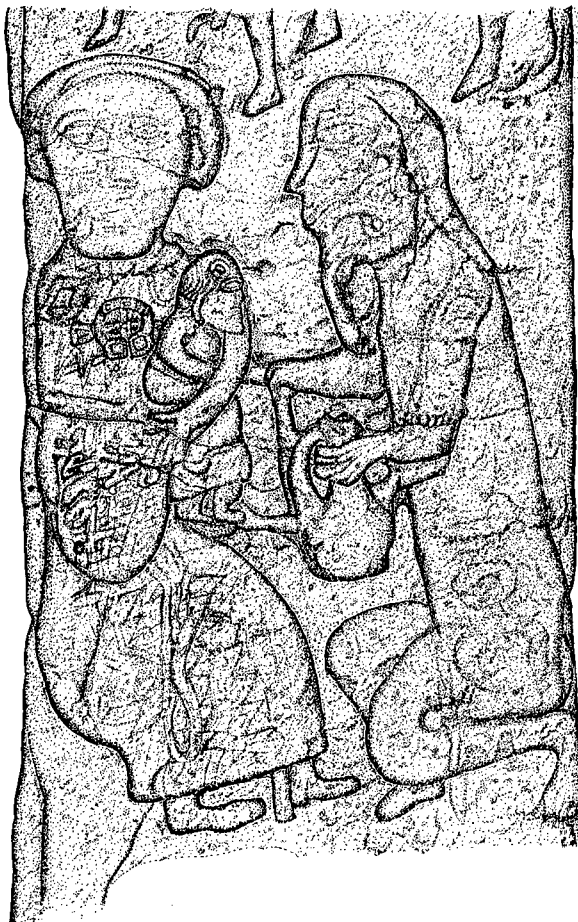


ILLUS 4 Angus, Monifieth 2C, lower left panel, interpretative drawing

crown to be fastened with the right terminal above the left. The commanding head is offset against the upper body which is partly turned to the viewer's right, while the bent legs are yet more fully turned and the feet lie completely in profile: thus the figure is skewed by stages through a right angle between head and feet.³

The figure wears an ankle-length gown, open at the front, which preserves faint evidence of a zigzag hem or decorative border trim running vertically in two lines. A similar zigzag pattern borders the neckline. Looping strands which overlie the lower garment signal the presence of a hanging girdle. Little evidence for the figure's right arm is visible down the damaged left slab edge and across the abraded waistline. At waist level, the left arm cradles a small seated figure, who, facing away, looks towards a third figure to the viewer's right. Beneath the small figure, the left arm re-emerges and the hand grasps an object lying on her lap which is identified by faint, interwoven strands and may represent a bag or basket. Centrally placed on the chest, immediately behind the diminutive figure is a penannular brooch fastened by a pin the head of which is of triangular type. Under oblique natural lighting (*mirabile dictu*) detail of the brooch's decoration in the terminal compartments and along sections of the cartouche can be seen. On the right shoulder next to the pinhead is a worn lozenge-shaped motif (the brooch and lozenge motif are discussed below).

The small, starkly profiled figure resting in the arms of the larger figure also preserves considerable detail. A tunic, belted at the waist, is worn at calf length and feet are visible beneath the hem. The fingers of the visible right arm touch the arm of the larger figure. Most significant, however, is the extensive evidence preserved on the head where clear detail of the hair remains,



ILLUS 6 Sandbach, Cheshire, North Cross, panel 7 (Adoration of the Magi), interpretative drawing

ILLUS 5 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, register 2, interpretative drawing

styled in descending waves and cut short on the neck at ear level. Framing an almond-shaped eye and the edge of the face, a single tress of hair falls, curving forward over the shoulder. It seems to be held at the top by an ear placed high on the head or possibly a pin.

To the right, the third element of the scene, a tall, distorted figure squats in profile, facing left. The left hand proffers a vessel or flask with double handles to the small figure.⁴ The large head, with long hair and perhaps bearded, preserves an almond-shaped eye. The figure wears a garment, belted at the waist, whose short sleeve with decorated hem is visible across the upper arm.⁵ A worn ephemeral element, perhaps intended to represent a veil, is realized as a series of curved lines, which pass across the face and wrap loosely around the body before terminating beneath the left elbow.⁶ The right hand also reaches out toward the small figure.⁷ Although carved in decorated relief the overall style of this figure (like that of the figure to the left) is elongated and distorted. (The design and sources for this scene are discussed in Appendix 3.)

A'CHILL AND MONIFIETH COMPARED

A comparison of the figure on the left of the Canna scene with that on Monifieth 2C indicates a significant body of shared influence. Each possesses a large figure whose frontality is notable,

both have versions of a similar and unusual hairstyle, a dimpled chin and both wear an unusual decoration in the form of a prominent penannular brooch at the centre of their chests, flanked on their right shoulder by smaller lozenge-shaped insignia.

More significantly, where the Monifieth carving has become damaged, the Canna scene contains a diminutive figure. Detailed analysis indicates that the outline of the small Canna figure is virtually identical to the outline of the erased area at Monifieth, with the caveat only that the Monifieth figure would have been proportionately larger. So, the large Monifieth figure also originally held a smaller profiled figure, facing to the right, but whose head projected slightly above the shoulder and with legs and feet dangling in the space beyond the outline of the larger figure. The fact that at Monifieth the small figure overlay the brooch is itself a further indicator of increased size. These significant correspondences suggest that each scene portrays a slightly differing realization of the same iconograph. Such differences as there are, including the lack of a third figure at Monifieth, suggest a gap of time, allowing some degeneration to occur between the Canna and Monifieth scenes.

So what do the scenes represent? The Canna panel provides the more promising initial approach as it depicts a more complete and detailed image. Allen (1903, pt 3, illus 108, n 1) judged that the larger figure on the left of the scene portrayed a woman holding a child which he thought represented the Madonna and Child. This interpretation is not without its difficulties not least because of the presence of a single additional figure to the right of the panel. An iconic model for the Virgin and Child, such as that on the *Book of Kells*, fol 7v (Kells facsimile 1990; Henry 1974, pl 10), or that on St Cuthbert's Coffin (Wilson 1984, illus 43), certainly presents the Virgin's figure in a form closely similar to that found at Canna, with a markedly frontal head and skewed body, but both *Kells* and Cuthbert coffin models present the Christ-child in a complementary profile, facing or acknowledging the Virgin (Nordhagen 1977). However, this is not the pose of the Canna Child who faces resolutely away from her, nor is it the more rigidly iconic form of the Virgin and Child found on the three sculptured, Iona school scenes on St Oran's and St Martin's Crosses, Iona, and on the Kildalton Cross, Islay (RCAHMS 1982, illus 193B & 207B; RCAHMS 1984, illus 210C), in which the Virgin is presented completely frontally with a complementary Christ, cradled and turned towards her, in scenes framed by angels.

Scenes in which the Virgin and Child are presented in a similar configuration to that found on the Canna panel seem to belong to a different, narrative tradition in which the Virgin and Child interact with other elements. Similar poses can be identified in versions of the Presentation of Christ to Simeon in the Temple, but that scene seems inappropriate to the Canna context. More satisfactory is some version of the Epiphany, the Adoration of the Magi, although customarily that scene is fleshed out with three, or perhaps four, additional figures, representing the three kings, sometimes accompanied by Joseph, a female servant or an angel. On a common-sense basis, however, previous commentators have not found the truncated Canna realization a bar to its identification as an Adoration scene (Allen & Anderson op cit; Kelly 1995, 199).

In fact, the portrayal of a third figure at Canna, a man apparently presenting a gift to the Christ-child, is persuasive evidence that the panel was intended to be understood as a depiction of the Adoration of the Magi but in an attenuated form whose presence requires brief explanation. By the fourth century, once the iconograph of the Adoration scene, characterized by its neatly queuing line of three processing magi, had been firmly established, it became possible to introduce variants, for compositional expediency. This process precipitated a reformation of the icon, dividing the magi by positioning the foremost on one side of the Virgin, confronting the Christ-child as he presented his gift, while the two remaining magi balanced the scene on the opposite side. Examples of this type of design appear on the fifth-century Triumphal Arch mosaic of Santa

Maria Maggiore, Rome (Hubert *et al* 1969, ill. 123), and on a Palestinian ampulla now preserved in Monza Cathedral treasury (Grabar 1958, pl II), which positions the magi in a triangular formation, one king behind and one above the donor magus. In its collections the British Museum preserves a sixth-century ivory with frontal Virgin and Child flanked to the left by a magus and angel, and on the right the remaining magi (Harbison 1992, fig 804); a similar arrangement appears also on fol 229 of the sixth-century Etschmiadzin Gospels (Beckwith 1970, pl II7) which portrays the kings flanking the throne in a balanced composition.

More importantly, this trick of dividing the processional magi found its way onto Irish high cross panels with the effect of positioning the Virgin more centrally within the design. Five of the eight Irish examples of the Adoration of the Magi cited by Harbison (1992) dating to the ninth and 10th century, are pertinent here.⁸ All have a dispersal in north-east Ireland and seem to derive from two models: a southern group, including three members, from Clones, County Monaghan, Donaghmore, County Tyrone, and Galloon, County Fermanagh (*ibid*, figs 128, 192, 292), portrays the Virgin frontally while a northern group of two crosses, at Arboe, County Tyrone and Camus, County Derry, has the skewed type of Virgin (*ibid*, figs 37 & 83). Each Virgin appears seated, either cradling the Child or holding Him across the lap in a complementary profile. A decision whether to place the majority of kings to the left or right flank seems to be in free variation. In the context of the northern group a Virgin and Child, but not an Adorational type, which has been recognized by Kelly (1995, 200; Harbison 1992, fig 89) on a small pillar at Carndonagh, County Donegal, also deserves consideration (and is discussed below).

A miniature on fol 137r of the Bibliothèque National, Paris, Ms gr 510, a Byzantine collection of the *Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzen*, dated to AD 879, demonstrates how easily detached from the composition the peripheral magi might become (Harbison 1992, fig 807). There, the second and third kings, holding their gifts with eyes averted from the focal action, chat together on the edge of the scene in a manner similar to their disinterested counterparts in the early eighth-century fresco of Pope John VII (AD 705–7) in Santa Maria Antiqua (Nordhagen 1968, pl XVI). But it is unnecessary to go to such lengths to find satisfactory non-standard parallels, for an example occurs in the ninth century, on the east face of the taller, North Cross, Sandbach (Hawkes 1997, 119, fig 8), where the enthroned Virgin clasps the Child in complementary pose (illus 6). Vertically stacked to her right, each portrait bust of a gift-bearing magus is individually framed, the upper is carved upside-down in this procrustean frame, thus illustrating that contemporary Adorational models with aberrant forms of the magi were present elsewhere in an Insular context.

So what kind of process is required to develop a scene of Canna type from an Adorational model retaining all three kings? It is undoubtedly a short though radical step to dispose of two on-looking kings and refocus the scene by enlarging the three active elements; nevertheless, this is exactly what seems to have taken place in the Canna register. The specific reason for the development is impossible to pinpoint with certainty and, with so many linking examples in the chain of development missing, it will probably never be possible to achieve a full understanding of the process.

Returning finally to the Monifieth scene; it appears reasonable to claim that the panel encapsulates an arcane version of the Virgin and Child, deriving from the same ultimate source as the Canna scene. Differences between Canna and Monifieth versions such as the portrayal of the Virgin seated or standing or skewed versus frontal poses suggest that the scenes, although related are not immediately so. Lack of a magus figure at Monifieth is a more significant and unexpected difference, particularly as the outward-facing Christ-child expects a magus and implies that this version was derived from a narrative model of similar design to the Canna image. This loss of a

third figure makes the choice and Adorational model at Monifieth perplexing although it illustrates to us the source of its form. It is perhaps appropriate that a monument displaying a degenerating Pictish 'symbol' should also preserve a deconstructing Adorational Virgin and Child icon. The use of a framing device at Monifieth, similar to that found structuring the elements in the Sandbach scene, should alert us to the appreciation that the juxtaposition of the Crescent and V-Rod with a Virgin and Child scene may carry special significance. A third difference between scenes is the fulsome rendering of the Virgin's hair at Monifieth in comparison with the more restrained hairstyle worn by the Canna figure, although both are clearly versions of the same unusual style. The nature of this hairstyle is worthy of further exploration.

THE VIRGIN'S HAIRSTYLE

The source of the Monifieth and Canna Virgins' particular hairstyle is obscure. The style seems limited to rare examples in northern Britain and restricted to female figures, arguably representations of the Virgin, which post-date the first Viking incursions. It may be possible, however, to trace its origin more precisely to a developmental misunderstanding of earlier Virgin iconography in the Iona sculpture school, a process already advanced by the early ninth century.

Amongst the Iona sculpture school a non-narrative image of the Virgin and Child was used in the eighth century. Here, three major examples of the iconic model, represented by the *Maria Angelorum* model, a type derived from a different source of icon from that found on Canna and at Monifieth, survive (Hawkes 1997, 109–13, 123–8, figs 3–5). The worn carving of the Virgin and Child on St Oran's Cross, Iona (RCAHMS 1982, fig 195C), probably the earliest of these representations, shows a frontal Virgin with hair gathered into curling bunches on either side of the neck and surrounded by a narrow crescentic halo (illus 7). She is flanked by two nimbed angels whose gracile, raised inner wings curve above and around her head. This is stylistically similar to a well-developed type found, for instance, on the sixth-century icon carved under Byzantine influence and preserved in the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome (Hubert *et al* 1969, illus 128). Although the related Columban iconograph of the Virgin and Child miniature on fol 7v of the *Book of Kells* almost certainly post-dates the St Oran's Cross scene (illus 8) it provides some idea of the variety of models available to a sculptor in an eighth-century Insular context. The inner, drooping, angelic wings which pass behind the Virgin's halo in the *Kells* miniature, when translated onto the St Oran's shaft panel, form a frame flanking her head. This form perhaps developed in this manner due to spatial restrictions imposed both by a broad rectangular panel and as a response to the limitations of the stone carving medium. Already in the St Oran's representation, the angel to the right seems to be losing its halo.

A development of the St Oran's Cross model appears in a rectangular shaft panel on the east face of the Kildalton Cross, Islay (RCAHMS 1984, illus 208B & 210C). Here the angels' wings are reduced in size and have become less plastic in form (illus 9), while the Virgin has lost her halo and her curly hair appears to be cropped to ear length. Although the panel is still positioned prominently on the cross shaft, the image shows subtle but significant change from the St Oran's Cross representation on Iona, indicating some simplification and reduction in the icon. Both angels have lost their halos in the Kildalton scene.

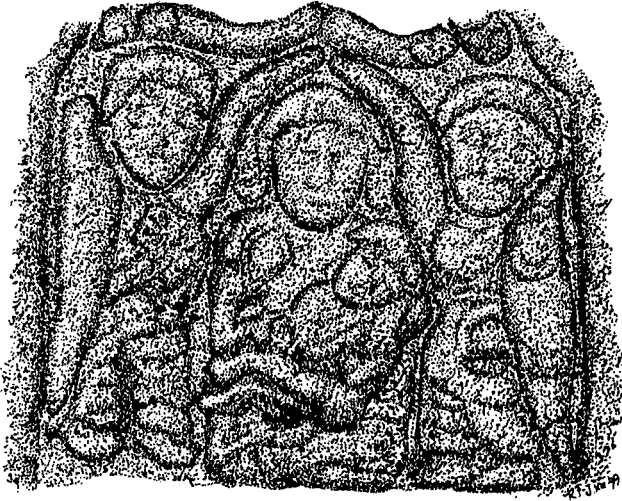
By the time the Virgin and Child was carved on the St Martin's Cross, Iona (RCAHMS 1982, fig 207B), perhaps as much as half a century after the St Oran's Cross experiment, the head area of the Virgin had undergone considerable further reformation (illus 10). Her hair is reduced to an unshapely bobbed cut and her halo has disappeared, while the flanking angels, now expanded in number to four, have become miniaturized relative to the Virgin. This seems to be a



ILLUS 7 Iona, St Oran's Cross, face A, lower cross arm (Virgin and Child), interpretative drawing



ILLUS 8 *Book of Kells*, fol 7v (Virgin and Child), interpretative drawing



ILLUS 9 Islay, Kildalton Cross, east face, lower cross arm (Virgin and Child), interpretative drawing



ILLUS 10 Iona, St Martin's Cross, west face, crossing panel (Virgin and Child), interpretative drawing

response to a repositioning of the scene in the crossing where it has been elevated to take pride of place in a focal circular panel. Its repositioning perhaps reflects a new emphasis in the focus on Marian iconography on Iona. If it dates to as late as the end of the eighth century (for a discussion of dating see RCAHMS 1982, 17–19, 266, n 79), this may have been in response to the salvational needs of the community (Hawkes 1997, 125–6, n 8) during the phase of initial Viking interest in the site.

