

#### IV.

### THE ARCHITECTURALLY SHAPED SHRINES AND OTHER RELIQUARIES OF THE EARLY CELTIC CHURCH IN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND.

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The object of this paper is to gather together all the examples of the architecturally shaped shrines of the Early Celtic Church in Scotland and Ireland. They form a class of relics of most singular interest, alike in their intrinsic character and features, and in their historical significance and associations. Thirty years ago I dealt with them in my Rhind Lectures<sup>1</sup> under the general head of the existing relics of the Early Celtic Church; but since that time some new examples have occurred, and it may be of interest to call attention again to these objects as a class by themselves. I have also taken advantage of the occasion to add a few brief notices of other reliquaries existing in Scotland.

The architecturally shaped shrines of the Celtic Church both in Ireland and in Scotland were fashioned in imitation of the form which the Celtic artist who illuminated the *Book of Kells* evolved from his imagination as a representation of the Temple at Jerusalem (fig. 1)—a rectangular basement covered by a hipped roof, with a roof-ridge terminating at either end in ornamental projections.<sup>2</sup> It is not known why these shrines were made after this particular pattern, or what was

<sup>1</sup> *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, Edinburgh, D. Douglas, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> See a facsimile of the page containing this representation in G. O. Westwood's *Facsimiles of the Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish Manuscripts*, pl. 11.

the nature of the relics enshrined within them, although, from their small size and the elaborate and costly ornamentation lavished upon them, it is evident that the objects they were intended to contain and preserve must have been regarded as exceptionally precious and important. No more than five of them have come down to our time. Of the five only one is certainly known to belong to Scotland; two were

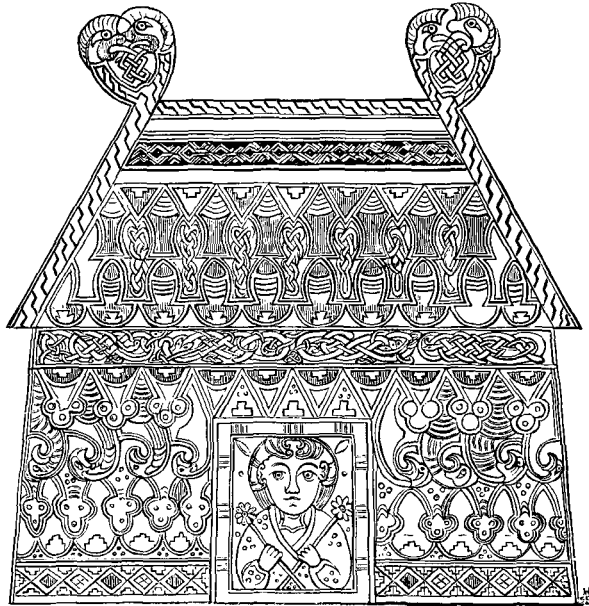


Fig. 1. Representation of the Temple at Jerusalem in the *Book of Kells*.

casually found in Ireland, and two were found in Norway, whither they had been taken as plunder by the Vikings. To these five may be added a sixth, which, though it is architecturally shaped, does not strictly follow the model of the others by its having straight gables, instead of the general form of the hipped roof.

The Scottish example, known as the Monymusk Reliquary (fig. 2), is the finest of all as a work of art. It was exhibited to the Society in

1879 by the kindness of Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk, and I then took the opportunity of describing and figuring it.<sup>1</sup> It is  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches in height, and 2 inches in width. It consists of a

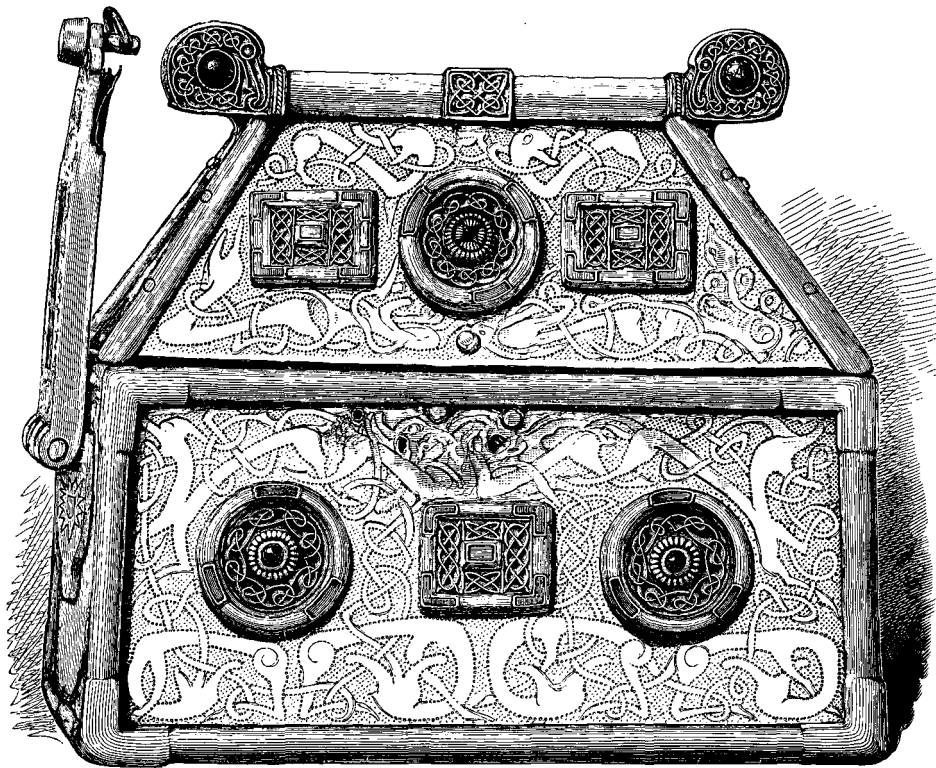


Fig. 2. The Monymusk Reliquary, front view. (Actual size.)

