

St John's Cross, Iona, Argyll

by W Norman Robertson

SUMMARY

In June 1970 a replica of the St John's Cross was dedicated at a special service held at the Cathedral on Iona (pl 4). This ceremony marked the completion of an undertaking which had been discussed many times over a period of several years. Already two attempts had been made to rebuild the broken original cross,¹ in 1927 and again in 1954, but neither restoration was a lasting success. These reconstructions, though perhaps strong enough in normal weather conditions, were quite unsuited to withstand the unpredictable violence of the wind during a storm. In consequence, it was considered wiser to move all the pieces of the cross away from further harm and to erect a replica on the site instead. This replica was made at the request of the Iona Cathedral Trustees who were wholly responsible for the proposal and for the cost of the project.

HISTORY

Nothing is known of the history of the St John's Cross (Phillips 1958), but as an early example of a free-standing, Celtic-type cross it is considered to be of 9th-century date. The name given to it, however, is not ancient and there are no historical reasons for its use. In fact, the names assigned to the four major crosses on Iona, i.e. St Martin's, St John's, St Matthew's and Maclean's, do not appear in the order as they are known today until 1898 (Macmillan and Brydall 1898). The earliest reference to the three crosses which stand near the Cathedral is that made by William Sacheverell, Governor of Man, after a visit to Iona in 1688. He noted outside the W end of the church, 'three large crosses finely engraved, of which one that was high and proportionably big, is yet entire and more than half of the other two remaining' (Sacheverell 1702, 133). In 1693, another but unknown writer remarked 'two notable ones (crosses) of a considerable height and excellent work, untouched', but again the crosses were not named (*New Stat Acct* 1845, 314).

The first writer to introduce the practice of naming these crosses was Martin Martin, who in 1713 described the present St Matthew's Cross as 'St Martin's' and Maclean's Cross as 'Mack-Leans Cross' (Martin 1716, 259, 263). The other two appellations, 'St John's Cross' and 'St Matthew's Cross', which are also fictitious, do not appear until the mid-19th century. In 1850 Graham uses the name 'St John' to describe St Matthew's Cross (present name) (Graham 1850), while Reeves in 1857 names the surviving stump of St John's Cross (present name) 'St Matthew's' (Reeves 1857, 420-1). For the next fifty years some confusion exists in the names which successive historians attach to the crosses. The following list gives the source of the name by which each monument is known at the present time.

ST MARTIN'S CROSS was called by this name for the first time by Graham in 1850.

ST MATTHEW'S CROSS was named 'St Matthew's' for the first time by Macmillan and Brydall in 1898. In 1713 Martin Martin called it 'St Martin's' and from 1850 until 1914 it was often described as 'St John's'.

ST JOHN'S CROSS was seldom noted and was named 'St John's' for the first time by Macmillan and Brydall in 1898. In 1857 Reeves described it as 'St Matthew's'.
 MACLEAN'S CROSS was continuously so-called from Martin Martin in 1713.

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the above-mentioned names are other than romantic inventions of the Victorian Age. As far as is known, no cross bears a name of earlier date than 1713 even by tradition, orally or otherwise.

The earliest illustrations of the St John's Cross are the drawings of the ornament on the cross-shaft made in 1859 by A Gibb for the Spalding Club (Stuart 1866). Early photographic records include a photograph taken in 1867 by G W Wilson showing the broken cross-shaft at the head of a rubble-filled setting of large stones, the base and the lower end of the shaft are hidden (Wilson 1867). A few years later, Dr Erskine Beveridge produced several fine photographs taken after the ground had been cleared to expose the box-like base (Beveridge 1898, pls 56-77). One of these photographs shows that the fragments of the cross-head were at that time in the burial ground beside St Oran's Chapel. However, by 1913, when Professor Macalister compiled his catalogue of the sculptured stones at Iona, they had been moved into the roofless St Oran's Chapel and there they lay until 1927 (Macalister 1914).