This migration of the icon into the crossing of St Martin's Cross also allowed the sculptor to create more bulbous angels' wings which were tucked in tightly but awkwardly around the Virgin's head, forming a clumsy right-angled frame. The effect of this development is to simplify



ILLUS 11 Angus, Brechin (Cathedral), St Mary slab fragment, crossing panel (Virgin and Child), interpretative drawing

the angels and further reduce their stature making their clear recognition more difficult. By contrast, the size of their wings increased relative to the Virgin: detached, so that they now seem to float in a focus around her head divorced from their rightful sphere. This may have led in some circumstances (such as miniaturization on a plaque or in a drawing for transmission as a model) to the angels' wings being misunderstood and reinterpreted as the Virgin's distinctive hairstyle.

It can be suggested that at this stage of its development, having undergone a major reformation, it was transmuted from the *Maria Angelorum* type through a loss of the angelic attendants, into a basic iconic type of Virgin and Child. In such a remodelled form, bearing the kudos of a Columban icon, it was then transmitted into Pictland and elements were adopted into a narrative Pictish model of the Adoration, either as it appears on the Canna Cross, the Monifieth 2C scene or, more probably, on a lost predecessor of those versions. The kernel form of these narrative scenes was apparently quite similar to iconic representations at this stage, with both types lacking flanking angels. The distinctive hairstyle has received different emphasis on the restrained Canna 1E example (illus 5) from the flamboyant Monifieth 2C version (illus 4) but although becoming more distanced from the late Iona type of the St Martin's Cross, their relationship is still clearly evident.

The relevance of another Virgin and Child type, readily identified by its inscription, should be considered here. It appears on a stone now preserved in Brechin Cathedral (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 261) which was once a *Céli Dé* complex and probably, in its earliest phase, Columban. At first sight this form seems rather different from the other examples discussed



ILLUS 12 Angus, Kirriemuir 1C, lower panel, interpretative drawing

above, for Brechin's frontal Virgin carries a large, horizontal Christ-child awkwardly portrayed in the opposing plane to those of Monifieth and Canna (Hawkes 1997, 115, 129–30, n 10; Fisher 1997) (illus 11). On balance, however, the Brechin icon seems to have little in common with other Insular Virgin scenes present in Ireland, Anglo-Saxon England or continental examples. Her hairstyle protrudes at ear level and, although in transmission this version seems to have lost the distinctive trick of fastening up across the top of the head, like Monifieth's Virgin, it has evidently developed from a similar model. The lateral quality of its portrayal and moreover the thickened and curved terminals indicative of looping, suggests that it, too, is simply another realization of the Canna/Monifieth type, ultimately derived from the reformed Iona school icon. Apart from the later developments to the hairstyle, the Brechin Madonna is closely similar to the St Oran's Virgin. But here, for the first time, the iconic Virgin and Child group appears without accompanying angels in the main panel for they have become externalized and, facing inwards, flank the scene in the horizontal cross arms. A date for this carving in the later ninth century, as suggested by Isabel Henderson (1985, 51) and supported by Jane Hawkes (1997, 115), seems satisfactory.⁹

Another potential example of the Virgin and Child occurs in Angus on Kirriemuir 1C: lower panel (illus 12). Allen (1903, pt 3, 227, fig 239B) identified this figure, who sits frontally in a high-backed chair, as female. Her portrayal on a throne underscores her royal status. She holds a worn element in her arms in a complementary pose similar to other depictions of the Virgin holding the Christ-child. Her hair is a separate element which follows the contouring of the sides of her head, reminiscent of the Canna Virgin's hairstyle rather than that at Monifieth or Brechin.

In her right hand she holds or touches a worn attribute lying obliquely across her lower robe. This is recognizable as a distaff, a rod surmounted by a skein of wool. If Kirriemuir's seated figure can be shown to represent an iconic Virgin and Child, the addition of fresh accompanying elements suggests the sculptor was attempting to develop the icon and create a novel scene in so far as the weaving attributes of loom and distaff are more universally associated with portrayals of the Annunciation as a metaphor of the Incarnation. Here, presumably, they bracket the unique significance of the virgin birth with Mary and Christ as a channel of Redemption (Coatsworth 1998).¹⁰

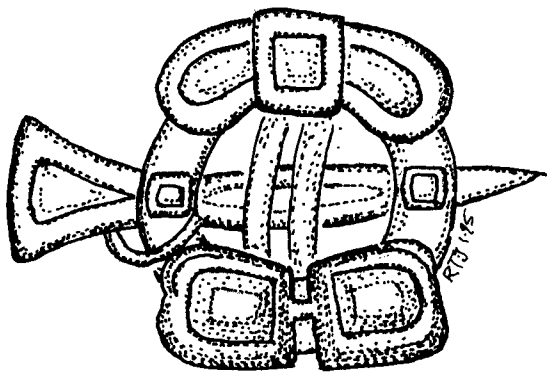
This variant hairstyle also seems to have reached Ireland where it appears in the degenerating form of a feline mask on the south face of a pillar stone at Carndonagh, County Donegal, also a Columban foundation. In this scene, which Kelly (1995, 200) is surely right to identify as a Virgin and Child, her hair appears crudely portrayed like the ears of a cat above smaller curves, representing her true ears (Kelly 1995, fig 5; Harbison 1992, fig 89).¹¹ Another scene, potentially also linked to the degraded Iona icon, occurs on a profiled female figure with braided, looping plaits fastened across the crown of her head (*pace* Fitzgerald 1997, 257), which appears on the north face, panel 3, of the slightly later Irish high cross at Durrow, County Offaly (Harbison 1992, 82, fig 258), a site which also belonged to the Columban *familia*. This scene has most recently been reinterpreted by Harbison as Elizabeth with the infant John the Baptist (*ibid*, 82) but has otherwise been thought to represent the Virgin carrying the Child accompanied by a male figure, probably Joseph, in a familiar chin-stroking image, the scene perhaps representing the Holy Family returning from Egypt.

THE BROOCHES AND LOZENGE INSIGNIA¹²

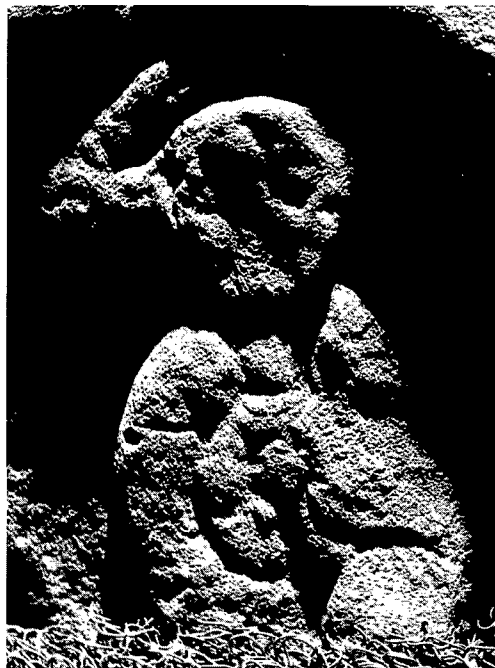
The monumental panels under discussion here, Canna 1E2, Monifieth 1C-LL and also a scene on Wester Denoon 1C, form a substantial part of the Insular evidence for sculptural representations of decorative fastenings, to which may be added seven Irish examples of sculptured brooches.¹³ All Irish brooches adorn male figures and all, bar one which has been identified by Fitzgerald (1997, 259) as 'non-functional', are worn on the figure's right breast (the exception appears on the left shoulder). This location seems to securely distinguish them from the five Scottish female figures who wear the brooch at the centre of the chest. All brooches, whether worn by men or women, seem to function as a marker of status.

CANNA BROOCH

The Canna brooch appears to be a true penannular with sub-rectangular or lozenge-shaped terminals and central cartouche on the hoop. Both hoop and terminals have internal panels indicating decoration (illus 13). The pin appears to taper from a broad, sub-triangular head and is depicted with a gathering of material at the centre; anomalously in this example, the head lies under the loop. Uneven wear on the pin, which is carved proud of the hoop, obscures some of the detail. The composite pinhead is of Irish rather than Pictish type. Dating brooches on the basis of their style is problematical, especially from worn sculptural representations. Stylistically this example, whose hoop shares similarities with the Ballynagloch and Ervey penannular brooches and the annular Mull (modified) and Tara brooches (Youngs 1989, nos 85, 86, 75, 77), may be accorded a bracket between the second half of the eighth and ninth century. The Canna pinhead appears similar to those of the Ardagh, Loughmoe and Roscrea annular brooches (*ibid*, nos 76, 78, 79), spanning a similar date range.



ILLUS 13 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, register 2, the Virgin's penannular brooch, interpretative drawing



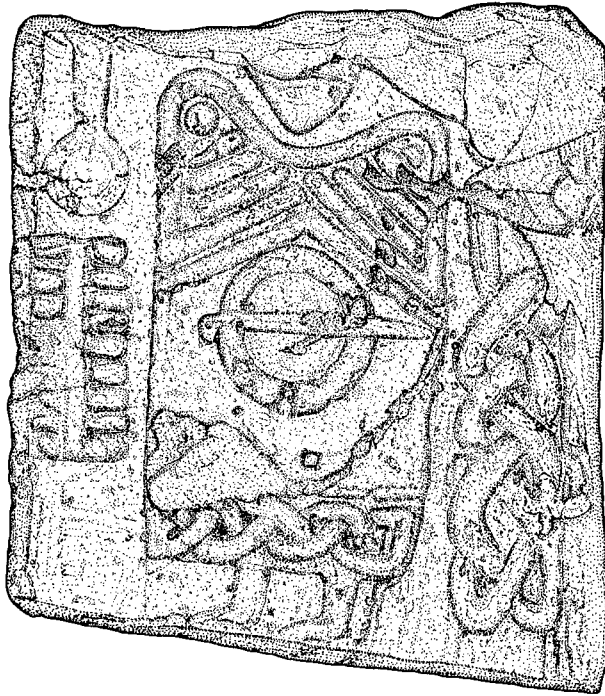
ILLUS 14 Angus, Monifieth 2C, lower left panel

MONIFIETH BROOCH

The Monifieth brooch has a typical Pictish pinhead (a leaf-shaped integral panel) of elliptical form which also seems to gather material within the hoop (illus 14). The penannular hoop seems to have a cartouche at the top and the outer line of the terminal is a definite curve while the terminal is most probably triangular although, just possibly, it is of tear-drop shape. The cartouche and pinhead are best paralleled at Aldclune and Clunie, Perthshire (*ibid*, nos 108 & 109), while another Clunie brooch (*ibid*, no 110) most closely represents the form of the Monifieth terminal but, once again, the Aldclune brooch (*ibid*, no 108) offers similarities. A date for the brooch in the ninth century is most satisfactory although Susan Youngs (*pers comm*) has suggested degenerate versions may extend into the 10th century. Other stylistic evidence on the monument, such as the Pictish 'symbols', indicates a probable date in the second half of the ninth or earliest years of the 10th century.

KIRRIEMUIR BROOCH

The relatively small Kirriemuir penannular brooch is carved in the centre of the Virgin's upper chest and is extensively worn and damaged (illus 12). The inner line of the hoop is the most securely identifiable element while sections to the right, next to the Child's outstretched hand, are no longer detectable. The terminals appear similar to those of the Monifieth brooch while a circular element positioned centrally at the top may indicate decoration in the cartouche. A pinhead, triangular in form, appears horizontally on the left side.



ILLUS 15 Angus (Glamis), Wester Denoon 1C (female figure and brooch), interpretative drawing

WESTER DENOON (GLAMIS) BROOCH

The slab fragment from Wester Denoon was recovered in 1994 (DES 1994, 82; Trench-Jellicoe 1995, 6, fig 4). It is decorated on the obverse with a cross and on its reverse with a fronted figure, lacking its head, flanked by a Mirror and Comb Pictish symbol. In the centre of the chest the figure wears a narrow penannular brooch with integrated terminals which expand only an additional 50% on the width of the hoop (illus 15). It is otherwise undecorated. The pinhead, formed in a single element, seems to wrap around the hoop from above and the other end passes over the hoop. The curved pin terminal is little broader than the rest. The brooch and, to a lesser extent, the pin are similar to a silver penannular brooch from the Skaill hoard, Orkney (Graham-Campbell 1995, cat item 24, no 9, pl 24), deposited between AD 950–70 (ibid, 34). A lack of parallels for the overall form of this Skaill brooch has been noted (ibid, 36). What appears initially to be a disproportionately large representation of the brooch on the Wester Denoon figure seems less outrageous when the true size of the Skaill brooch (diam 0.136 m) is measured against the proportions of the human form. It is of interest that the size of this brooch echoes the dimensions and proportions of the element worn by Hilton of Cadboll's female figure. A date in the 10th century seems appropriate for the Denoon brooch.

LOZENGE INSIGNIA

The insignia on the Canna Virgin's right shoulder is more worn and was perhaps less deeply carved than her brooch. The outline is a hollow lozenge, more extended in the horizontal than vertical plane. The upper point is positioned a little to the right of vertical and each side is slightly concaved. All detail is lost on the surface within the lozenge. The insignia is juxtaposed with and

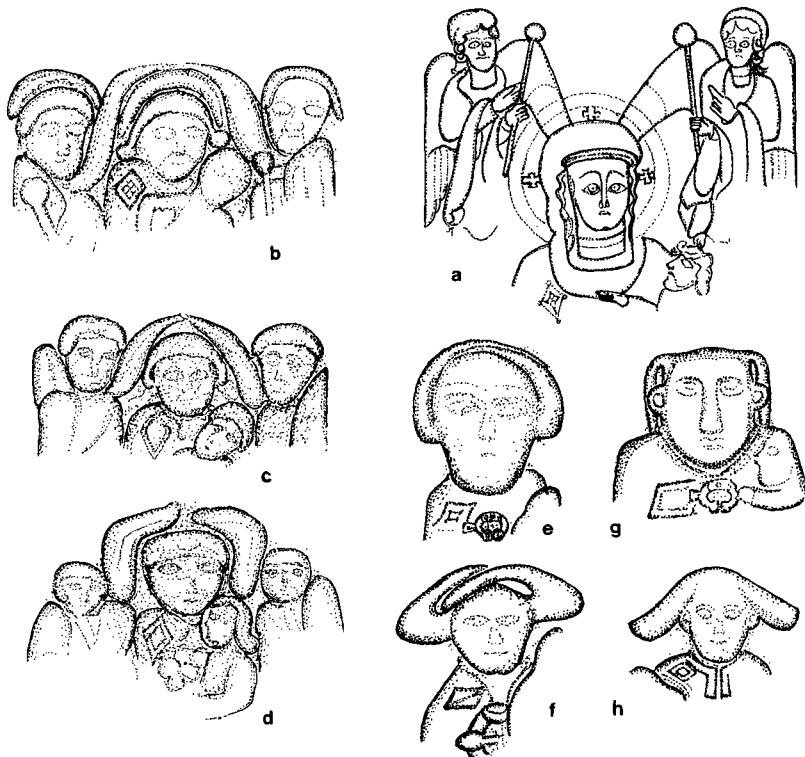
may be overlain at its lower point by the triangular pinhead of the brooch (illus 5). The representation of the Monifieth Virgin is smaller, nevertheless on her right shoulder appears a hollow lozenge which, like the Canna motif, is extended laterally and almost touches the top of the brooch (illus 14). The Wester Denoon figure lacks all suggestion of a lozenge motif. To the narrative depictions of the Virgin bearing a lozenge insignia must be added a similar insignia on the iconic Brechin Virgin. Although the carving is badly worn on her right shoulder, photography using a raking light reveals the presence of a lozenge motif between the Child's hair and her collar (illus 11). This example is also extended laterally. The potentially female figure on Kirriemuir 1C-L, noted above for its similar hairstyle to Canna's Virgin and a centrally worn penannular brooch, can also be seen (under oblique lighting) to possess a lozenge brooch on the right shoulder. The lozenge and brooch seem restricted in size by the position of the Child which may be a product of a general degeneration in the iconograph (illus 12).