box of wood made up of two parts, each hollowed out of a single piece, the lower part oblong and rectangular, the upper part triangular lengthwise, with sloping ends, being hinged to the lower rectangular part

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xiv. p. 431, and *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (First Series), pp. 242-250.

as a lid. The exterior on three sides is covered by thin plates of bronze, plain, and attached to the wood underneath by small rivets, and the corners are secured by cylindrically rounded mountings with squared-off thickenings at the angles. The plates on the front are of silver, covered with a diaper pattern of zoomorphic interlaced work, the outlines of which are made by dots instead of lines. The design is placed on a ground shaded or stippled over by minute dots, and the ground of the interior of the figures is left plain, so as to show them up by contrast. In the centre of the lower front is a square panel enclosed by a frame or moulding of semi-cylindrical section, with settings of red enamel at the four corners, enclosing a pattern of interlaced work arranged round a small central panel filled with red enamel. Balancing each other to right and left of this square central panel are two circular panels of similar character, their marginal mouldings ornamented with three segmental settings of red enamel placed at equal distances round the circumference, and enclosing a circular band of interlaced work surrounding a central boss of gilt metal with a beaded margin. The upper front is decorated in the same way with three similar panels in the middle line, arranged so that the central panel is a circular one and the two on either side of it are oblong. The bar on the ridge of the roof is ornamented in the middle of its length with an oblong projecting panel of interlaced work, the top of which is filled with red enamel. The expanded and projecting ends of the bar are each ornamented with a panel of interlaced work of zoomorphic character arranged round a setting of lapis-lazuli.

Both ends of the casket (fig. 3) are plain, except that to each has been hinged a richly enamelled appendage of the nature of a metal mounting or socket for a strap-end, probably of leather, by which the casket could be conveniently suspended round the neck when carried on the breast of its bearer, as it was the custom for these relics to be carried. The enshrined Psalter, the chief relic of St Columba in the territory of his tribe of the Cinel Conall Gulban, which was styled the Cathach or Battler, was so carried, for "if it be sent thrice rightwise

(*i.e.*, according to the course of the sun) around the army of the Cinel Conall when they are going to battle, they will return safe with victory, and it is on the breast of a coarb, or a cleric, who is, to the best of his

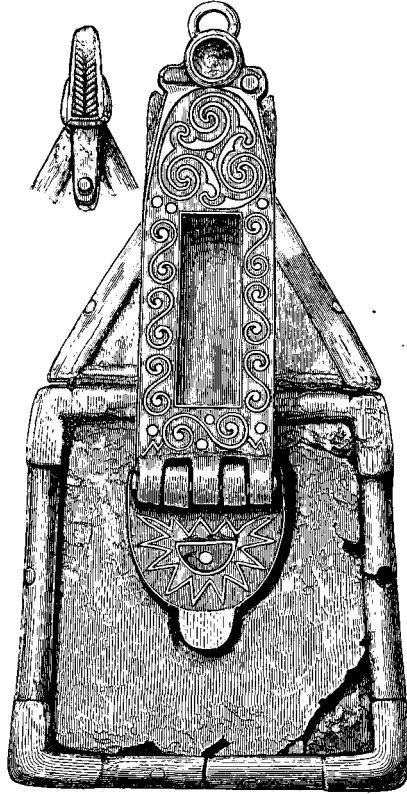


Fig. 3. End view of the Monymusk Reliquary. (Actual size.)

power, free from mortal sin, that the Cathach should be when brought round the army."<sup>1</sup>

The Monymusk shrine, however, has no known history. It is un-

<sup>1</sup> Adamnan's *Life of St Columba*, edited by W. Reeves, D.D., p. 250.

questionably a reliquary of the Celtic Church, which enshrined an unknown relic of the very first order of importance, judging by the elaborate and costly nature of its decoration. But absolutely nothing is known about it to account for its presence and preservation at Monymusk. We are thus driven to inquire whether there is anything ascertainable which might account for the presence of such a notable relic of the Early Celtic Church there.<sup>1</sup> And accordingly we find that there is on record a special connection between Monymusk and one of the most famous of the Scottish enshrined relics of St Columba—a relic, too, which, like the Cathach, had for its principal function to be carried into battle by its bearer with the army of the king, and a relic which, though its nature is unspecified, bore a name which implies that it was enshrined in such a shrine as this.

In a charter of King William the Lion<sup>2</sup> before 1211, he grants and confirms to the monks of his newly founded monastery of Aberbrothock the custody of "The Brecbennoch." And to these same monks, he says, "I have given and granted, with the Brecbennoch the lands of Forglen given to God and to St Columba and to the Brecbennoch, they making therefor the service in the army with the Brecbennoch which is due to me from the said lands." From this it is apparent that the Brecbennoch, whatever it was, was endowed with the lands of Forglen for its keepership, like many other relics of the Celtic Church, and that these lands had been of old granted to St Columba. The Church of Forglen was dedicated to St Adamnan, the ninth successor in the Abbacy of Iona from Columba himself, and the well-known author of his *Life*; and it is nowise improbable that it may have possessed the Brecbennoch previous to the grant to Aberbrothock by King William

<sup>1</sup> The first notice in record of Monimusk is c. 1170 A.D. It was then, and had been for a long time, the seat of a community of Kelidei (popularly known as Culdees), affiliated to St Andrews, which, in the thirteenth century, was converted into a Priory of the Order of St Augustin. Reeves's *Culdees of the British Islands*, pp. 54 and 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Registrum Vetus de Aberbrothock* (Bannatyne Club), pp. 10, 73, 296; *Collections for a History of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff* (Spalding Club), pp. 510, 588; *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, vol. iii., preface, p. xxiv.

the Lion. We hear no more of it for more than a century. Bernard, abbot of Aberbrothock, had been at the battle of Bannockburn, presumably making the service in the army with the Brebbenoch due to the king from the lands with which his monastery had been endowed for its custody; and a few months thereafter he, with consent of his chapter, and having regard to the welfare of the monastery (to which such military service was no doubt uncongenial) granted to Malcolm of Monymusk the whole lands of Forglen which pertain to the Brebbenoch, "to be held by the said Malcolm and his heirs on condition that he and they shall perform in our name the service in the king's army which pertains to the Brebbenoch as often as occasion shall arise." There is no need to go further. There is no evidence that the Brebbenoch which was thus committed to the hereditary keepership of the family of Monymusk ever left Monymusk, although the lands belonging to it can be traced in record as held by other families down to the Reformation by the same tenure. The unnamed reliquary which still remains there is unquestionably a relic of the Early Celtic Church, and from its character and ornamentation may very well be of the time of Adamnan, to whom the Church of Forglen was dedicated. It is not against its possible identity with the Brebbenoch that Bishop Reeves, Cosmo Innes, and others supposed the Brebbenoch to have been a banner, probably founding upon the fact that in some of the Charters relating to it, it has been called a *vexillum*, a term given doubtless from its function of service with the army. This, however, is really in its favour, for the Celtic *vexilla* were not necessarily banners, but more frequently reliquaries.<sup>1</sup>

There remains another indication of the nature of the Brebbenoch<sup>2</sup>—the indication contained in the name itself—which is obviously made up of two words, of which the latter, according to the Gaelic usage, is an

<sup>1</sup> Dr Reeves, in his note on the Brebbenoch in his edition of Adamnan's *Life of St Columba* (p. 331), after expressing the opinion that it was a banner, adds (p. 332 n.), "but the Irish *vexilla* were boxes," *i.e.*, reliquaries or shrines.

<sup>2</sup> The spelling in the original documents is very variable, but evidently phonetic—Brachbennoche, Brebbennoche, Brachbennache, Brachbennach, Brebbenoch.

adjective. Bennoch means blessed, and the significance of the whole word appears to be the blessed Breac—whatever may be the nature of the thing indicated by Breac. Fortunately there is still one Breac



Fig. 4. The Breac Mogue or Shrine of St Moedoc. (½.)

known, the Breac Mogue (fig. 4), which is the shrine of St Mogue, otherwise Moedoc, or Ædan of Ferns, in Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

It is one of the architecturally shaped shrines, but of later date than

<sup>1</sup> See a paper by Dr Reeves on St Ædan of Ferns in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. viii. p. 446, and a notice of the Breac Mogue by Miss Stokes in *Archæologia*, vol. xliiii. p. 135, and Coffey's *Celtic Antiquities of the Christian Period*, p. 50.



the others, a circumstance which probably accounts for its slight departure from the form of the prototype in having its gables almost vertical instead of being greatly sloped inwards towards the centre of the roof. It is made of bronze, the lower rectangular part measuring  $8\frac{7}{8}$  by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and the total height  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches. It has rings at the ends for suspension, but there is also preserved with it a leathern satchel finely ornamented with interlaced work, and provided with a strap by which it might be

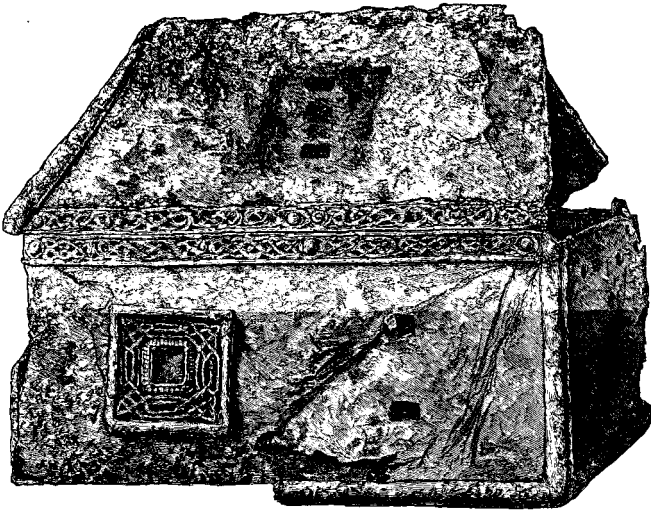


Fig. 5. Shrine found in the Shannon. (3.)

carried. On one end of the shrine is a figure of King David playing the harp, and the front has been ornamented with attached full-length figures, presumably of saints or ecclesiastical personages, of which eleven still remain. These figures are very characteristic, and remind one of the figures carved in stone in high relief on the High Crosses of Ireland. The back and bottom of the shrine are ornamented with a diaper of plain sunk crosses, resembling those on the shrine of St Patrick's bell.