SOURCE OF THE LOZENGE INSIGNIA

The source of the lozenge insignia may readily be linked to the miniature on fol 7v in the *Book of Kells* (Henry 1974, 10) (illus 8) where it appears above the Virgin's right breast. The Kells insignia is painted with a concaved white border decorated by a round pellet at each point and contains a light ochre-coloured inset with internal decoration. Whitfield (1996, 20) has suggested that the colour scheme was intended to represent silver and gold. Immediately before or contemporary with the production of *Book of Kells*, three major crosses decorated with panels of iconography, including representations of the Virgin and Child, were erected by the Iona school of sculptors (discussed above). On the St Oran's Cross the Virgin's right shoulder bears a worn lozenge shape with slight extensions at top and bottom (illus 7) indicating a similar motif to that in the Kells miniature. Likewise, a worn lozenge decorates the Virgin of the Kildalton Cross (illus 9) and finally, the Virgin in the crossing of St Martin's Cross carries a lozenge of concaved sides on her right shoulder (RCAHMS 1982, illus 207B) (illus 10). Each of these seems to have its main axis lying from bottom left to top right, unlike the Kells codex version but similar to the carved Canna, Brechin, Kirriemuir and Monifieth examples. It seems that the lozenge insignia had long been attached to the Columban Virgin and Child by the time it was imported into Pictland, appearing in Angus and ultimately on Canna.¹⁴

BROOCHES AND LOZENGE INSIGNIA: DISCUSSION

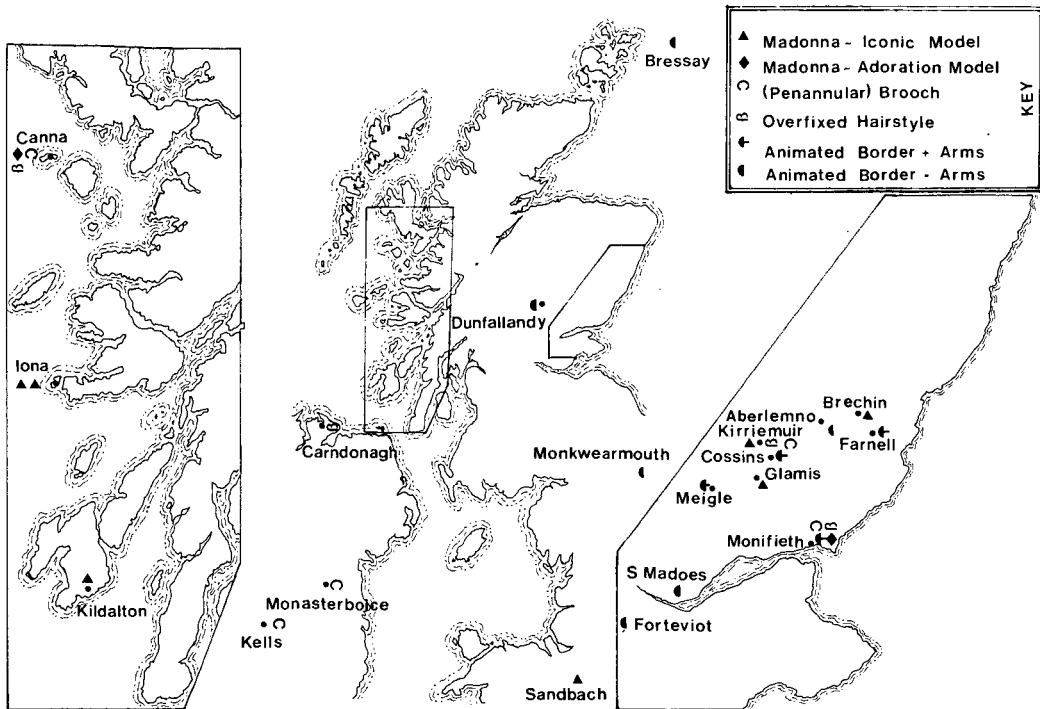
The degeneration of penannular brooch representations seems to parallel a general deterioration in the iconograph of the Virgin and Child over at least a century and a half (850–1000). The three scenes in Scotland which carry brooches as a status marker on female figures represent a roughly contemporary but different, although undoubtedly initially related, tradition from that operating on male figures in Ireland from the ninth into the 10th century. That the brooches neither appear on early iconic examples such as St Cuthbert's coffin nor the three Iona school representations, nor the miniature of *Book of Kells* 7v, suggests this version of the model, portraying a brooch, was not available before the ninth century but was then subsumed within an existing icon in Pictland only (illus 16). It is most significant that where the brooch appears alongside the lozenge device it occurs only on the narrative version of the model, except for the aberrant, later Kirriemuir example, and is generally lacking on the iconic types (the Virgins of the Iona school and Brechin). This indicates that a clear distinction was perceived between the iconic and narrative types (illus 17). Another important difference is evident between the Iona school



ILLUS 16 Comparative drawing of Iona school and Angus elements; the Virgin's hairstyle, penannular brooches and lozenge insignia: (a) *Book of Kells*, fol 7v; (b) Iona, St Oran's Cross; (c) Islay, Kildalton Cross; (d) Iona, St Martin's Cross; (e) Isle of Canna, a' Chill Cross; (f) Angus, Monifieth 2C; (g) Angus, Kirriemuir 1C; (h) Angus, Brechin (Cathedral), St Mary slab fragment

lozenges (including that in the *Book of Kells*) and the Angus (with Canna) group. The former all have a long vertical axis while the latter have an extended horizontal axis (illus 16). Not only does this differential marker firmly link Canna to the Angus group but, associated with the brooches, it underscores the distinction in the series both chronologically, and geographically. The source of the narrative icon is problematical but the brooch may be an addendum from current secular, high-status practice, exemplified by the female rider on the Hilton of Cadboll slab (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, fig 59) who may, however, also represent the Virgin within a salvational hunt scene.¹⁵ The process at work here may be parallel to that operating in Late Antique iconography of importing high status secular imagery into religious scenes. To support this view it is worth citing Grainger-Taylor (in Whitfield 1996, 21–2) who has indicated that the *Kells* Virgin, despite her Mediterranean connections, wears clothing in the north-west European aristocratic tradition, comprising separate veil and cloak edged with braid, rather than the more usual *maphorion*. Ongoing modification to the image would, therefore, be neither inappropriate nor unexpected.

The presence of a lozenge motif on the right shoulders of the Canna, Kirriemuir and Monifieth figures clinches the identification of these figures as the Virgin through its use on Iona school icons repeated on the Virgin of the *Book of Kells*, fol 7v.¹⁶ This is particularly underscored by its presence on the Picto-Scottish Brechin Virgin, who is specifically identified by a Latin



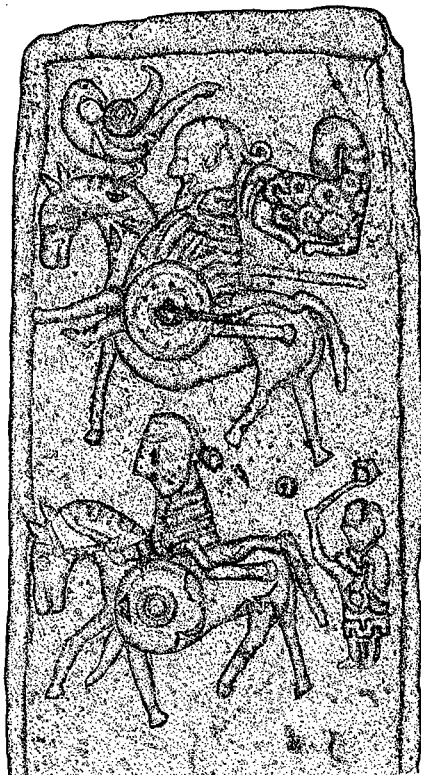
ILLUS 17 Location of decorative parallel elements for Monifieth 2 and a'Chill 1, Canna

version: *S[ANCTA] MARIA M[ATE]R XPI[STI]* [Holy Mary, mother of Christ] of a Greek title formula carved on similar eastern *Theotokos* icons (Veelenturf 1997). The portrayal of the Virgin identified by a lozenge insignia, deriving from an ultimately Byzantine prototype, was a long-standing motif (c 750 to c 1000) in that part of the Columban *paruchia* to the north and east. Its presence on both iconic and narrative sculptural models and in the Kells miniature suggests that all are closely related. The Viking incursions of the ninth century, perhaps rather than inhibiting iconic development, seem to have provided new impetus for experimentation. It is of interest that these lozenge insignia appear in roughly the same position as virtually all the Irish penannular brooches worn by men.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

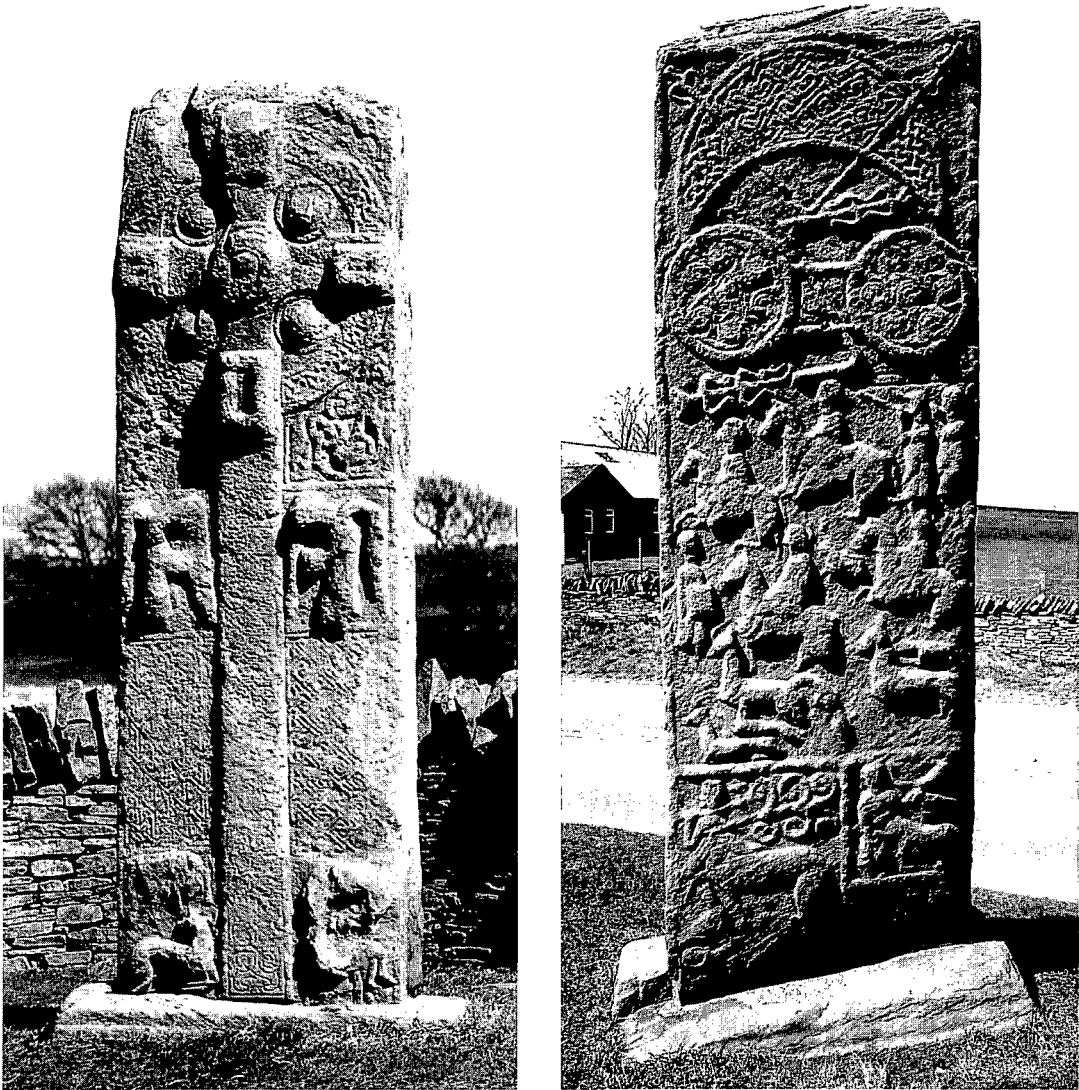
THE A'CHILL CROSS, CANNA AND ITS SOURCES

An assessment of the a'Chill Cross suggests that it is an isolated example of a Picto-Scottish genre of sculpture displaced to the west of Druimalban. To date only Monifieth 2 offers a close parallel in Angus for the Canna 1E2, narrative type, Virgin and Child scene. Significantly Angus alone also possesses the related iconic type of Madonna on the slab fragment at Brechin, on Kirriemuir 1C and perhaps another version occurs on Inchbrayock 1C.¹⁷ This phenomenon reflects a shift of geographic focus for depicting this type of iconography from the Iona school in the eighth century into Angus (as well as the single example on Canna and perhaps Hilton of Cadboll) during the ninth to early 10th centuries.



ILLUS 18 Angus, Menmuir 1C, upper register, interpretative drawing

The remainder of Canna's decorative programme (Appendix 2) contains a selection of motifs that were not current in the Iona school repertoire, but are in keeping with decorative styles present in Angus in the ninth century (illus 16). These include, in addition to the Monifieth parallel for the Canna Adoration of the Magi scene in register E2, a particular type of beast confrontation in Canna 1E1 for which an isolated Pictish parallel is found on Aberlemno 3A-LL1 (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 228).¹⁸ A Pictish type of rider appears in Canna 1E3, with an obscure (but diagnostic) accompanying feature to the upper right of the register. This latter feature may be paralleled in Angus on Menmuir 1C (*ibid*, fig 273B) and the mystery identified as a degenerating quadruped, almost certainly a sheep, with legs tucked beneath its body and a U-curved neck, head facing downwards, are both accompanied by a rider (illus 18). The upper register of the Canna shaft (or more properly the lower cross arm), E4, also contains beasts like the upper confrontational beast of Aberlemno 3A-LR1 (illus 19). On Canna's flat west face (MacLean 1997, fig 5) panel W4 and probably also W2 and W3 (illus 31) contain tapering beasts which, interlacing parts of their own bodies, are of a similar type to those on Aberlemno 3A-LL4/LR4. Also, as MacLean (*ibid*, 180) has noted, the Canna fret pattern in panel W5 is found on Aberlemno 3A-LL2/LR2 (illus 20). Besides the instance of Menmuir 1 noted above, there are echoes of Canna's decoration on other Angus monuments such as Kirriemuir 1, Monifieth 2 and perhaps amongst the beasts at Woodrae. That such a range of similarities is present on Canna 1, Aberlemno 3 and on other local Angus monuments (all within a radius of 24 km and most less than 10 km) indicates strong links between these monuments and leaves little doubt that they are related stylistically and iconographically. Canna 1, dating to the end of the first half of the ninth



ILLUS 19 Angus, Aberlemno 3, photograph: face A (left), face C (right) (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)

century, reuses motifs and decoration whose immediate derivation can be found in southern Pictland and more specifically amongst a restricted group of monuments in Angus.

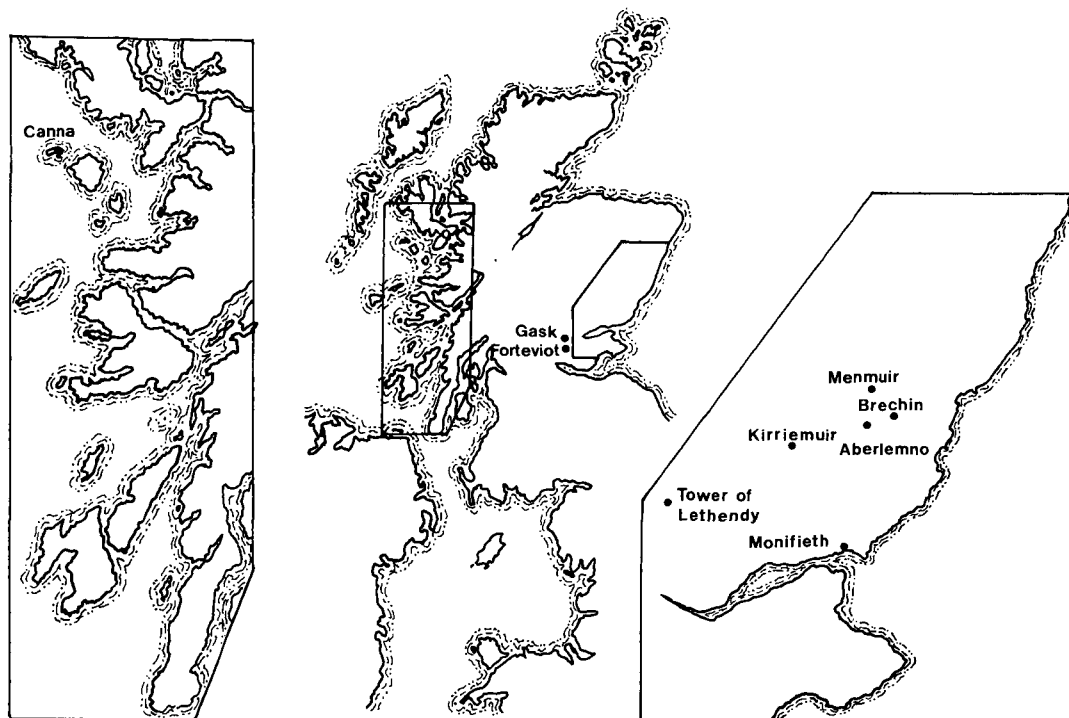
The implications of these links are significant for it may be surmised that at some time in the middle of the ninth century members of a religious community, probably located at or near Aberlemno, travelled across Druimalban to re-settle on Canna's a'Chill site. The skeuomorphic form of the present Canna Cross, eclectic in decoration yet innovative in its form, looks structurally similar to a carved wooden cross, with deeply relieved carving on one main face and with panels resembling affixed decorative metal-working, on the other. This suggests that at one time a smaller wooden version of this monument existed which was transported (probably in kit

form) for re-assembly and erection on site, to be re-created subsequently in a permanent form, in stone.¹⁹ The wooden prototype was perhaps brought from Angus for use at a dedication ceremony or more likely a re-dedication of the site. What seems to be revealed by the radical, innovative iconographic programme is that the cross, a focus of the community's work and its visual symbol, was intended as an instrument of conversion (see Appendix 2). If the Canna community came from Angus it may be seen as part of a planned retrenchment amongst lands recently settled by Viking incomers. Its missionary success is witnessed by the sort of evidence, recorded in the *Landnámabók* (Pálsson & Edwards 1972) of Örlygur Hrapppsson, Viking foster-son of a Hebridean bishop and nephew of Ketil Flatnose who took the cult of Columba from north-western Scotland to Iceland in the later ninth century (Smyth 1984, 171). Canna may well have been the site of that reconstituted Hebridean bishopric. So Christianity appears to have been alive and well in the west in the second half of the ninth century and numbered some powerful supporters among its flock.²⁰

THE DECORATION OF ABERLEMNO 3 AND ABERLEMNO 2

These observations provoke questions which require further exploration, the most important being to divine the reason why Canna's community should have traversed the difficult terrain from Angus and why the high cross's decorative programme should reflect a group of monuments 240 km distant, particularly that of an outstanding and in some ways unique monument, Aberlemno 3 (illus 19). This slab is also innovative in its size, for it appears to be the first of the truly monumental slabs in southern Pictland, a tendency it shares with members of the novel Easter Ross group and the earlier Iona school. The design of Aberlemno 3C and its similarity to the programmes of some Easter Ross monuments has been much discussed, in particular the Pictish hunt motif with its trumpeters, found on the reverse at Hilton of Cadboll and also to some motifs on Nigg 1C and Tarbat 1C. Isabel Henderson (1986, 107), following Donald Bullough's argument (1975, 269, n 2), allows the possibility that Hilton of Cadboll could be derived stylistically from Aberlemno 3 rather than vice versa. Similarities also subsist between the portrayal and the layout of the Pictish symbols at the top of these monuments which show they remained relevant in a Pictish context; their absence on Canna demonstrates their inappropriateness there and confirms Canna as a non-Pictish area by the ninth century.