A small and somewhat dilapidated shrine (fig. 5), of the same type as the Monymusk example, which was found in the Shannon, is preserved in this Museum.<sup>1</sup> Allowing for dilapidation of the ends, it may be said to be exactly the same size as the Monymusk one. It has lost the bar along the ridge of the roof, and some of its corner mountings, but the double band of interlaced work at the junction of the lower part of the roof or lid of the box remains. It has been

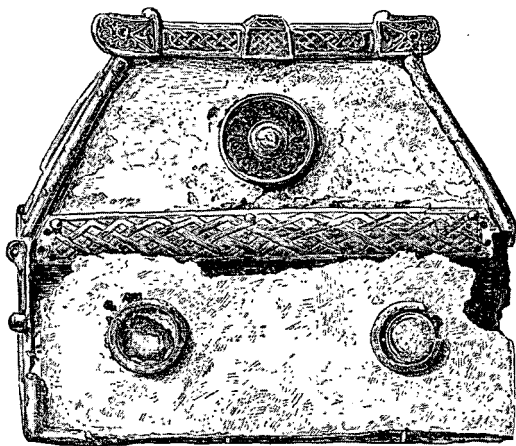


Fig. 6. Shrine found in Lough Erne, Ireland. ( $\frac{1}{3}$ .)

ornamented on the front with three square panels of interlaced work, surrounding a central setting, placed two on the lower part and one on the upper. Only one of these panels remains, but the marks of the others are plainly visible. Like the Monymusk reliquary, it has had provision at the ends for suspensory attachments, the traces of which still remain.

A somewhat larger shrine of the same form and character (fig. 6), measuring 7 inches in length,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in breadth, and  $5\frac{7}{8}$  in height, was brought up on a fishing line from the bottom of Loch Erne in

<sup>1</sup> See an account of it in the *Proceedings*, vol. xiv. p. 286, by Professor Duns.

Ireland.<sup>1</sup> It is of bronze, tinned or silvered, and retains the original yew-wood box inside. The construction is the same as that of the Monymusk shrine, the bronze plates being kept together at the corners by rounded bronze mountings; a bar with projecting ends ornamented with interlaced work runs along the ridge of the roof, and a broader band of interlaced work marks the junction of the lower part with the roof. Two circular medallions adorn the lower part of the front, and one of larger size occupies the centre of the

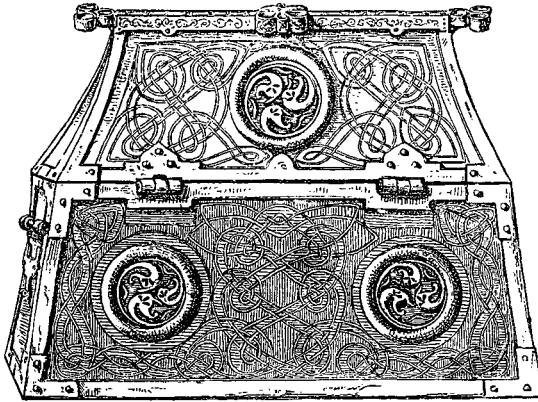


Fig. 7. Shrine now in Copenhagen Museum. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

upper part. These medallions have circular settings of amber in the centre, surrounded by bands of delicate interlaced work. On the ends are the remains of hinges for suspensory attachments, like those of the Monymusk shrine.

Of the two examples taken by the Vikings to Norway, one (fig. 7) has been long known, as it was figured by Worsaae in his illustrated catalogue of the Copenhagen Museum in 1859.<sup>2</sup> It is  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length and 4 inches in height. The ends are slightly sloped inwards,

<sup>1</sup> See an account of it by Rev. D. Murphy in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxiii. (1892), p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *Nordiske Oldsager i det Kongelige Museum i Kjobenhavn*, 1859, fig. 524; also T. Petersen's *A Celtic Reliquary found in a Norwegian Burial Mound*, p. 15.

and the gables curved inwards. The bar along the ridge of the roof has projections at either end and an ornamental panel in the centre. The sides and roof are engraved with interlaced knot-work of good design, and two medallions on the lower part, and one on the upper, are ornamented with triplets of spirals terminating in dragonesque heads in the style of the older spiral ornament. On the ends there are

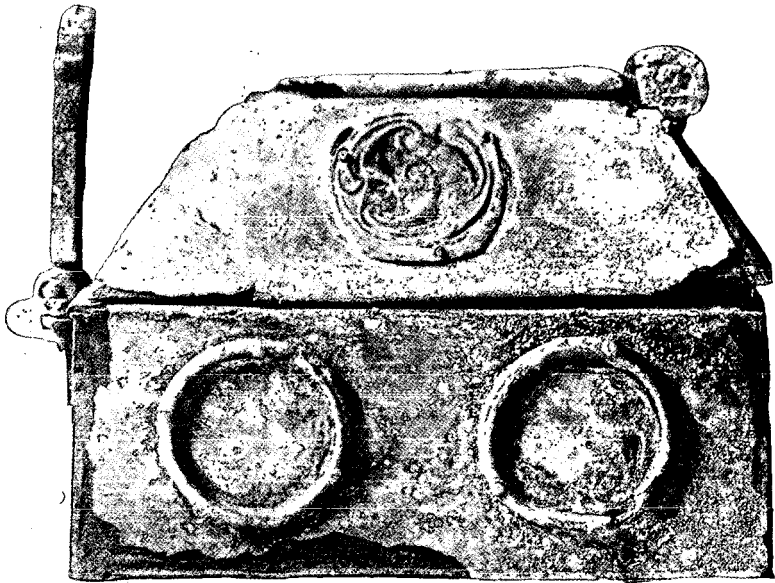


Fig. 8. Shrine found in a Viking Boat-burial at Melhus in Norway. (3.)

remains of a hinge for the suspensory attachments, like those of the Monymusk shrine. Scratched on the bottom of the shrine is a Runic inscription, "Ranvaig owns this Casket." The Runes belong to the peculiar group found on the monumental crosses in the Isle of Man, from which it may be inferred that Ranvaig was a Norwegian woman, perhaps settled in Man at the time when she first possessed the casket, which was afterwards taken to Norway, whence it found its way to Copenhagen, as is known from the Museum records.

The other shrine from Norway (fig. 8) was found in extremely interesting circumstances in 1906 in a large grave-mound of the Viking time at Melhus in the Namdalen valley, and has been described by

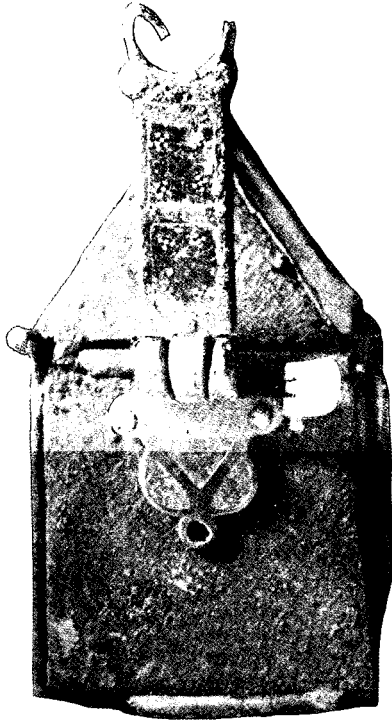


Fig. 9. End of the Shrine found at Melhus. ( $\frac{3}{4}$ .)

T. Petersen of the Trondheim Museum.<sup>1</sup> The grave-mound covered a boat-burial of two people interred at the same time, a man and a woman. With the man were two swords, one single and one double-edged, an axe-head, a spear-head, a shield-boss, and a whetstone; with the woman were two brooches and a fibula, a necklace of 137 beads,

<sup>1</sup> *A Celtic Reliquary found in a Norwegian Burial Mound*, by T. Petersen (1907).

a pair of shears, a spindle-whorl, a weaver's spatha of cetacean bone, an oblong plate of cetacean bone ornamented with dots and circles, and the reliquary. The latter is of the same general form and character as the Monymusk shrine, being  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length by 2 inches in breadth and  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in height. It consists of a box of yew-wood covered with thin plates of bronze, unornamented, except for three circular medallions placed on the front, which have been filled in with ornamentation of divergent spirals. The bar along the ridge of the roof has projecting terminations quite like those on the Monymusk shrine, and on the ends of the shrine (fig. 9) are fixed by hinges two suspensory attachments for a strap, which are, like the ones on the Monymusk example, richly decorated with enamel. Judging from the character of its ornamentation, Mr Petersen considers this shrine the oldest of them all, and gives to it a date not later than A.D. 650. From other considerations relating to the grave-mound and its contents, he states that the period of its being brought to Norway to be buried with its possessor cannot be reckoned later than the beginning of the ninth century, so that it must have already been of a venerable age before it became the spoil of the Vikings.

It was a well-established custom of the Celtic Church to enshrine the relics of their native saints.<sup>1</sup> The relics so preserved were mostly personal possessions of the saint, intimately associated with his life and labours, such as books of the Gospels or Psalters, copied or used by him, bells, crosiers, or such-like, of which some traditionary story was told.

The books or manuscripts of the Gospels and Psalters were enshrined in *cumdach*s or cases of the form of the book itself, made of silver or bronze, and elaborately ornamented in chased or filigree work and inlay of gold and settings of gems. Five of these are preserved in the Dublin

<sup>1</sup> "It would appear, from the number of references to shrines in the authentic Irish annals, that previously to the irruptions of the Northmen in the eighth and ninth centuries, there were few, if any, of the distinguished churches in Ireland which had not costly shrines containing the relics of their founders and other celebrated saints." Petrie's *Round Towers of Ireland*, p. 201.