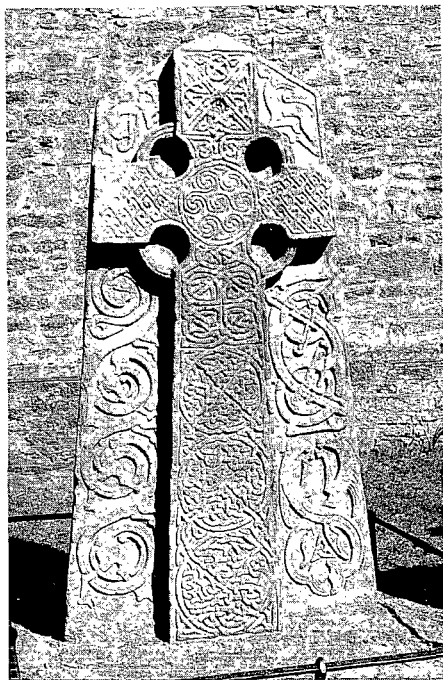
Recently, parallels have also been noted between the angels present on an Easter Ross recumbent monument from Kincardine (Trench-Jellicoe 1997, 170) and the weeping angels of Aberlemno 3A-LL3/LR3. Nevertheless, Aberlemno 3C also seems to draw part of its iconography from southern Pictland. The best parallels for David the Lion-killer and the Centaur panels appear on the Borestone of Gask, Perthshire (ibid, 159, 166, 167), and there are links too with the nearby Fowlis Wester and Forteviot monuments.²¹ The single most innovative element and a unique feature of Aberlemno 3 is the cross design on face A. The encircled crossing boss and the hollow rectangular decoration of the arm terminals might find parallels in Easter Ross but they seem to derive more satisfactorily from the earlier Iona school. The hollow rectangles decorating the cross arms are singularly difficult to parallel but their design is most reminiscent of the beast-infested central boss on the Kildalton Cross, Islay (RCAHMS 1984, 208, fig B). Likewise, the domed bosses in the armpits in this decorated form are unique²² but the bosses are reminiscent of those on face C of St John's Cross and St Martin's Cross, Iona (RCAHMS 1982, 198, fig A; 206, fig). This seems to be a novel attempt to modify and ornament the Pictish quadrilobate cross type. All in all, the Aberlemno 3 cross design seems to be a ninth-century formulation which attempts to synthesize the slab-bound quadrilobate cross with the free-standing high cross



ILLUS 20 Location of decorative parallels in Angus for the a'Chill Cross, Isle of Canna

developed in eighth-century Iona school sculpture. So, here in Angus, an attempt was made to forge a novel design, synthesizing disparate and far-flung elements from across northern and southern Pictland and from the major Scottish religious centres west of Druimalban.

Aberlemno 2, standing in the nearby kirkyard, is also a unique monument, combining a Pictish, quadrilobate cross with a mixture of decorative elements. The obverse is reminiscent of metal-working both on the cross and in the panels of animal ornament (illus 21). The animal in the register beneath the cross arm LR2 has been identified as a seventh-century Northumbrian derivation of Germanic style 2 design and, although the decoration of the opposite panel LL1 also seems Northumbrian in style, it probably belongs in the earlier eighth century. This panel is also reminiscent of columns of animated capital letter decoration in the *Book of Kells* on fols 32v, 40v, 59r, 200r-201v, 212r (Henry 1974, 26, 30, 33, 63-6, 71), but demonstrate less integration of their forms. One explanation for this feature at Aberlemno is that both may be modelled on the design of a Northumbrian metal-work casket or shrine.²³ Henderson (1998, 101) has commented on the masterly design qualities of Aberlemno 2C. Its unparalleled cartoon depiction of warrior combat more probably echoes the contemporary struggle between the Picts and the Vikings than a representation of the Battle of Nechtansmere as has been argued elsewhere (Cruikshank 1991, 23-5). Two parties in conflict are clearly visualized. One force, to the viewer's left, fights without head protection; the other wears helmets. Although this conflict is represented in contemporary terms it is highly likely that the scene represents a struggle in a spiritual context (Alcock 1993, 234), a contemporary parable for which the sentiment of the Columban hymn *Cantemus in omni die*, verse 10, is particularly apposite:



ILLUS 21 Angus, Aberlemno 2, face A (left), face C (right) (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland © Crown copyright)

*Induamus arma lucis
loricam et galiam
ut simus deo perfecti
suscepit per Mariam*

Let us put on the armour of light,
the breastplate and the helmet
that we may be perfected by God,
taken up by Mary.

(Clancy & Márkus 1995, 184–5)

Here, the breastplate symbolizes justice and the shield, salvation (ibid, 257, n 28). Thus, the jettisoning of both the sword and the shield by the fleeing enemy rider in the upper register may be a particularly relevant motif. The presence of identical isolated weapons on Fowlis Wester 2A-UL (Henderson 1998, fig 21), a ninth-century monument, shows the Aberlemno 2 motif was not unique. Fowlis Wester 2 thus carries decorative elements linking it both to the Canna Cross and Aberlemno.

The multivalence of Aberlemno 2C's main scene perhaps records an epitomy of conversion, the spiritual battle for pagans' souls. Good triumphs over evil which, despite its physically superior armament, is finally gored by a raven, ironically a symbol of Odin. This was perhaps intended as a succinct conceit which may have been interpreted by a painted inscription in the now empty panel beneath the battle scene. The whole monument appears to be an attempt to amalgamate important elements from earlier iconography into a synthesized style, different from but complementary to that which appears on Aberlemno 3, operating in the same milieu and in this case carved when it was potentially a fashion to reproduce decoration on revered mobilia (ie portable objects) in stone. Both monuments arguably date to within a quarter century or perhaps shorter bracket in the first half of the ninth century. Aberlemno 2 and 3 are, in their design, both

highly experimental monuments and are likely to represent a response to a very specific brief, developing an iconographic programme related to a theme of conversion.

SOURCES FOR VIRGIN AND CHILD ICONOGRAPHY

Before enquiring further into who was responsible for the monumental Aberlemno creations, it will be worthwhile moving at a tangent to examine the forms and dispersal of the Angus Virgin and Child scenes. It is significant that the earliest Insular representations of both the iconic form of the Virgin and Child, carved at the very end of the seventh century, and adorational types, dated to the first half of the eighth century (Webster & Backhouse 1991, no 70), were produced in Northumbria. The iconic complementary type appears on the St Cuthbert's coffin (Wilson 1984, illus 43), while narrative, Adorational scenes appear on the right side of the front face of the Franks casket (ibid, pl 37)²⁴ and potentially also in a copy of the *Carmen Paschale* of Sedulius today kept in the Museum Plantin-Moretus, M.4, fol 15v (Alexander 1978, illus 291). All scenes, it will be recalled, appear on mobilia and, given the known journey of St Cuthbert's coffin and the find sites of the Franks casket and the codex, their propensity for dispersal is amply demonstrated. After the Northumbrian examples were produced there was perhaps a gap of as much as half a century before the iconic Virgin and Child panels appear on Iona school monuments and in the *Book of Kells* miniature, during the second half of the eighth century (RCAHMS 1982, 18, 197, 208; RCAHMS 1984, 29, 209). These were perhaps a product of reinvigorated contact with Rome and the Mediterranean world after the resolution of the Easter controversy. But Iona school examples were produced only in an iconic form whether frontal or of the skewed variety, consequently they can be shown to derive from a different model from the imagery of the St Cuthbert's coffin. Both iconic and narrative types reappeared in Angus in the late Pictish period (ninth century) but the present study of decorative elements in their design has already indicated that they were closely related to Iona school sculpture of the eighth century.

It has also been demonstrated that Canna's narrative Virgin and Child is likely to have originated in Angus stock and so, for the purposes of this discussion, is part of the Angus phenomenon. Nevertheless, although deriving some features from a late and degenerating Iona school model, in two aspects it was not transmitted unscathed. First Canna depicts a narrative icon, unattested on Iona; in addition, the scene has acquired a penannular brooch which is thought to be a Pictish, high-status, female marker. This element is paralleled on the female figure from Monifieth who it can now also be established represents the Virgin. So, Canna's Madonna is a distinctive version of the narrative icon evolved in a late Pictish or Picto-Scottish milieu, sharing features with the iconic type yet remaining distinctive. Given the existence of seventh-century Northumbrian examples present only on mobilia and demonstrable contacts between Northumbria and Pictland throughout the eighth century (MacLean 1998), it would seem reasonable to propose the likely importation of Northumbrian models (or continental models derived through a Northumbrian interface) rather than an Irish source, as the basis for a Pictish Adorational icon. In Pictland, an eighth-century imported narrative model seems to have absorbed a native high-status, Pictish female marker, the penannular brooch. This reformed icon was subsequently affected by the synthesis of a fully developed Ionan Virgin and Child to create the sort of icon found on Canna, at Monifieth and at Kirriemuir. The ease with which one element of an iconic model of the Kells type might be converted into a narrative Adorational icon of the Canna type may be demonstrated by reversing the Christ-child from the *Book of Kells* fol 7v miniature (illus 22). That a Pictish Madonna appears not to have found its way into a Pictish stone medium during the eighth century (as it also failed to do on Northumbrian sculpture) seems



ILLUS 22 *Book of Kells* fol 7v, Virgin and Child reversed, interpretative drawing

to have been a matter of Pictish taste (or selective preservation) so it was only when tastes and iconographic requirements changed (with the introduction of the Ionan tradition of carving the Madonna in stone and under new religious and political pressures) that images already circulating on mobilia became translated into lapidary form.

ABERLEMNO 3 AND VIRGIN AND CHILD ICONOGRAPHY

Assembling the evidence explored above allows some conclusions to be framed. In the ninth century the Aberlemno community responsible for slab number 3 seems to have become a local centre in Angus for the dispersal of iconography. Moreover, the decoration of the slab appears to indicate that this centre sustained significant long-distance relationships within northern and southern Pictland, with the major Iona school in the west and also with Northumbria. This seems to have been a retrospective relationship: in other words, Aberlemno was in receipt of influences from these areas and responsible for a purposeful attempt to synthesize them into one coherent symbolic system. Such a view is supported by the evidence gleaned from the presence in Angus of Virgin and Child iconography which, although not a motif specifically present at Aberlemno, as a group seems to focus topographically on Aberlemno, suggesting it as a likely source.

All evidence points towards Aberlemno as a major centre both in receipt of influences and for their dispersal. This entitles us to enquire what sort of organization, demonstrating such a range of interests, could be responsible for this focus in the ninth century. The answer seems to be closely linked with the movements of the Iona community but to develop such a thesis it is necessary first to turn to the meagre historical record.

THE FATE OF THE *FAMILIA IAE*

Sparse evidence from early medieval Scotland records that the community of Columba was banished from Pictland in AD 717 'across the spine of Britain' by Nechtan, son of Derile, King of the Picts. The motivation for this radical act is obscure but it probably had less to do with

conformity in the controversy over the dating of Easter than with some secular political expediency (Duncan 1975, 71). Subsequently the Columban were believed to have been reintroduced east of Druimalban after the Scottish 'take-over' by Cináed mac Alpín in the middle of the ninth century. The situation looks straightforward but references to the Columban community associated with Alba in the first half of the ninth century suggest that this simplistic view may be deceptive (Clancy 1996; Veitch 1997).

A complicating factor in the record is the intrusion of the Vikings. Although we undoubtedly now possess a dramatized 'official' version of events, it is certain that the Vikings' devastation of Iona in 795, 802 and 806 (Smyth 1984, 146; Anderson 1922, 256–8) made the site an unhealthy place for a religious community. Abbot Cellach chose to partly abandon Iona between the years 807 and 814 and build 'a new monastery of Columcille' on the safer Irish midland site of Kells, County Meath (ibid, 259). His successor, Abbot Diarmait, led the community in Kells from 814 (ibid, 260; Clancy 1996; Bannerman 1997) but is recorded travelling to Alba in 818 with the shrine (*sgrín*) of Columba (ibid, 261) and again between 829–31, carrying with him the relics of Columba (*co minnaib Coluim cille*: AU, s.a. 828 = AD 829; ibid, 265–6). During this period, around the year 825, Bláthmacc mac Fland was martyred on Iona, an event recorded laconically in the *Annals of Ulster* and at length in a dramatic poem by Walafrid Strabo, Abbot of Reichnau (838–49), in a *Life of Bláthmacc* (Anderson 1922, 263–5). In this *Vita* appears an oblique reference to the existence of a safe escape route from Iona, not known to the Vikings, in which Walafrid records that those monks: '*Ast alii quibus hoc nondum fiducia mentis Persuasit, per nota fugam loca calle capessunt.*' (Migne nd: PL 114, 1046) 'who not yet induced to this [violent martyrdom] by their confidence of mind took flight by a footpath through regions known to them' (Anderson 1922, 264). This reference to a 'footpath' suggests an overland route and may record a safe corridor through Druimalban into Pictland. The most probable route to follow seems to be from Loch Etive via Strath Tay or Strath Earn into Fortriu and Angus. This route would have emerged at the head of Strathmore c 50 km (30 miles) from Aberlemno in Angus.²⁵ The existence of such a route, believed to have been an 'ancient pilgrimage route' from Iona via Strathmore has long been suspected (Hawkes 1997, 129).²⁶

So, for what purpose was Abbot Diarmait travelling in Alba in 818 and 829–31 with Columba's relics and, if the 'safe corridor' theory is correct, why would those brothers, who were disinclined to suffer a gory death, choose to flee along a 'footpath in regions known to them' rather than return over the sea to Columban centres in Ireland? It seems that the annalists have not preserved the full story. Surviving records do, however, begin to take on meaning when viewed in conjunction with the sculptural evidence. Christian activity at the Aberlemno site seems to begin early in the ninth century and we know its effect was beginning to be felt in the west by the middle of the century. No sculptural evidence exists for activity at the site beyond the middle of the century indicating a very short bracket for its influence at this level. The sculptural evidence also indicates *inter alia* that a considerable amount of influence from the later eighth-century Iona school was invested in the Aberlemno area in the early ninth, which suggests more than cursory contact. The implication is that when part of the *familia Iae* sought safety in Kells other members went to an alternative safe haven in Angus, at Aberlemno.