Museum,<sup>1</sup> dating from about A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1150. We have now none in Scotland; but we learn from Fordun,<sup>2</sup> that Fothad, son of Bran, scribe and Bishop of Alba, who died in A.D. 961, enshrined a book of

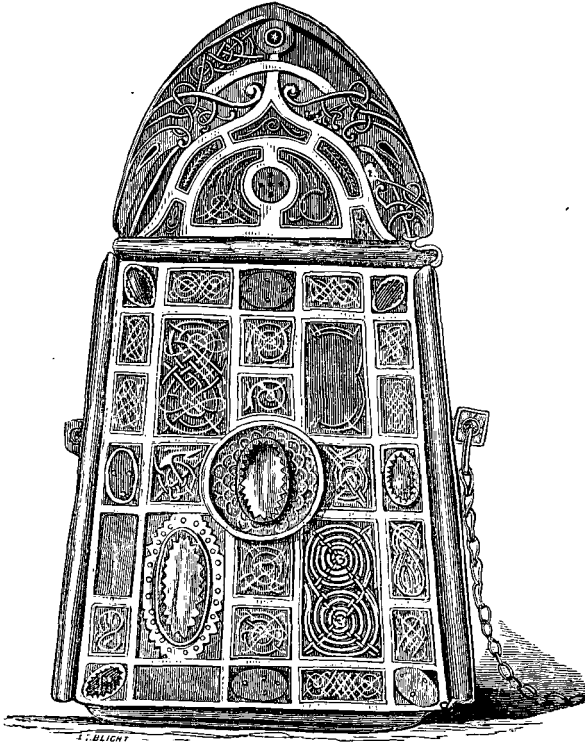


Fig. 10. Shrine of St Patrick's Bell. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

the Gospels (presumably written by himself), and placed it on the high altar of the Church of St Andrews, where it was still preserved about the middle of the fourteenth century. St Ternan's Book of the Gospels,

<sup>1</sup> Coffey's *Guide to the Celtic Antiquities of the Christian Period preserved in the National Museum, Dublin*, p. 46. A list of ten *cumdachs* which are known to have existed in Ireland is given in Miss Stokes's *Early Christian Art in Ireland*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Scotichronicon*, Bower's continuation (ed. Goodall), vol. i. p. 339.

in four volumes, each enshrined in a metal case enriched by silver and gold interwoven on their surfaces, is noticed in the Martyrology of Aberdeen,<sup>1</sup> where it is stated that the volume containing the Gospel of Matthew was preserved in his Church at Banchory at the date when the MS. was written, or about 1530.

The bells, of which a goodly number still exist,<sup>2</sup> when enshrined, were encased in decorated coverings of the shape of the Celtic bell, which was quadrangular, tapering upwards to the loop handle, or to a flattened semi-oviform dome enclosing it. These bell-shrines are quite peculiar to Scotland and Ireland, not a single example occurring elsewhere. The finest surviving example is that of St Patrick's bell (fig. 10), traditionally said to have been found in the tomb of St Columba, and placed by him in the Church of Armagh, where it was enshrined between the years 1091 and 1105. The bell itself is of hammered iron, 6 inches in height, and as rudely put together as any cattle-bell; but the shrine is a work of art, and bears an inscription commemorating the King of Ireland and the Bishop of Armagh, who caused it to be made, with the name of the artificer who, "with his sons," fashioned it, and of "the keeper of the bell." This last intimation of the existence of an office implying the keepership of a sacred relic has an important bearing on questions that will follow.

There are two bell-shrines in Scotland, both of considerably later date,—the Kilmichael Glassary shrine in Argyleshire,<sup>3</sup> and the shrine of the Guthrie bell in Forfarshire.<sup>4</sup> The Kilmichael Glassary shrine (fig. 11), now in the Museum, contains a small iron bell, probably that of St Moluag of Lismore, which he made miraculously, according to the ecclesiastical tradition, with a bundle of rushes for fuel, the smith having declined to make him a bell because he had no coals. The Aberdeen

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. ii. p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> See notices with illustrations of nine Celtic bells of iron and three of bronze preserved in different parts of Scotland, in *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (First Series), pp. 167-213. A fourth bell of bronze is described and figured in *Proceedings*, vol. xxiii. p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. iv. p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. i. p. 55.



Breviary relates that this bell was held in high honour in the Church of Lismore, which afterwards became the cathedral of the diocese, of which Glassary was one of the rural deaneries. The shrine, which is  $3\frac{3}{4}$

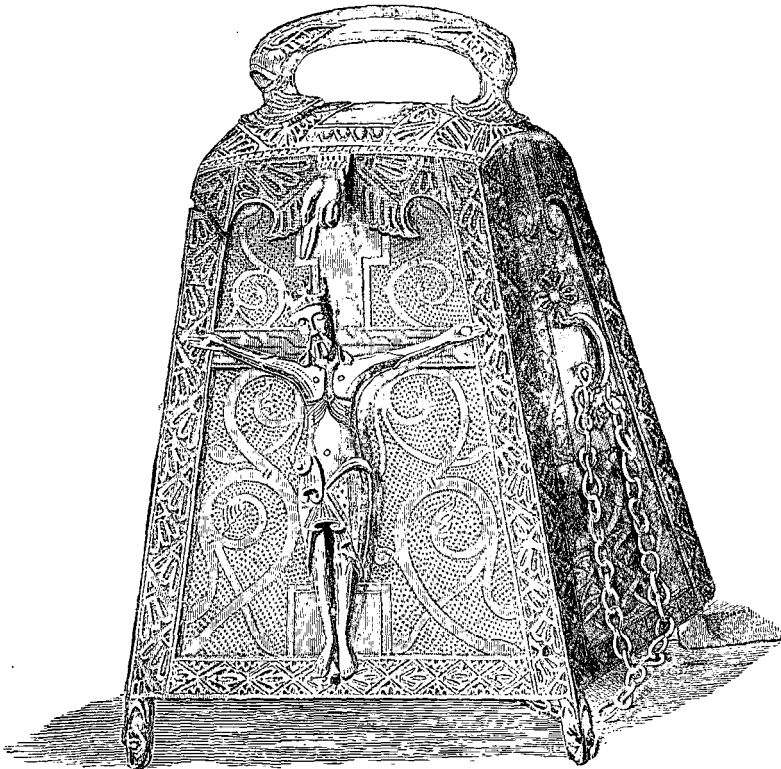


Fig. 11. Bell-shrine from Kilmichael Glassary, Argyleshire. (3.)

inches across the base, and  $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches in height, has a round hole pierced in the bottom, sufficient to allow of the insertion of a finger to touch the bell, an indication that the relic had been used, like many others, to swear oaths upon, so that there is no improbability in its having been brought to the deanery for that purpose.