Although the Columban community was reportedly banned from Pictland in 717, the political situation must have developed considerably during the subsequent century: the Easter controversy and other difficulties were resolved, while Scottish power in Pictland was no longer feared and to be excluded. Smyth's view (1984, 179) that between 811 and 834 kings ruled both in Pictland and simultaneously in Dál Riata, in effect operating a joint kingship, has been challenged (Broun 1998). Although there is yet much to be understood about the complexities of Pictish

kingship in this period, its specific relationship with the regality of Fortrenn and the intrusion of Dál Riatic kings into the sequence (Bannerman 1997; Broun 1998) make it clear that a Columban presence again played a significant role in Pictish affairs; and there may have been a major Columban foundation at Dunkeld as much as four decades before the partial translation of Columba's relics there in 849 (Bannerman 1993; 1997; Clancy 1996). With such strong suggestions of royal favour for the *familia Iae* it is unsurprising that, when threatened, Picto-Scottish kings would offer this primary religious institution in their western lands a safe haven in their other lordship.²⁷ But there was undoubtedly more to their resettlement than seeking to escape from Viking tyranny. Church and state related to each other in complex ways and both had a vested interest in mutual support for the conversion of Viking incomers (Bannerman 1997; Foster 1998a, 3). Kings of Pictland and Dál Riata wished to resume control of their patrimony in western Alba and must have reasoned that a re-establishment of Christianity was an agency to that end, while the *familia Iae* naturally wished to convert the pagans, regain their lost lands, power and influence. It can be argued that to this end a Columban base was established at Aberlemno, not merely drawing on the resources of part of the re-settled Iona community nor southern Pictish support but also on interests in northern Pictland which suffered under similar pressure from Viking interlopers. The sculptural evidence suggests that here, at Aberlemno, a foundation was established to plan evangelizing missions.

The reason for choosing Aberlemno as the base for this project seems straightforward. It is at the eastern end of the 'safe corridor' across Druimalban with direct connections back across to the western seaboard. At the same time it was situated in the heartlands of the ninth-century Pictish kingdoms along Strathmore and Strath Earn, with ready access to Forteviot and other royal centres. The strength of the connection between these sites is attested by the presence of a slouching figure on Aberlemno 3A-LR1 who holds what appears to be a long vertical staff lying across a beast beneath (the object is certainly not a sword) and a similar scene on the roughly contemporary sculptured arch recovered from the river at Forteviot (no 2) (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, 214, 325, fig 228A; Stuart 1867, pl 103). Given a ninth-century date for the Dupplin Cross, the Forteviot Arch and Aberlemno 3 (linked to Aberlemno's Columban affiliations indicated here), Henderson's (1998, 154) suggestion that the Dupplin Cross also 'reflects the revival of the cult of Columba in Perthshire' (and probably Angus too) makes good sense. In fact, sculpture in Fortriu and Circinn, dating from the earlier ninth century, shows evidence of a general increase in the influence from the Columban west. Established on rich land, Aberlemno²⁸ would have had a sound financial base from which to resource a mission and at the same time be relatively protected from areas of greater Viking activity in the north and along the Forth/Clyde line to the south, while yet being well placed to sustain vital contact with a besieged northern Pictland. It seems probable that it was foremost to this site that Abbot Diarmait made his way in 818 and again with Columba's relics in 829–31, not only potentially to consecrate Pictish sites as Clancy (1996, 114) has suggested, but primarily to take personal control, spearheading the organization and missionary work of the community. The insight that Abbot Diarmait was involved with the reforms of the Céli Dé movement (ibid, 116–18) would have served to add rigour to the structuring and operation of such an evangelical project.

CONCLUSIONS

This view of the *familia Iae* as not necessarily fleeing from the Viking incursions but rather staging a tactical withdrawal to plan for the conversion of the Vikings in western Alba and the north, is perhaps no more than we should expect from such a widespread, resilient, well-resourced and

highly organized institution. The ramifications of this strategy were far-reaching, bringing Christianity into the Viking settlements of the north Atlantic and beyond. Evidence for its wider effects appears on Viking sculpture in the Irish Sea province in southern Scotland, the Isle of Man and north-west England and to the east of the Pennines in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. It also occurred in coastal areas of western and southern Wales during the remainder of the ninth and well into the 10th century and, in places, perhaps even into the 11th, before the final ripples of its influence came to rest.

Some believe that sculpture studies belongs to an old-fashioned, outmoded type of scholarship but, used properly within an overall framework, they can become a valuable complement to archaeology, place-name studies and history, particularly helpful in periods when written evidence is curtailed. Indeed sculpture, in this period, represents the largest body of contemporary documentation. Currently, however, apart from specific local studies of sculpture²⁹ little overall systematic scholarship is being fostered. Meanwhile these irreplaceable stone documents, our primary evidence, are deteriorating steadily (and on occasion suffering theft). Now surely is the time for a modern and scholarly national survey leading to the production of a complete corpus of this vital resource, to update the work of J Romilly Allen, published by this Society a century ago.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Mike Spearman for pointing out the presence of a brooch on the Canna monument and for other suggestions. I wish to thank Susan Youngs and Niamh and Adrian Whitfield for help with the brooches and insignia; Richard Bailey, Katherine Forsyth, Jane Hawkes, Isabel Henderson, David Henry, Douglas MacLean, Niall Robertson and Simon Taylor for their valued comments; and Basil Megaw for allowing me to read an early draft of his article on the Calf of Man Crucifix.

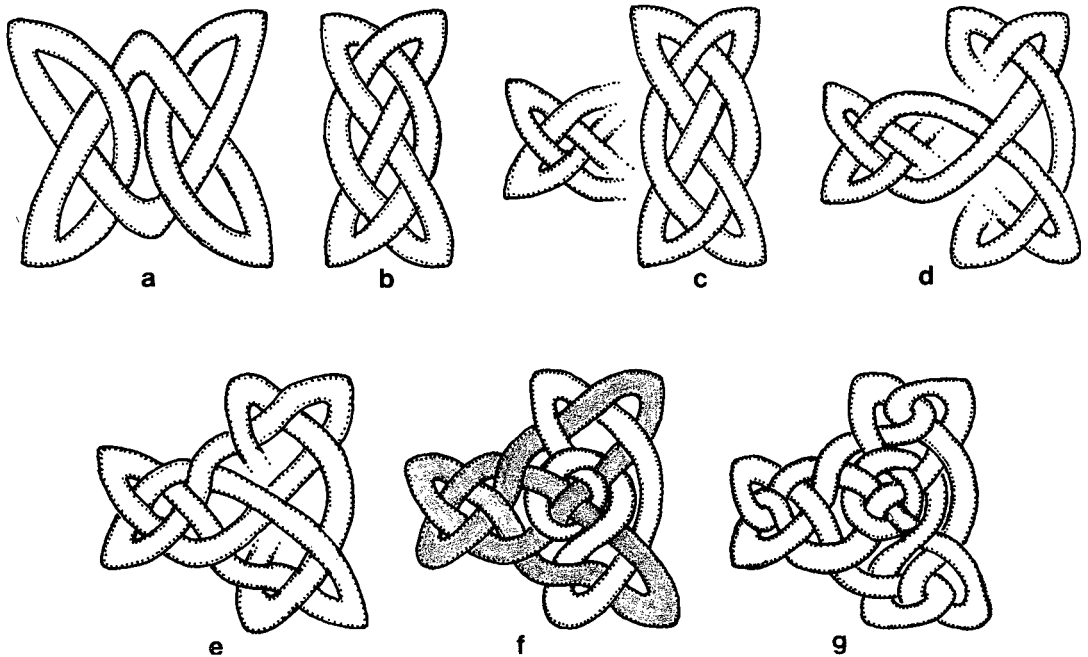
APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTION OF MONIFIETH 2

FACE A: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DECORATIVE MOTIF

The face is dominated by a contoured relief cross which fills the unbordered surface and is surrounded with undecorated quadrants. Over the cross armpits (after Cramp 1991) (illus 1) is imposed a square, plain-bordered crossing panel with slightly cusped corners (RA outline 104A: after Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 2). The short horizontal cross arms are noticeably cusped but the profile of the vertical arms is less pronounced (the cross is hybrid type: BAC 2.9A/D). Each arm is decorated and the crossing panel is filled with an interlace based on four linked triquetra knots, producing a dense, worked cruciform motif. The ornament was recorded by Allen (RA 753: *ibid*) but is of subtler form than he suggested. The three upper knots are indeed formed from one linked strand but the lower knot is independent, bound to the others only by the initial strand passing through as an interwoven loop, thereby breaking the absolute symmetry of the design. Of the horizontal arms, the right is complete while the left lacks the terminal border and some 20% of the panel area. Both are decorated overall with similar interlace but there are slight variations of detail.

KNOT-WORK ON THE HORIZONTAL ARM PANELS

The interlace is created from a single continuous plain strand: the right contains a delicate and sophisticated design which Allen (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, 229) described as 'not regular enough for classification', a designation which obscures its intrinsic interest. The unique layout seems to be ultimately based on a pair of linked backed Stafford knots (RA 214; BAC 23Eiv) (illus 23a). Allen records the motif in southern Pictland,



ILLUS 23A–G Angus, Monifieth 2A, construction of cross arm decoration, interpretative drawing

apparently dated to the ninth century, in a double-row arrangement (RA 601). The Stafford knots have first been compressed (illus 23b) so that the backing loops overlap. To this design, in order to fill the available space in the cross arm, a further half-unit was added at a right angle (illus 23c). These separate elements were then linked together; first, the outer strands (illus 23d) and then the inner (illus 23e). To complete the basic form, the crossing is locked together with a loop (illus 23f) and the final design is achieved by detaching the inner terminal strands and turning them using a twist motif (illus 23g). The effect of this sophisticated strategy is to reduce the need for two elements to a single strand. Interlace of the same basic type decorates the horizontal cross arms of Glamis 1A and the right arm of Glamis 2A (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, figs 233A, 234A) but neither appears to be as fully synthesized or delicately executed. An attractive local example of the use of the basic design appears on a bone disc recovered from a crannog near Forfar (Stuart 1867, LXXXII–LXXXIII, fig).

DECORATION OF THE VERTICAL ARMS

The upper and lower arms are decorated with pelta forms and asymmetrically balanced trumpet spirals. The design of the upper arm is complete, the lower arm, substantially a mirror of the upper, is less complete but differs from the design above in subdividing the pelta-form into two interlocking trumpets. The lower area (now hidden from view by the present supporting mount) is illustrated by Stuart (1867, pl LXXXI, no 3), Neish (1871, pl IV.3) and Allen (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 242A). They show a horizontal bar developing out of the trumpet decoration above, from which emerge two tree-like scrolls (BAC 10) with perhaps the suggestion of a further similar register carved beneath. Allen described this as a type of meander pattern (RA 899; BAC27, M1) but this is unsatisfactory. Lower detail is extensively damaged.

FACE C

The slab is framed by two confronting bird-headed beasts with scrolled shoulders and bent forelimbs terminating in curling claws (illus 2 & 3). The substantial beak, the upper element longer than the lower,

curves and tapers downwards. The eyes are tear-shaped, angular and bulbous. The slab face is subdivided into three panels by a T-shaped plain moulding whose junction of vertical and horizontal struts is eased with a curve. The upper panel contains two symbolic beasts. The left-hand monster is a distorted quadruped with long curling tail and long tapering neck bent back across the upper body; the head is portrayed as if viewed from above with long blunted snout and bulbous eyes. Its four articulated limbs terminate with two short digits on the forelimbs and three at the rear. A second Pictish symbol on the right represents the head of a deer. Facing to the right (RA 155), its neck expands markedly as it descends to terminate on the line of the panel border, a mouth defines the elongated muzzle. An almond-shaped eye and a large pricked ear completes the head. In the lower right panel is a degenerating bordered crescent with V-rod overlay, decorated with matching terminals resembling fleurs-de-lis. The crescent is ornamented with symmetrical trumpet spirals and lentoid elements. The lower left figural panel has already been described.

DISCUSSION

The design of face A is reminiscent of an assembly of appliqué metal-work plates suggesting it is a skeuomorph of an earlier wooden cross covered with decorated plates, like the cross preserved in the Museo Nazionale, Cividale. The well-carved beast frame of face C is ultimately derived from Northumbrian models such as Monkwearmouth 5A, dating to the first quarter of the eighth century (Cramp 1984, 124, illus 604; Bailey 1992, 35–6, pl 1). Its meaning is probably best understood in the context of the Old Testament Christological reference in Habakkuk Ch 3 ‘*In medio duorum animalium innotesceris*’ [in the midst of two beasts you shall be known] (found in the *Vespasian Psalter* version: Wright 1967, fol 145r; Ó Carragáin 1986).

The beast and deer-head Pictish symbol in the upper panel presents interpretative difficulties. The benign giraffe-necked beast may be derived from Late Antique sources, such as that found on a funerary stele preserved in the Byzantine Museum, Athens, dating to the fourth to fifth century (Grabar 1967, pl 101).³⁰ Although this type of fantasy may be paralleled, *inter alia*, by less well-conceived versions at Dunfallandy IA and on Meigle 4C, Perthshire, and Inchbrayock 1A/C, Angus (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, figs 305A, 313A, 235A/B), the most satisfactory parallel is found (unsurprisingly) on the base of Monifieth 4D (*ibid*, fig 275D). A potential derivation from manuscript illustration in the *Physiologus* or *Marvels of the East* (Hicks 1993, 108–11; Henderson 1996) is less satisfactory. The inverted beast head, turned from the other elements in the panel, indicates rejection and creates a symmetrical statement with the deer’s head symbol, which is also averted. Although the hart, in certain instances, may be interpreted as representing Christ or ‘the soul’ (Bailey 1977), it seems unlikely that a deer head should stand as substitute. The deer-head motif is paralleled on Glamis 2A-LR, Angus, or in reduced form on the slab at Dunachton, Inverness, and also shares some similarities with the animal head on Ardross 2A (*ibid*, figs 234A, 103, 54). Both animals may represent different aspects of nature, portrayed rejecting Christ and the Word in the panel beneath.

Any interpretation of the Crescent and V-Rod Pictish symbol in the lower right panel is a matter of speculation. On the Kirriemuir 1C version of the Virgin and Child, a Mirror and Comb symbol appears to qualify the Virgin. The Mirror and Comb has long been thought to be a ‘female’ signifier and may therefore pertain to the Virgin in that context. Lack of a similar marker in the Monifieth scene is significant, for here the Crescent and V-Rod may be intended to qualify the nearby Christ-child, perhaps also acting as a status marker. Such interpretation is uncertain, however, as a panel border has been deliberately inserted between the two scenes; the situation is complicated by the lack of a magus, though his presence is implied by the portrayal of the Child facing away from the Virgin. The presence of these carefully chosen elements on face C insists that they represent a meaningful message whose detailed significance is at present irrecoverable, but probably involves their relationship with Christ as Saviour. There is also a high probability that Christ relates to whatever is signified by the Crescent and V-Rod symbol. It has been noted above that the individual framing of elements in an Adorational scene is also found on the larger Sandbach Cross, Cheshire.

APPENDIX 2: THE PROGRAMME ON THE A'CHILL CROSS, CANNA

EAST FACE

The programme on the east face of the cross lacks two scenes in the upper and left cross arms (illus 24). According to island folklore these were removed by 17th-century pirates who used the cross for cannon-firing practice (Mrs J L Campbell, Canna, pers comm; see also Campbell 1984 for general background). Six registers/panels remain, three in the shaft and three (of five) on the cross head. All are carved in deeply moulded style and here described from the base upwards.

Cross shaft, register E1

This half-sized unit is more worn than those above. It contains two horizontal beasts who are portrayed quite differently (illus 25). The upper beast, a boar facing to the right, has a thick-set body of uniform girth, limbs terminating in cloven hoofs. The front legs fold beneath the chest. The rear legs are drawn up. Its tail curls into the space created behind. A substantial head with broad pointed ears lies above the leading forelimb. Although worn, it seems to have a tightly curved horn above the snout and oval eye. On the right stands a worn figure facing left, his arm reaching towards the boar and perhaps pouring something over him from his other hand. The depiction of a wing form at the rear indicates this is an angel. The lower beast, facing left is of slighter stature than the upper and lies with its legs folded beneath the body, except for the offside foreleg which stretches across its neck. The limbs terminate in hoofs and a long tail passes in a curve to the right. The lower beast's worn head has tapering curved horns indicating it is a bovine. Both animals lie submissively but are surrounded by dogs who attack them, carved in low relief and now worn.

Register E2

The three figures in this full-sized unit have already been described (illus 5). This Adoration of the Magi, although truncated and displaying distortion in the figures and deconstruction in some elements, has been securely identified (for discussion see above).