The Guthrie bell-shrine (fig. 12), at Guthrie House, Forfarshire, is said to have come from the Church of Guthrie,<sup>1</sup> a prebend of the Cathedral



Fig. 12. The Guthrie Bell-shrine. (½.)

of Brechin. It is of bronze,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches in height,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in breadth, and  $4\frac{1}{4}$  in width at the base, and elaborately decorated with attached figures in relief, of bronze and silver, consisting of the crucifixion and figures of

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. i. p. 55.

ecclesiastics vested and mitred. From the fact that the crucifixion is represented with three nails instead of four, as in earlier representations, it can hardly be placed earlier than the thirteenth century; but there is one figure on the right-hand side of the shrine which is apparently of a date considerably earlier, and probably belongs to a prior system of its decoration. Over the arms of the crucifixion there are two groups of settings, the stones of which are now gone. They consist each of a circle of six settings arranged round a central and larger setting, and are probably intended to represent the sun and moon, which were the usual accompaniments of the crucifixion at that period, and for some centuries previously. On each side of the crucifix are panels of foliaceous scrolls, and on the extreme right a panel of interlaced work, the strands of which are marked with dots in the Irish manner. At the bottom is a silver plate, with the inscription, in black letter, in niello, "Johannes Alexandri me fieri fecit." The back of the shrine is plain, but presents the remains of two loop attachments of bronze for suspension.

Crosiers were usually enshrined by simply covering the staff, or the crook, with ornamental metal work, enriched by filigree work or enamels and settings of precious stones. A familiar example of this in Scotland is the crosier of St Fillan of Glendochart,<sup>1</sup> now in the National

<sup>1</sup> See Notice of the Quigrich or Crosier of St Fillan, by Daniel Wilson, LL.D., and Historical Notices of St Fillan's Crosier, by John Stuart, LL.D., in the *Proceedings*, vol. xii. pp. 122-182; and *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (First Series), pp. 216-241. Other Celtic crosiers still preserved, or known from record to have been preserved, in Scotland are:—The Crosier of St Moluag of Lismore, called the *Bachul More*, now in the possession of the Duke of Argyll, but till recently in the hereditary possession of a family named M'Inlea (changed to Livingstone), with a croft of land in Lismore for its keepership called *Peynbachalla* (*Proceedings*, vol. ii. p. 13, and *Origines Parochiales Scotiæ*, vol. ii. p. 163, where it is figured); the Crosier called the *Arwachyll*, preserved till 1518 at Kilmolrue in Muckairn, where it was used in taking the oaths of the subscribers to a bond of man-rent (*The Thanes of Cowdor*, Spalding Club, p. 129, and *Proceedings*, vol. iii. p. 292); the Crosier of St Mund in 1497 had a croft of land called Pordewry, and was itself "called in Scotch Deowray" (*Register of the Great Seal*, A.D. 1424-1573, p. 507); the Crosier of St Fergus, preserved in the church dedicated to him in Aberdeenshire at the time the *Breviary of Aberdeen* was written (*Brev. Aberd. temp. estiv.*, fol. clxiii); the Crosier of St Duthac which was exhibited by its keeper to James IV. in 1506 (*Accounts of the Lord High*

Museum of Antiquities. The staff of the original crosier has long disappeared, but the first metal mounting of the crook remains (fig. 13).

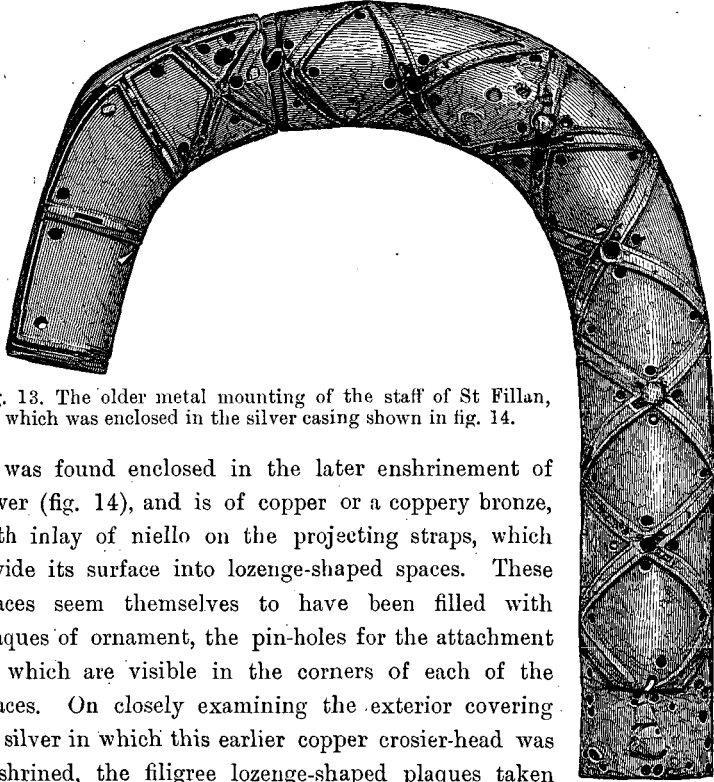


Fig. 13. The older metal mounting of the staff of St Fillan, which was enclosed in the silver casing shown in fig. 14.