Register E3

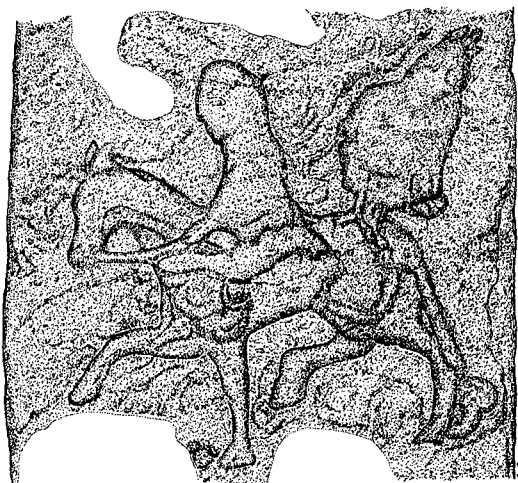
This half unit includes a horseman riding to the left and also a sub-triangular element to the upper right, above the horseman (illus 26). The horse strides out, leading fore and rear limbs stretching forward, the trailing forelimb set firmly on the ground. The tail falls straight, at an angle to the hock point of the trailing leg (Beck 1992, 8, illus). The head, slightly lowered and held by the bridle, reaches forward, both pricked ears are depicted. A crupper appears to pass beneath the tail. The rider holds a bridle which curves across the horse's neck. Leaning slightly forward, a foot resting at the junction of the horse's forelimb and shoulder, he sits on a large saddle blanket. An unidentified narrow curved line emerges from the back of the saddle, curves across the hind quarters and terminates on the stifle joint (ibid, 8, illus). The depiction of the horse is in a distinctively Pictish striding style: the saddle blanket and crupper are also helpful diagnostic features. The figure wears a cape with a broad hem across the lower arm and waist. His worn head, apparently un-bearded and with an oval eye, has hair around the crown giving the appearance of a tonsured crop. The rider holds a worn object in his left hand, now only faintly visible against the horse's neck. This seems to be a short staff with a curve, resembling a short pastoral staff, with the drop falling next to the horse's jaw. His potential tonsure and staff are similar to those used on St Vigeans 4 and Meigle 29 to denote an ecclesiastic. A second sub-triangular element, positioned to the upper right, is worn and indistinct. Four legs folded beneath, two from the back and two from the front, indicate that this animal is sitting or lying. The curve of the back lies to the left and a U-shaped protrusion to the upper right represents the neck, with the head turned backwards across the body, looking downwards. Two pricked ears are visible above. This is a sheep, best identified through a parallel on Menmuir 1C (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 273B). Menmuir's rider



ILLUS 24 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*
© Crown copyright)



ILLUS 25 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, register 1,
interpretative drawing



ILLUS 26 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, register 3,
interpretative drawing

is an armed warrior, adored both by a large bird sitting on the horse's neck and a sheep behind. The Canna sheep also clearly adores the rider but its head looks on downwards beyond the horse to focus on the Christ-child below. Carved in worn low relief on the surrounding background are four quadrupeds, probably hounds which attack the horse or, as in the case of that beneath the hind legs, appear trampled. These hounds (also found in E1) could be dismissed as figments of the imagination were not similar unpublished examples extant, one being similarly trampled, in Pictish scenes in both Easter Ross and southern Pictland. This travelling, tonsured priest and an adoring sheep complete the programme in the shaft.

Cross head, lower cross arm: Register E4

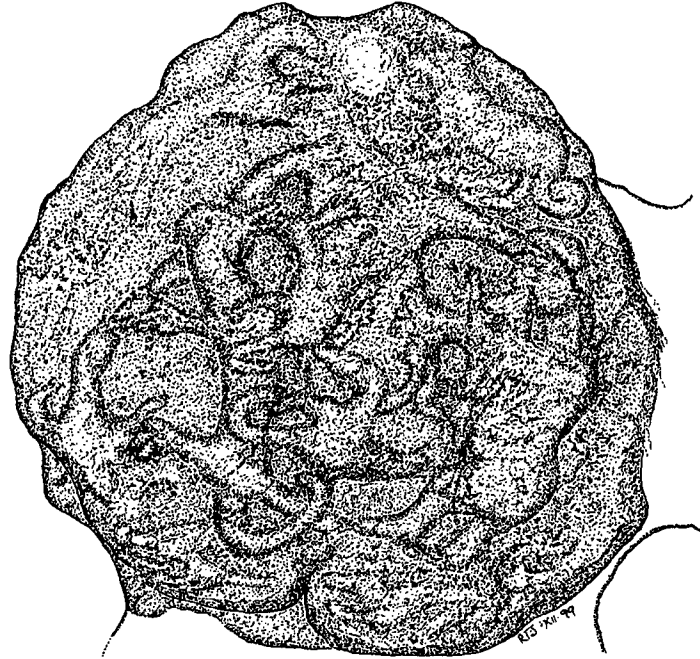
No demarcation subsists between the shaft and cross head but this full-sized unit (similar in size to the right arm panel) appears to represent a lower arm of the cross head. It contains two beasts portrayed horizontally travelling to the left, one above the other. Both are thick-set although the lower is larger and heavier (illus 27). The upper beast strides carefully, the offside rear limb terminating beneath the trailing front leg, the other tucked in behind. This beast's damaged head, with long thin vertical muzzle, is lowered as if sniffing the ground. This beast now appears monstrous but may originally have represented a real animal, perhaps a hound. The lower beast, a lion, has sturdier limbs, tapering at the wrists and preserving well-developed paws and digits. The rear limbs are also substantial. A long tail curves around the rump and above its back. The portrayal of the forelimbs suggests the beast turns around to support its inverted head which looks across its back as if checking to protect itself from rearward assault. Raking light suggests the head is seen from above with almond-shaped eyes and jowl. The beasts confront each other and the lion is perhaps intended for a symbol of Christ or alternatively a noble soul, prey to sin and, depicted as if aware that it is being stalked, checks behind to protect itself from menace. In so doing it looks beyond, past its opponent, towards the Godhead above, forming an inverted image of the sheep in the register (E3) below.

Crossing panel, E6

This circular panel, the focus of the cross (the only defined panel on this face), is foregrounded 0.015 m before the cross arms. Over half of the outline is now lost to the left but punch cuts on the right inner edge are visible in raking light. The panel contains three major vertical elements with slighter features around the



ILLUS 27 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, register 4, interpretative drawing



ILLUS 28 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, register 6, interpretative drawing

edges. Centrally positioned, a fronted figure stands with arms outstretched hanging at an angle of 60 degrees from the body (illus 28). To the figure's left is an inward-facing profiled figure whose rear profile follows the curvature of the panel terminating in legs and feet beneath the tunic hem. The central figure's hand rests on the crown of his elongated head, which has a beard and frames a worn eye. One of the flanking figure's arms reaches out to touch the central figure. Across his chest is a small profiled quadruped facing to the left, reminiscent of an *Agnus Dei* figure supported by John the Baptist on Ruthwell 1W4. In the area between the figures and beneath the central figure's arm is a narrow vertical element of uncertain function. To the central figure's right (viewer's left) and viewed as if from above, a sinuous lizard-like beast with a long muzzle rises, biting his outstretched arm. The beast's left forelimb stretches out so that the paw lies over the central figure's wrist, while its right arm, bent at the elbow, rests on the figure's chest. The left rear limb is raised, terminating in a reptilian foot which stretches out to touch another beast on the lower left edge (whose head touches the central figure's outstretched hand). The other leg turns downwards to the right towards the leading foot of the figure to the right, its dragonesque tail curving across its own rear limb. Two similar smaller beasts crawl up across the body of the central figure, one on the thighs and one across the chest. Other worn beasts, either lizard monsters or hounds, appear around the panel. On either side of the central figure's head, facing inwards, stand two profiled hound-like quadrupeds. The left leaps forward, its forelimbs touching the neck and head of the figure and muzzle juxtaposed with his head. The right stands on the figure's shoulder, a forepaw touching his head and his muzzle also apparently touches the head.

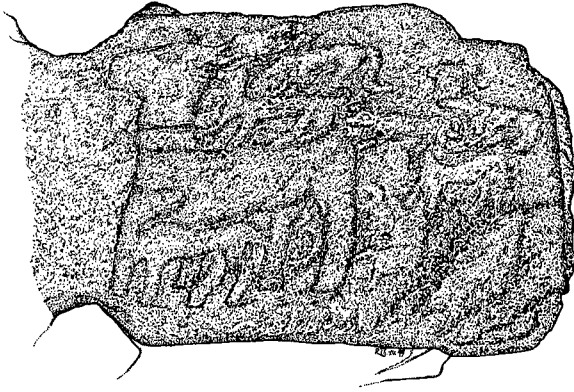
The structure and composition of this scene is most unusual, perhaps unique and unorthodox, in so far as any scene has a fixed form at this date. The major central figure represents Christ who is portrayed in a stance reminiscent of later Crucifixions. Although evidence for the presence of a cross is lacking, here it may be, that as on many later theophoric Irish crucifixions the main cross symbolizes the cross of Crucifixion. This scene also lacks other essential features, such as the flanking figures of Longinus and Stepaton which would serve to confirm it as a Crucifixion. Nor, lacking the four gospel symbols and mandorla, could it be interpreted as a *Maiestas Domini* (Veelenturf 1997). His elevation suggests the portrayal is intended to be understood as a Christ of the Perugia, the Second Coming, and the Last Judgement.

The declining arms are reminiscent of Christ's portrayal on later Irish high crosses at Clonmacnoise (Cross of the Scriptures), Drumcliff, Duleek (North and South Crosses), Durrow and Kells (Cross of Patrick and Columba E4), Monasterboice (Tall Cross and North Cross) (Harbison 1992, figs 141 221, 243, 246, 496, 500, 766, 870). The absence of Christ's lower legs and feet probably owes more to wear than their being obscured in cloud. Christ lays His left hand on the head of a flanking figure, who, receiving His benediction, in turn venerates and adores the Saviour by laying his hand on Christ. The closest parallels for this element occur in eastern Yorkshire on the late ninth- to early 10th-century Nunburnholme Cross and on a contemporary shaft fragment, York Minster 2A (Lang 1991, 54–5, 190–3, illus 6 & 727). In these later scenes the central figure's hands rest firmly on two flanking figures rather than the single figure represented here.³¹ The flanking figure may represent the faithful and is probably linked to the small quadruped whose function appears benign but is otherwise unclear. It is uncertain whether the figure to the right holds the small quadruped or whether he holds an object beneath his arm. It is possible that the vertical element represents blood flowing from Christ's wound and the flanking figure holds a cup to receive it in a eucharistic motif.

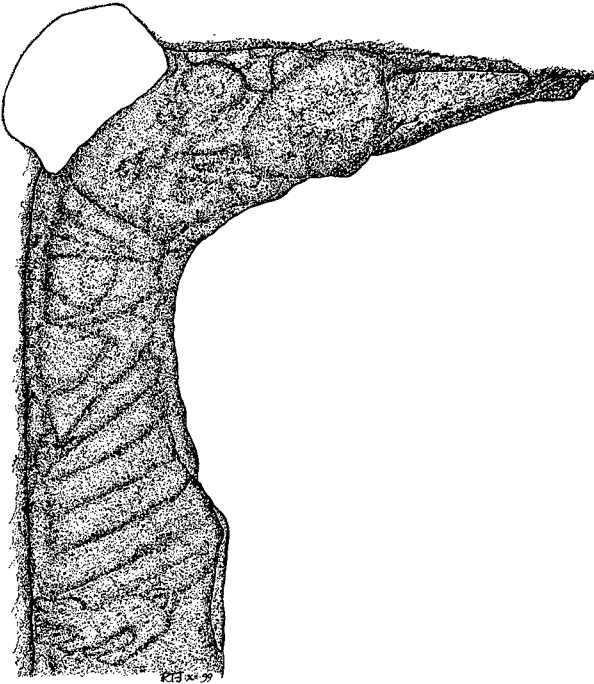
The presence of a lizard-like beast with significantly long tail is most unusual in this type of scene. It is clearly attacking Christ as it bites His arm while other beasts try to pin Him down. They are portrayed as if attempting to destroy Him. Unnaturally long tails on monsters seem a distinctive feature of the dragonsque beasts, dating to the second half of the eighth century, in the central column of a Northumbrian canon table from Rome (*Vatican, Bibl. Apostolica, Barberini Lat. 570*, fol 1: Alexander 1978, 61, illus 173) and closely related parallels are present on the lizard-like monsters of the Rothbury Cross's Damned in Hell scene (Rothbury 1cD1: Cramp 1992, illus 1224; Hawkes 1996, 88–90, fig 9) although not apparently present on its oft-noted parallels in the front flanking panels of the St Andrew's Shrine (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 365; Henderson 1994, fig 5.4; Henderson 1998, 147, pls 12 & 13). It occurs in later scenes such as that on the Heysham hogback, face A (Lang 1984, 139, fig on p 139). To intrude a beast into such a scene emphasizes its role, and its size and proximity to Christ intensifies the effect. Were this feature to appear in a Viking context, the beast might be intended as an intrusion of the *Midgardsorm* from pagan Norse mythology. Here, it is portrayed as having no power over Christ in an eschatological scene which may combine Christian elements of the Second Coming and the Last Judgement with concepts from *Ragnarök* in order to underscore the primacy of Christian salvation. It is reasonably certain that the quadruped on the scene's left edge is a small lion. Its stance, low on the forequarters, higher at the back and reaching up with the head, probably to lick Christ's hand, also suggests it receives a benediction and acknowledges Christ rather than attacking Him. The portrayal of the figure, with hands lowered from the horizontal and leonine animal at His hand is reminiscent of scenes on Irish high crosses identified as Daniel in the Lions' Den, such as that on the Kells, Cross of Patrick and Columba, E4 (Harbison 1992, figs 345 & 766). It also shares iconographic features with Crucifixion scenes, as in the north face crossing of Kells Market Cross where Christ's lowered arms (to accommodate the panel shape) appear to have a small figure (to the left) and quadruped (to the right) touching the hands (ibid, fig 344). The quadrupeds flanking the Canna Christ's head, also probably lions, appear to adore Him, again echoing later Irish Daniel imagery at Kells on the south crossing of the Market Cross (ibid, figs 335 & 771). It cannot be by chance that these later parallels appear at a major Columban centre. Pictish Daniel parallels, such as that on Meigle 2C, are less satisfactory (ibid, fig 769). Parallel elements appear in the Nunburnholme and York Minster 2A scenes (Lang, op cit) but there Canna's leonine beasts have transmuted into drop-tailed birds, of a distinctive York type, indicating an extensive reformation in that icon. A synthesis of Daniel iconography within a Christological context would be appropriate here as Daniel is recognized as an Old Testament fore-figuring of the Redeemer. The message of the scene is focused on those who venerate, adore and acknowledge Christ's power and are sustained by Him meanwhile, as Saviour: He suffers assault from evil which cannot prevail.

Right arm panel, E7

The panel includes a large quadruped travelling to the left. The area around the head is worn (illus 29). Two short stubs, representing antlers towards the rear of the head, can be seen to divide identifying the beast as a hart. Above its back are two small hounds, running to the left, the lower bites the hart's head. Running



ILLUS 29 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, register 7, interpretative drawing



ILLUS 30 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, north cross arm support, east face, interpretative drawing

behind the hart, biting its rump is another hound, followed by a companion. Other hounds, some worn and fragmentary, chasing above and below are partly lost over the edge. Beneath the hart's belly is another running hound who turns his head backwards to bite the chest at the base of the neck. Eight hounds are visible. Despite its representation as a camel by Stuart's illustrator (1867, pl 50), this scene represents a complex hart and hound motif (Trench-Jellicoe 1999, 192–4) of a type found in earlier ninth-century Pictland in Easter Ross, Moray and Angus. The symbolism of the heart and hound as a redemptive motif is discussed by Bailey (1977, 68–71) and its Insular distribution is plotted by Trench-Jellicoe (*ibid.*, 193–4).

Right edge panel (E/N)

This skeuomorphic extrusion is decorated on its east face with abstract ornament for its full height except for the curve around the armpit and a medial boss. The lower section appears to be decorated with running

Stafford knots which, rising, develop into two mirrored units of pelta spirals. The boss, perhaps a skeuomorphic nail cover, is a small curled quadruped, belly towards the cross, back legs tightly drawn in below. The front paws lie within and the muzzle is tucked in so that a pricked ear touches the shaft. The rolled-up form of the animal may be paralleled on Monifieth 4B (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 275B). Above the boss is another mirrored unit of pelta spirals surmounted by a small worn area. At the top, curving around onto the underside of the right cross arm, is a mannikin atop a series of seven angled lines. This appears to represent an angelic figure turned towards the right with a wing (or wings) running along the base of the cross arm (illus 30). The worn head, with ears and hair on the crown, faces the viewer. A crooked left arm bends across the body onto his right shoulder and proffers two hollow sub-circular objects which can be recognized as a pair of crowns of martyrdom, offered to Christ in the crossing panel. A flying figure offering two crowns to Christ also appears in the reverse right cross arm of the early ninth-century Rothbury Cross, Northumberland (Cramp 1984, illus 1210; Hawkes 1996, 84–5, 91, fig 6). The figure's right arm appears also to bend across the body and, passing beneath the left arm, holds a pair of narrow V-form objects beneath its chin. These elements, also joined in a U-shape at the base, are found on the Rothbury Cross head, in the upper arm, and are identified there as double sceptres of power (Hawkes 1996, 85, fig 6). The line of a short tunic descends around the thighs. Beneath the hem the right leg descends bending at the knee with the foot resting on one of the linear elements below. The offside leg and foot partly underlies it. Below the figure, the linear elements apparently represent a 'stairway' of six steps. This is another arcane link with the Rothbury Cross head. At Rothbury (ibid, fig 6) the figure in the upper cross arm is supported in the upper arm on five 'elongated cushions' similar to the 'steps' at Canna. Hawkes (ibid, 85) has argued persuasively for Rothbury that these represent 'rather solid (stylized) clouds' from which the adoring figure emerges, an element which provides the scene with an apocalyptic reference. It seems likely that the icon master of the Canna programme intended a similar inference. There is little difference between this Canna representation and the stylized depiction of clouds on the contemporary apse mosaic of Pope Paschal I in Santa Pressede, Rome (Grabar & Nordenfalk 1957, 40–1, pl).

NORTH EDGE

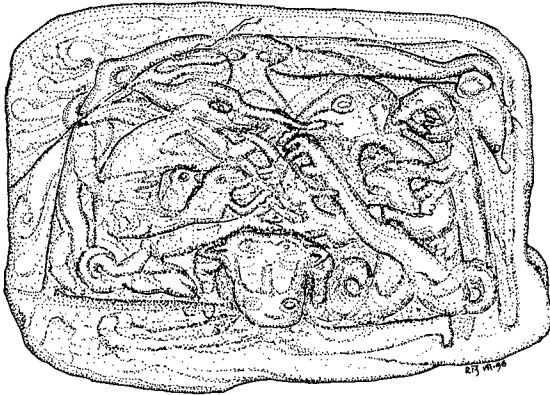
Two framed frontal figures are positioned down the narrow edge of the board-like north extension of the east and west faces. Extensive wear makes it difficult to understand the detail of the scenes. The upper figure has an oval head with almond-shaped eyes and a drooping moustache. His upper chest has curved lines suggesting clothing folds. His right hand descends across the body to waist level and appears to touch or hold a horizontal rectangular object with a slight suggestion of a circular central boss, perhaps a shield or suspended carrier. The left hand may hold a narrow vertical object, apparently damaged above, perhaps a cross stem or a sword. The legs are carved frontally and apart. The lower figure is similarly presented, holding at waist level a large rectangular object, apparently using both arms which pass across to the centre of the body. The legs are quarter-turned to the viewer's left and bent at the knee. Both feet turn as if viewed in profile. Identification of the frontal figures along the edge is uncertain. They may represent armed warriors or sacred figures. If two balancing figures originally appeared on the southern edge the figures may possibly have been intended to represent evangelists. The end of the arm terminal is decorated with a single-strand woven knot.

WEST FACE

Carved in flat style reminiscent of appliqué metalwork and now extensively worn, this face, lacking the right and upper cross arms, exhibits more formal division than the east face. The shaft contains four panels of symmetrical abstract beast design. The three remaining head panels include a delicately executed key pattern in the lower and left arms and four internally decorated interwoven circular elements in the crossing panel (illus 31).



ILLUS 31 Isle of Canna, a'Chill, west face (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)



ILLUS 32 Easter Ross, Kincardine 1B (narrow end of recumbent monument), interpretative drawing

Panel W1

This full unit contains a frontal seated central figure, flanked by a pair of profiled, near symmetrical inward-facing, thick-bodied monsters. Their knotted tails are set on a background of interlace. The monster to the left seems to be surmounted by a kneeling human figure. The monsters' long snouts with mouths and bulbous terminals stand open around the central figure's head while his left arm is raised to touch the monster on the right beneath the jowls. The beasts' arms appear to reach out to form a seat for the central figure. The portrayal of a figure between two beasts is of major importance. Despite the beasts' open mouths the figure's head seems not to be in jeopardy and the seated support offered by the beast's arms tends to support this view. The scene can be broadly paralleled, *inter alia*, on Dunfallandy where framing beasts with long tongues lick a fronted human head (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 305B) and on the end of a recumbent monument from Kincardine, Easter Ross (Trench-Jellicoe 1997, 168–70) (illus 32), where they appear to frame a hell scene (see also Note 1). The Canna scene is unique in its depiction of the central figure's body. Most unusual is the depiction of the figure touching the beast, found elsewhere on the Borestone of Gask 1A-LR3, Perthshire (ibid, 165–6, illus 4), a monument otherwise linked with Aberlemno 3. But there are also links with the Damned in Hell scene in the lower panel of the Rothbury Cross, 1cD1 (Cramp 1992, illus 1224; Hawkes 1996, 88–90, fig 9), where a small fronted figure at the base pushes away the rear limbs of biting lizard-like beasts. To the upper left of the Canna panel, the small human figure who grasps the left beast's head is reminiscent of figures with legs drawn up in the upper right panel of Fowls Wester 2A, Perthshire (Henderson 1967, illus 44), and perhaps also on Gask 1A, LR5 (Trench-Jellicoe, op cit), although both figures have their heads within a beast's jaws.

Panel W2

Filling a half unit, a single horizontal profiled beast travels to the right with head inverted next to the upper border. It lies on a bed of auto-generated interlace arising from its lappet and tail. The neck curves downwards thickening into the chest before tapering rapidly into the abdomen. A single forelimb arises on the shoulder and, bending at the elbow, lies beneath the neck. A thin rear limb, bending forward at the joint, is attached to a thickened rump from which the tail erupts, curving downwards. The scene, perhaps, represents evil destroying itself.

Panel W3

In this half unit, the carving is more worn to the right of the panel and so less recoverable here. This basically symmetrical scene involves two horizontal intertwined graceful beasts set upon a background of interwoven knotwork. The beasts' long necks curve downwards and interlock, each bites the other's belly. The beast to

the left is clearly a quadruped with a long muzzle and eye. Its tail passes beneath the body and emerges to terminate, apparently as a beast head with long tongue. The eye and long muzzle of the beast to the right is more clearly preserved but intensive wear and lack of obvious limbs suggest this may be a sea beast; short fin-like extrusions down its back lend support to this belief. A narrow bar along the upper margin, acting as panel divider, appears to be decorated with a beast's head at each end. W3 may show monsters destroying each other. That they are significant in a Christian context is obvious and answers may eventually be found amongst eschatological imagery from Iona writings such as in *Altus Prosator*, stanza N (Clancy & Márkus 1995, 48–9), and similar texts, rather than in the *Marvels of the East* or the *Physiologus* (Henderson 1996). The bar with beast heads at either end is reminiscent of the miniature representing David, as Victor, in the *Durham Cassiodorus*, fol 127v (Nordenfalk 1977, pl 28) and also of the features above and below the bust-length arcaded figure, towards the right, on the lid of the Franks casket (Wilson 1984, pl 34).

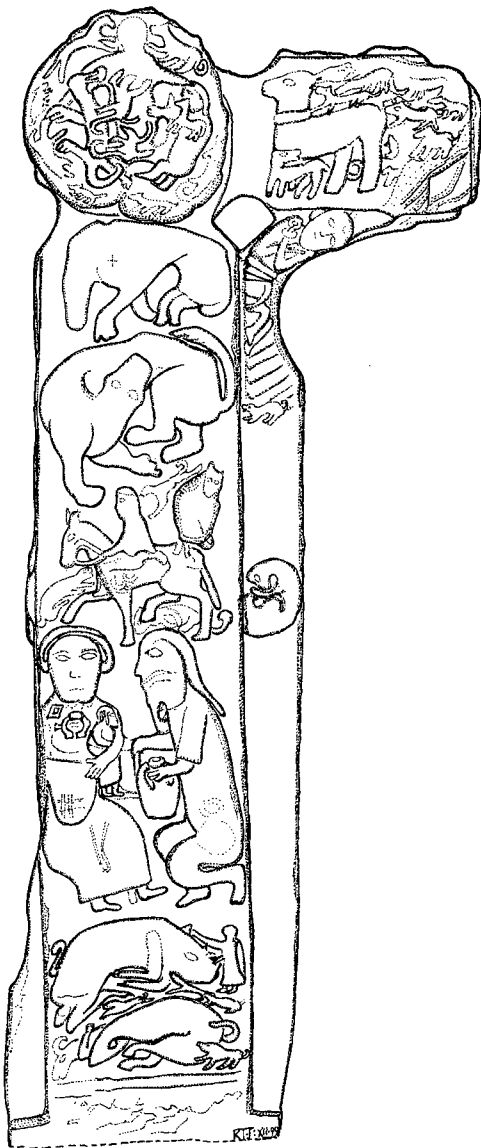
Panel W4

This full-sized unit contains a symmetrically balanced scene of two upright adorsed and interlocking quadrupeds with long necks enmeshed in loose lappet strands. The gracile beasts stand in profile. Stuart's lithographer (1867, pl 51) appears to have indulged in some creative reconstruction. The area to the right, as in panel W3, is more extensively worn, obscuring important evidence. The beasts' heads have long muzzles with open mouths and pointed teeth. That to the left has a large, almond-shaped eye and both bite on a strand which appears not to be its own tongue. A straight forelimb extends from each beast's rounded shoulder, the delineated paws touch the shaft edge. The other forelimb seems to curve downwards and link with the free limb of the other beast. The rear limbs (offside above nearside) emerge from a well-formed rump and also reach towards the shaft edge. The fields of key pattern in panels W5 and W6 need no further comment while decoration in the crossing panel (W7) is too worn to allow more detailed discussion. It seems likely that all four arms, including the missing W8 and W9 were decorated with key pattern so perhaps little of the meaning is lost on this face.

DISCUSSION

Monuments with extensive programmes of iconography drawn from biblical sources or writings of the Church and monastic fathers (Ruthwell, Bewcastle, Rothbury) are rare. They are generally understood if not readily interpretable within a specific programme. Sculptural programmes of mixed type, including biblical and non-biblical illustrations (some even apparently pagan) but also involving realistic or abstract beast and bird interactions or abstract geometric ornament, are less accessible. Although the elements are today recognized as having relevance within a religious programme, the key to their interpretation has not been preserved. Canna falls into the latter category, its programmes being drawn from a variety of decorative types but with the added complication that an aggregate of seven from a total of 21 scenes missing from the two faces, inevitably making an exhaustive interpretation of the programme impossible. Many of the iconographic elements here seem among the earliest representations of scenes which were to become popular during the next century, in the Insular context, and a Viking milieu.

The content of the panels confirms that scenes on the east face divide into two suites of programmes, E1–3 in the shaft and E4–6 occupying the cross head (illus 33). Each group has a symmetry and sustains visual links which are extended to create parallels between both suites. Registers E1–3 focus around the larger scene of E2 in which the Christ-child is the focus. E1 shows God's intervention in the natural world, apparently dispensing his grace. The sheep in E3 gazes at Christ in E2, appearing to venerate Him and to echo the action of the magus who suggests a suitable manner in which the viewer should acknowledge Christ. The position of the adoring sheep in E3, behind the priestly rider, suggests it has received the Word from God's messenger who now travels on to spread the good news elsewhere. The Adoration scene encapsulates the first occasion on which God was revealed to humankind through Christ (J Hawkes, pers comm). The magus, adoring the Godhead, symbolizes Christ's salvation extended to the Gentiles. This scene, itself an appropriate icon for the conversion of pagan peoples, is augmented below by nature



ILLUS 33 Isle of Canna, a'Chill 1E, interpretative drawing

adoring Christ and above by His sheep, the adoring congregation, acknowledging the Power and Wisdom of the Godhead, converted to an acceptance of the Word by the priesthood of His Church.

The incomplete upper suite not only includes E4–7 but also the angel in the armpit of the flanking panel. This panel, with its offering of martyrial crowns and sceptres of power, sets the scene for the Veneration of Christ in the upper programme. This links the lion of E4, the hart of E7 and the various elements touching and being touched by Christ in E6, suggesting an eschatological theophany. Similar scenes containing a message of adoration and recognition of the salvational power focused on the Christ figure of E6 were also probably reflected in the lost cross arm panels. Links subsist between the predators of E4–7. The stalking predator of E4 physically rejects Christ's veneration not only by turning its back but also in menacing the lion who venerates Him. The lizard-beasts of E6 attack Christ by cleaving to Him while the

hounds of E7 try to bring down the hart — all three actions showing different aspects of virulent sin and menacing evil but primarily demonstrating the power of the Saviour.

Clear parallels exist between the two suites of the programme which help forge correspondences, underscoring meaning which leads the viewer to frame a conclusion greater than the sum of the parts. Panels E1 (angel blessing a boar) and E3 (the priestly horseman cantering leftwards to spread the message) demonstrate God's intervention in the world to the benefit of beast and man (also present on E6). Visual symmetry is also present in two scenes, E3 and E4, both of which contain one element venerating Christ, either as a Child (in E2) or in elevated status (E6) where sheep and lion respectively look beyond to adore the Saviour. The horse and rider in E3 is reminiscent of the hart racing towards Christ in E7. Panel E6, not only because of its central position, but also because of direction markers in E4, E7 and the flanking Angel operates as a focus beyond the individual scenes. The remarkably frontal Virgin of E2, who sacrificed herself to bear the Saviour into the world and joined the human to the divine, parallels the frontal Christ of E6 who made the supreme sacrifice for the salvation of humankind and presides over the Last Judgement. The Christ of the crossing panel signifies salvation for all those who believe in Him and His conquest of evil, perhaps in the form of the old religion, thus fulfilling the promise of panel E2. The programme on the east face demonstrates both how and why Christ should be worshipped: veneration and adoration of His message, power and wisdom lead all peoples, especially (here) converted pagan Vikings, to salvation. In sum, the east face carries a multivalent programme in which the primary message seems to be apocalyptic, though the elements may be reinterpreted and combined anew to produce other layers of meaning.

The programme on the west face is more difficult to interpret as its decoration is generally abstract. Scene W1 is the most literal, perhaps representing the Damned in Hell, as on the Rothbury Cross where it occupies the same position at the base of the shaft. Alternatively, as already described (Appendix 1, Discussion), the scene might be connected to the Christological reference in an Old Testament line from Habakkuk Ch 3 as in the *Vespasian Psalter* (Wright 1967, fol 145r). While it is clear that the beasts in the panels above relate to each other in a variety of ways, it is impossible at present to invest them with relevant meaning.

The overall interpretation of the iconographic programme contained on this cross (the symbol of Christ and His salvation) includes recognition and adoration of the Christ who is the Saviour of all peoples including Gentiles. It cannot be fortuitous that a novel scene of apocalyptic Saviour should be created here or that an Adoration of the Magi icon, a type which is absent in a Columban sculptural context for more than a century, should reappear at this moment, linked with the conversion of the Vikings.

APPENDIX 3: SOURCES FOR THE CANNA ADORATION SCENE

ADORATION

Lack of an Adorational model in extant Columban iconography and of a Canna type of Adoration scene in early Ireland forces us to look further afield, spatially and chronologically, to discover a source for the Canna Virgin and Child. It seems most probable that the Canna icon was designed in Angus in its present form and, apart from arguably local elements, such as the penannular brooch and probably the clothing, draws on some aspects of the Columban iconic model. These include the debased 'hairstyle', lozenge insignia and perhaps skewed portrayal of the figure. There are, however, other basic strands subsumed in its make-up. The roughly contemporary Sandbach scene (Hawkes 1997) is unhelpful in tracing the source, as is the rather different model found on the Franks casket (ibid, 114; Webster & Backhouse 1991, no 70), although the kneeling, leading magus of the casket preserves several points of similarity.

Early secular models of kneeling and, rarely, squatting figures which might have provided an ultimate model for the Canna magus do occur in Byzantine imperial images of the later fourth century. One example occurs on the base of the obelisk in the Hippodrome at Constantinople illustrating suppliant figures before the emperor; particularly apposite is the figure on the far right (du Bourget 1972, 143, pl). However it is only when this stance enters the religious sphere that it becomes relevant. Amongst examples from the European mainland, a squat-cum-kneeling magus, sharing significant similarities with the Canna figure, was painted

on the east presbytery wall of Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, during the pontificate of John VII (705–7) (Nordhagen 1968, 22–5, pl XVI & CXXXIII). This damaged work, showing Byzantine influence, depicts a kneeling figure facing a Christ-child who leans forward to receive a gift which Nordhagen (*ibid*, 24) has tentatively identified as a box. The short pontificate of John VII was productive, for a mosaic Adoration scene in Helenizing style was also commissioned for the Oratory in the Old Basilica of St Peter's. It is now preserved in the Sacristy of S Maria in Cosmedin, Rome (Nordhagen 1965, 134–8, col pl; Kitzinger 1956, 259–60). The scene shows a seated Virgin, accompanied by Joseph and an Angel, flanked above by the rays of the star. However, only a fragmentary section of the leading king nearest the Child is now preserved.

Although the majority of the Old St Peter's magus is now lost, his lowly position indicates that he must have knelt or bowed to present his gift, a scene familiar from the fresco in Santa Maria Antiqua (Nordhagen 1968, pl XVI). Fortunately the mosaics in the Old St Peter's programme were sketched in the early 17th century by Grimaldi while still complete *in situ* (Nordhagen 1965, pl XVIII). In his drawing the foremost magus is depicted on one knee, bowing before Christ (*ibid*, pl XVIII, fig M), which is a recognizable pose paralleling the Canna version. The Christ-child reaches forward urgently in both Roman illustrations also reminiscent of the Canna example. Despite sharing many features with John VII's scenes, the Canna example differs in having the Virgin's body skewed rather than in profile, while the haloed Roman portrayal of the Christ-child, a feature missing on Canna, is less constrained. Nordhagen considers the garment dropping beneath the Old St Peter's magus' gift to be part of a *chamlys*, apparently similar to that worn by him in Santa Maria Antiqua (Nordhagen 1968, 22–5). However, neither of these garments resembles closely that in the Canna scene. Another European model from the 740s is the Altar of Duke Ratchis, preserved in Cividale Cathedral. Here the Virgin and Child are presented in profile, except for their heads which are turned to the viewer. This portrayal is closer to the Canna version, though the three standing magi, flying angel and female servant detract from the overall congruence of the images (Hubert *et al* 1969, illus 279 & 870).