It was found enclosed in the later enshrinement of silver (fig. 14), and is of copper or a coppery bronze, with inlay of niello on the projecting straps, which divide its surface into lozenge-shaped spaces. These spaces seem themselves to have been filled with plaques of ornament, the pin-holes for the attachment of which are visible in the corners of each of the spaces. On closely examining the exterior covering of silver in which this earlier copper crosier-head was enshrined, the filigree lozenge-shaped plaques taken from these spaces were found to be encrusted on the thin plate of silver which covered the body of the crook-head, and may be recognised

*Treasurer*, vol. iii. p. 342); the Crosier of St Donnan at the church of Auchterless was famous for curing fevers and other diseases till the Reformation (*Collections on the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, Spalding Club, p. 505); the Crosier and Bell of St Lolan at Kincardine-on-Forth had each a croft of land for its keepership (*Cartulary of Cambuskenneth*, p. 166). The terminal part of the crook of a Celtic crosier found at Hoddam Church, which was dedicated to St Kentigern, is in the National Museum (*Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 225).



Fig. 14. The external silver casing in which St Fillan's Crosier-head was enshrined.

not only by their correspondence in shape, but by the pin-holes still remaining at the corners.

This group of Reliquaries, interesting as they are from their intrinsic merits as works of art, are still more interesting in their historical associations from their intimate connection with the ecclesiastical and secular life of the people. They were used for swearing oaths upon, for curing diseases, and for procuring victory for the host of the tribe in the day of battle. Three of the relics of St Columba were so used—the *Cathach*, or Battler, which was his enshrined Psalter; the *Cath Buidhe*, or Yellow Battler,<sup>1</sup> which was the Scottish shrine of his crosier encased in gold; and the Brebennoch, which was enlisted by charter to service in the army by King William the Lion. Nor must we forget, in this connection, the enshrined arm of St Fillan, which, according to the historian Boece, played a miraculous part in cheering King Robert the Bruce on the eve of Bannockburn. The crosier of St Fillan, so far as we know, was never borne to battle, but had its own function, as we learn from the inquest of 1428 that when goods or cattle were stolen from Glendochart, and the owner, from doubt of the culprit or fear of his enemies, did not dare to follow after his property, he might send word to the Dewar of the crosier, with fourpence, or a pair of shoes and food for the first night, and the Dewar was bound to follow and recover them if he could anywhere within the kingdom of Scotland,<sup>2</sup> which he was specially empowered to do by letters under the privy seal of James III.

These shrines and reliquaries are most precious illustrations of the art and craftsmanship of our forefathers many centuries ago. The extreme

<sup>1</sup> It is mentioned in the Irish Annals, preserved in the Burgundian Library at Brussels, under the year 918, that on the invasion of Alba by the Lochlanns under Ivar, the men of Alba vowed "that their standard in going forth to battle should be the crosier of Columkille; wherefore it is called *Cath-bhuaidh* from that day to this; and this is a fitting name for it, for they have often gained victory in battle by it, as they did at that time when they placed their hope in Columkille." The Four Masters say that the leader of the men of Alba on this occasion was Constantine, son of Aedh, and grandson of Kenneth Macalpine (*Adarnan's Life of St Columba*, by Reeves, p. 333).

<sup>2</sup> *Black Book of Taymouth*, Preface, p. xxxv; *Proceedings*, vol. xii. p. 179.

veneration in which they were held caused all the resources of art to be lavished upon them, and secured their preservation by endowing them with grants of land to be held in heritable tenure by hereditary keepers to whom their custody was committed. These hereditary keepers were laymen, not clerics, who in Scotland were known by the official name of Doire, which later became the family name of Dewar. The five relics of St Fillan<sup>1</sup> had each its croft of land in Glendochart or Strathfillan, held, with the custody of the relic, by lay Dewars or hereditary keepers. We know from record that as late as 1549 three of these lay hereditary keepers were able in the Civil Courts to vindicate their right of possession of the relics against the Church itself in the person of the Prior of Strathfillan, who sought delivery of the relics to him that they might be placed in the churches of Killin and Strathfillan, "not to be tain furth agane without licence of the said Prior." In 1551 we find it noted in the Great Seal, with reference to the lands held by Malise Dewar, with the custody of the crosier of St Fillan, that they had never been computed in the rental of the Lordship of Glendochart, nor any payment made for them to the Queen, but now they were to be held of the Crown for a payment of forty shillings annually.

After the Reformation Donald Dewar sold the lands to Campbell of Glenurchy, but did not part with the crosier, which descended hereditarily in the family till 1876, when Archibald Dewar, then resident in Canada, where the crosier had been for fifty-nine years, executed a deed of transference and surrender of the relic, with all its rights and privileges, to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and their successors, "on trust to deposit the same in the National Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh, there to remain in all time to come, for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the Scottish nation."

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xxiii. p. 110.