Other potential sources for the Canna Adoration may be located amongst mobilia. Similar scenes are found on a sixth-century Palestinian ampulla, now preserved in the Cathedral Treasury at Monza (Grabar 1958). On Monza's ampulla no 1 (*ibid*, pl I & II) the foremost magus kneels, in a similar manner to the figure in the Canna scene, before a frontally enthroned Virgin with the Christ-child in her lap who also faces the viewer. A useful parallel for an Adorational type of frontal Virgin with profiled Child, similar to Canna, appears on a stone from Zadar, Croatia. These figures are similar to the 'squat-cum-kneel' magus on the front of the Northumbrian Franks casket dated most recently to the first half of the eighth century (Wilson 1984, pl 37; Webster & Backhouse 1991, no 70). The king here is an apposite parallel but the Virgin sits frontally and the Child seems to be encapsulated in a mandorla, although this effect may be a product of miniaturization (Hawkes 1997). In an Insular context none of the Irish magi kneels (Harbison 1992) although the pose occurs elsewhere on later Irish figure sculpture.

Clearly, then, the source of the Canna icon is complex. Hawkes (1997, 111–12) is undoubtedly correct in underlining the varied, unstandardized nature of the types and a flexibility of approach in portrayal of the Virgin and Child at this date. Nevertheless it is clear that the elements present in the Canna scene have been drawn together from a range of influences: Byzantine via Rome, some through Iona and probably also Mercia and Northumbria, into southern Pictland, each time undergoing minor or major reformation but leaving evidence of each interface in its transmission.

SOURCES FOR LOZENGE INSIGNIA

Lozenge insignia appearing on the shoulder of the Canna Virgin also appear to derive from Byzantine imperial sources such as the examples visible on male attendants of both Justinian and Theodora in the San Vitale mosaics, Ravenna, from the first half of the sixth century (Grabar 1967, pl 171 & 172). They may appear earlier in Italy, for one occurs on a donor portrait in the mosaic floor of the nave of Aquileia Cathedral tentatively dated to the fourth century. It is again manifest in the Byzantine sphere, where insignia were also applied to Christ's saintly servants, for one appears on St Demetrios' right shoulder in two separate frescos at the Greek church of Hagia Demetrios, Thessalonica, one dated to the late sixth or early

seventh century, the other between 600 and 650 (*ibid*, pl 143; Kitzinger 1958, 2, 22, figs 1 & 22). The form of the Aquileia, Ravenna and Hagia Demetrios insignia is remarkably similar to the shape of the Virgin's lozenge brooch on fol 7v, of the *Book of Kells*. (Henry 1974, pl 10; *Kells* facsimile 1990, vol 1). Lozenge insignia have most recently been discussed by Whitfield (1996, 20–3) and Richardson (1996, 24–5).

We must conclude that there are gaps in available Insular evidence for transmission which may yet be filled as more sculpture is recovered, evidence which can show which models were received in northern Britain and contributed to the formation of the ninth-century icon. Although some parallels share corresponding elements, none offers an overall model for the unique northern British portrayal of the Adoration scene.

NOTES

- 1 This particular form of border is closely paralleled on the slab from St Orland's, Cossins 1C, Angus, and Meigle 4A, Perthshire, while another similar but later example occurs on Farnell 1C, Angus (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, figs 230B, 313, 232B). On Dunfallandy 1C, Perthshire, and Aberlemno 2C the framing beast lack intrusive arms. The animal's border frame probably derived originally from Northumbrian slab models at Jarrow or more particularly from Monkwearmouth 5A and 8A (Cramp 1984, illus 604, 161–7; Bailey 1992, 33–6, fig 3). If this is the source of the Pictish beast frame, the slab form together with the beast frame may have been borrowed in the first half of the eighth century before the high cross type evolved in Northumbria.
- 2 The origins of the Canna Cross skeuomorph and its structural design have been discussed by Kelly (1991, 114, 116) and MacLean (1995, 172) and a fuller description appears in RCAHMS (forthcoming). The cross shows an alternative type of supporting structure to those of the Iona school and represents a radical experiment in cross design worthy of the *familia Iae*.
- 3 Although portrayal of the Virgin turning through a right angle, as in the Canna scene appears awkward, parallels occur elsewhere in Britain at an early date but are not present on the fully frontal iconic figures of the Iona school. The earliest extant Insular example, albeit iconic, appears on the late seventh-century St Cuthbert's coffin (Wilson 1984, illus 43) and that in the miniature on fol 7v of the *Book of Kells* is similarly skewed (Henry 1974, pl 10; *Kells* facsimile 1990; Nordhagen 1977) although the orientation of the Christ-child and model type on both is different.
- 4 In 1903 Allen drew attention to the similarity between a flask present on the front of the Franks casket (British Museum) and that carried by the magus on Canna 1E (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, 108, n 1). He implied that the Franks flask was carried by a magus (but the magi carry cups and a staff) although he clearly intended to indicate the vessel carried in the Legend of Weland the Smith scene (Wilson 1984, illus 37) in the next register. This example offers a valuable insight into a process of visual interchange.
- 5 The short-sleeved garment whose decorated hem is visible across the upper arm is reminiscent of the detail of the figure of Longinus on the Calf of Man Crucifix (Kermode 1907, pl XVI) which as Basil Megaw (*pers comm* and forthcoming) has recently argued is probably a 10th-century copy of an eighth-century model.
- 6 Fine material is expensive and thus appropriate to a magus. Such depictions, rare in western Europe, are derived ultimately from Sassanian models transmitted through a Byzantine interface.
- 7 Although the third figure certainly reaches out with his right hand. Allen's observation (1903, pt 3, 108, n 1) that he seems to touch the arm of the chair rather than the child is probably correct.
- 8 Three Irish scenes of the Virgin and Child including Kilree, County Kilkenny and Armagh (*ibid*, figs 47, 447, 809) should be omitted as too unsound or uncertain, while that on Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice, County Louth (*ibid*, fig 805) is irrelevant as it depicts the Magi accompanied by Joseph.
- 9 Henderson (1985, 51) has also drawn attention to the similarities in positioning the Brechin Virgin and Child scene within the crossing panel with that on the St Martin's Cross, Iona. The unique aspects of the Brechin scene, derived from a later iconographic model, have been noted by Hawkes (1997, 115, 129–30 & n 10).

- 10 The Kirriemuir figure has been identified as a representation of a woman (although not a Virgin) by Niall Robertson (forthcoming — to whom I am grateful for the opportunity to read an early draft of his paper) because of the presence of a reputedly female Pictish symbol, the Mirror and Comb, and because of the box-shaped object to the viewer's right, hitherto identified as a musical instrument (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 239B) but now identified by Robertson as a loom. This element can now be recognized not only as a female marker but as an identifier of the Virgin (Coatsworth 1998; Clayton 1990, 267).
- 11 The presence of this peculiar hairstyle indicates a second element to appear on the Carndonagh pillars to link them with *familia Iae* iconographs. Similarity between an unusual Davidic harp variety, present also on the Southern Pillar at Carndonagh (east face) and on the St Oran's and St Martin's Crosses at Iona, is discussed by Trench-Jellicoe (1997, 161). Evidence points towards a date in the mid to later ninth century for the Carndonagh monument, thus underpinning the general conclusions of Robert Stevenson (1956, 93–6) nearly half a century ago.
- 12 I am grateful to Niamh Whitfield and Susan Youngs, who kindly examined brooch evidence on the sculptured monuments, for their observations on typology and tentative dating (N Whitfield, pers comm; S Youngs, pers comm). They are not responsible for the views propounded here.
- 13 The six certain Irish examples appear on: the Cross of the Scriptures E2, Clonmacnoise, County Offaly, two examples (Harbison 1992, 49, fig 691); Broken Cross E1, Kells, County Meath, two examples (ibid, 101, fig 823); Market Cross, North Cross head, east arm, Kells, County Meath (ibid, 108, fig 947); Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross W2 (ibid, 144, fig 875). Another appears on a pillar from White Island, County Fermanagh (Youngs 1989, 89, fig 2). Four more potential items occur in Ireland (ibid, 424): St Patrick's Cross W1, Cashel, and Roscrea Cross, S1, both Tipperary, are too uncertain, while figures on the Cross of the Scriptures N3, Clonmacnoise, and the Market Cross W3, Kells, who wear large but wide circular objects centrally on the chest are perhaps attempts to represent priestly breastplates rather than brooches.
- 14 The worn shape, potentially half a lozenge brooch, partially covered by the Child's head in the left of panel 7, east face of the North Cross, Sandbach, Cheshire supports Hawkes' (1997, 118–20) suggestion that this is also a Columban Virgin and Child.
- 15 Leslie Alcock's (1993, 231) suggestion that the Hilton of Cadboll female figure may represent Mary 'on the journey to Bethlehem' is attractive. Although Katherine Forsyth (pers comm) has pointed out that on Pictish sculpture 'symbols do not appear with *unambiguously* scriptural or clerical figures (David, Daniel, Samson and Delilah, Mary, Paul and Anthony)', a Mirror and Comb also accompanies the probable Virgin and Child on Kirriemuir 1C (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 239B) and perhaps a Crescent and V-rod for Monifeith 2C figures.
- 16 It is unlikely to be fortuitous that a lozenge motif has also been inserted in the *Kells* text, fol 19v, of the *Breves causa* of Luke, immediately after the announcement by the Angel to Mary that she would have a son, to be named Jesus (Henry 1974, 14). The lozenge here seems to be an insignia of the Virgin.
- 17 Isabel Henderson (pers comm) has pointed to the possibility that the seated figure to the right of Samson on Inchbrayock 1C is also a degenerate Virgin and Child and Hawkes (1997, 153) suggests it may be derived from a veiled eastern Virgin transmitted via Northumbria — for which a figure like the Virgin in the Adoration scene on the Franks casket (Wilson 1984, pl 37) may have provided a model.
- 18 Significantly a few parallels also appear on later Irish high crosses on sites of the Columban *familia*, mainly on the undersides of the cross arms (Harbison 1992, figs 146, 195, 351–2, 447).
- 19 The possibility that sculptured crosses in a Gaelic milieu could be derived from wooden and metal prototypes was suggested by Françoise Henry (1940, 103) and taken up by Helen Roe (1958, 8–9) and Peter Harbison (1977, 283–4).
- 20 Andrew Jennings (1994), building on the place-name studies of Nicolaisen (1976) and MacGregor (1986), has demonstrated that the Small Isles, including Canna, should be included within his (Zone 1) areas of western Scotland and the Isles least penetrated onomastically by Norse settlement; lacking Norse settlement elements such as *staðir* and preserving few *bólstaðr* forms (none on Canna) but retaining Celtic place-name elements through its pre-Norse population (Jennings 1994, 17). Canna may

have achieved a rapid assimilation to Christianity (ibid, 118) despite being flanked to the north, west and south by areas of intense Norse linguistic intrusion. This disparity is as yet not fully understood. The selection of the Canna site as a primary mission centre to spearhead the evangelization cannot have been random. It is unlikely to have been a green-field site as the Columban community would need to have demonstrated that it had good title to the land. So an already acknowledged Columban site of considerable significance and veneration in the pre-Viking period would also have been chosen. The Icelandic *Book of Settlements: Landnámabók* (Pálsson & Edwards 1972) comments that in Iceland no heathen was allowed to settle on sites where *papár* (hermitical Christians) had previously lived. If Norse settlers in the Western Isles operated under the same protocols, the Canna site would not have been settled by pagans either. In fact, on Canna, as on Iona, the community may have sought to retain a minimal presence during the first half of the ninth century.

- 21 The sculptor of Aberlemno 3C's centaur scene synthesized the centaur on Gask 1C-R4 (Trench-Jellicoe 1997, fig 4) and a motif from the hunt scene of Easter Ross and Moray models in which a hound jumps up from beneath to bite its quarry's throat (also found on Canna 1-E7).
- 22 A single possible parallel appears on an unornamented cross in Edderton churchyard, Easter Ross (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, 83-4, fig 82A).
- 23 Close ties with Northumbria during the reigns of the Pictish kings Custantin son of Uurguist (789-820), his brother Onuist (820-34) and Uuen son of Onuist (836/7-9) suggested by their appearance in the Durham *Liber Vitae* (Hudson 1994, 31) indicates one possible channel for acquiring a gift of such a reliquary.
- 24 A number of elements appearing on the Franks casket have parallels on Pictish sculpture. These include the Virgin and Child scene on the front panel, paralleled by the Inchbrayock 'Virgin' (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, fig 235B); the carving of a 'bird strangler' (Wilson 1984, pl 37) who also appears on the ninth-century Perthshire slab at Rossie Priory 1C-UL (Allen, op cit, fig 322B) and the distinctive flask in the Weland scene, opposite the Adoration (Wilson 1984, pl 37), is paralleled by a magus carrying a flask in the Canna Adoration scene. The double-headed beast on Canna's west face appears on the Franks casket lid (Wilson 1984, pl 34) as also in the Durham *Cassiodorus* (Durham Cathedral Library B.II.30, fol 172v; Alexander 1978, pl 75). The evidence suggests a similar Northumbrian casket (or perhaps the Franks casket itself) was in circulation in Angus in the ninth century.
- 25 Simon Taylor (1997, 50-5), using onomastic evidence, has explored the line of a similar major routeway between Iona and Lindisfarne.
- 26 Evidence that this may be the case appears at Tower of Lethendy, on a suggested route-line, where a 'Choir of David' scene, apparently derived from the scene carved on a shaft panel of St Martin's Cross, Iona, appears (Trench-Jellicoe 1997, 161; Fisher & Greenhill 1972, 238-42, pl 36A), which amplifies evidence already explored at Aberlemno and from other monuments on or near to the line of the route. Henderson (1998, 133-3, fig 39) has noted the similarities between depictions of David and the Lion in the upper cross arm at Kildalton, Islay, and scenes on the back of Aldbar slab and on the Dupplin Cross panel W1 (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt 3, figs 259B, 334A, 410), thus demonstrating other links between Perthshire, Angus and the Iona school. The presence of sculpture at Tower of Lethendy, Perthshire, may indicate a way station on the route offering hospitality.
- 27 Satisfactory results were achieved more immediately by the Columba community, who returned to western Scotland in an enhanced position, than by the Scottish kingship, which took almost 700 years to retrieve their overall patrimony.
- 28 G W S Barrow (1983, 8) commented that the area around Forfar arguably 'formed one of the chief bases of Pictish royal power' but that, despite the antiquity of Restenneth church, itself dedicated to Peter, Restenneth itself could not be the church of *egglespether* (Barrow 1960, 231). Recently Norman Atkinson (1994, 12-13; 1997, 8-9, 15) suggested that, by elimination, Aberlemno was likely to be Eggespether. Were this the case, the site might be expected to have produced high-status eighth-century sculptural evidence which it has so far failed to yield.
- 29 I do not refer here to the fine examples of monument protection (Sueno's Stone, Dunfallandy, Shandwick), work at Tarbat or Forteviot or museum display programmes and area surveys but to the

need for a national approach along the lines of the new survey of Early Christian monuments of Wales or the British Academy corpus for England. A recent example of significant co-operation appears in a study of a recently recovered fragment from Pittensorn.

- 30 On an Athens funerary stele, a Davidic Orpheus with lyre sits, encircled by beasts both real and fantastic. The scene presumably held some significance relevant to concepts of immortality. Two beasts with long necks and cloven hoofs, like benign giraffes, flank Orpheus' lower legs. These resemble the long-necked quadruped of Monifieth 2C. Another fifth-century scene in mosaic from a sepulchral oratory in Jerusalem, now preserved in the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul (Grabar 1966, 119), shows Orpheus with his lyre surrounded by a satyr, a centaur with a club and various other real and imaginary beasts. Grabar (1966, 112) refers to him as 'a Christian Orpheus'.
- 31 J T Lang (1991, 193) suggested that the motif of Christ laying hands on supplicants' heads should be paralleled in Ireland at Castledermot, County Kildare where the South Cross (ibid, illus 912) shows Christ with His hands apparently resting on the heads of Longinus and Stephaton. A close examination suggests that the hands of the Crucified figure extend beyond their heads. A similar illusion is created in other Irish Crucifixion scenes caused because of the restricted width of the panel. Where more room is available the hands are extended well beyond the flanking figures. This suggests that the Canna scene may not be formally based in a Crucifix.

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