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CROSS

The first effective reconstruction of the St John's Cross was carried out in 1927 under the guidance of Professor R A S Macalister (1928). This rebuilt cross stood for nearly twenty-five years, but in 1951 it fell during a severe storm. Three years later it was re-erected by the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works and on this occasion metal supports were fitted to the sides of the cross-shaft. Despite this additional reinforcement, the shaft was still unable to support the great weight of the cross-head and in 1957 it toppled again. After this last mishap all the loose pieces of the cross were carefully collected and photographed. At the same time, arrangements were made to store them for safe keeping. In a subsequent report on the cross it was suggested that it should not be rebuilt in the open but only for erection indoors. The Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland agreed with this proposal and recommended that no action should be taken until an appropriate and permanent position was found for it elsewhere. The Iona Cathedral Trustees, however, were of the opinion that a replica should be set up on the vacant site left by the original monument. This suggestion was approved and arrangements were made to proceed with the fabrication of a replica cross. This project was undertaken in two separate operations, the first to provide a master model in stucco of the completed cross², the second to reproduce from the model, a finished replica in pre-stressed concrete suitably compounded with aggregate to match the original stone.³ The replica, when erected later on the site, was anchored at the base by high tensile wires for certain stability in all kinds of weather. The following account describes the method which was devised in order to obtain the master pattern, the essential requisite in any casting operation. It also includes information which was gained while working on the project.

THE MAKING OF THE REPLICA

The surviving remains of the St John's Cross consist of seven large unconnected fragments which are both heavy and awkward to handle. To overcome this difficulty, photographic prints were made of both faces of each stone, all to the same scale. The necessary pieces were then cut

from the prints and placed in their relative positions on a scaled drawing of the completed cross. In this way, it was easier to study the arrangement of the decorative panels and to estimate how much restoration was needed (pl 5).

An important feature of the cross is that it is carved on the front and back but not on the sides. Furthermore, the two sculptured faces are confined within a plain rounded moulding which runs continuously round the edges of the entire cross. This sculptured treatment proved to be an advantage as it enabled the back and the front to be reconstructed separately.

To start the work, sixteen different plaster casts were made from the original fragments at Iona. The casts were then brought to the workshop in Edinburgh and there they were manoeuvred into position so that the exact dimensions and outline of the cross could be established. When these needs were determined, two similar templates of the outline were formed in hardboard and pinned to separate modelling boards. Next, the casts belonging to the front of the cross were fixed in the corresponding positions on one of the templates. The same procedure was repeated on the second template with the casts of the reverse face. Thus, two separate crosses, 3 in (7.6 cm) in relief and with matching profiles, were formed.

The overall decoration on both faces is broken up into isolated compartments, each one containing an individual design. Excluding the central roundels, there are eleven panels of ornament on the front and ten panels on the back of the cross. Most of the designs are symmetrically arranged and thereby composed of elements which are transposable either by turning or inverting them. This characteristic made it possible to restore the incomplete designs by implanting prints of similar surviving parts into the vacant spaces.

It was necessary to start first with the restoration of the central roundels which are both approximately the same in size and section. On the front, the roundel has a circular sinking or setting, apparently to hold some sort of inset. No doubt a similar feature existed on the reverse face, but unfortunately this part of the roundel is now missing. The border which encircles the recess on the front is ornamented with a continuous design consisting of twelve ornate circles (pl 6a, fig 1a). On the back the decoration is different and it combines ten repeats of pattern, including two types of bosses in alternate order (pl 6b, fig 1b). Both roundels have been completely restored by making prints of a segment representing a full repeat of the pattern. Casts equalling the number of repeats were made and carefully fitted together within the estimated circumference. Similarly, all the panels on the two faces of the cross were restored eventually by filling in the missing parts with prints taken from original workmanship. There is an unfortunate deficiency in the pattern on the upper arm of the front; it has been restored but the interpretation of the whole design is conjectural. Also on the front, the sinister half of the ornament on the top-most panel of the shaft is missing. As this particular design is only symmetrical on a vertical axis, some modelling was unavoidable in order to complete the details.

When the relief models of both faces of the cross were finished, moulds were made and plaster casts taken from them (pls 7 and 8). When ready, these casts were set up vertically back to back and spaced very carefully to correspond approximately with the thickness and taper of the original cross. The sides were then consolidated to form the full three-dimensional model from which the final plaster cast was taken. This cast was made in two parts with the joint between head and shaft in exactly the same position as on the original cross. When the master cast was set up, the segments of the ring were made and fitted into the arms to form the nimbus. These quadrant-pieces have been left plain because none of the original members of the ring have survived to show how they were fashioned. Finally, the apex-stone was added after some restoration work had been carried out on the badly weathered details. A considerable amount of rebuilding was needed to restore the outline of this feature, but extra care was taken to avoid obscuring any of the original surface.

This rule was strictly observed wherever modelling was required. Each detail of the cross was measured and developed with special care in order to produce a reasonably accurate copy of the real cross (pl 9).

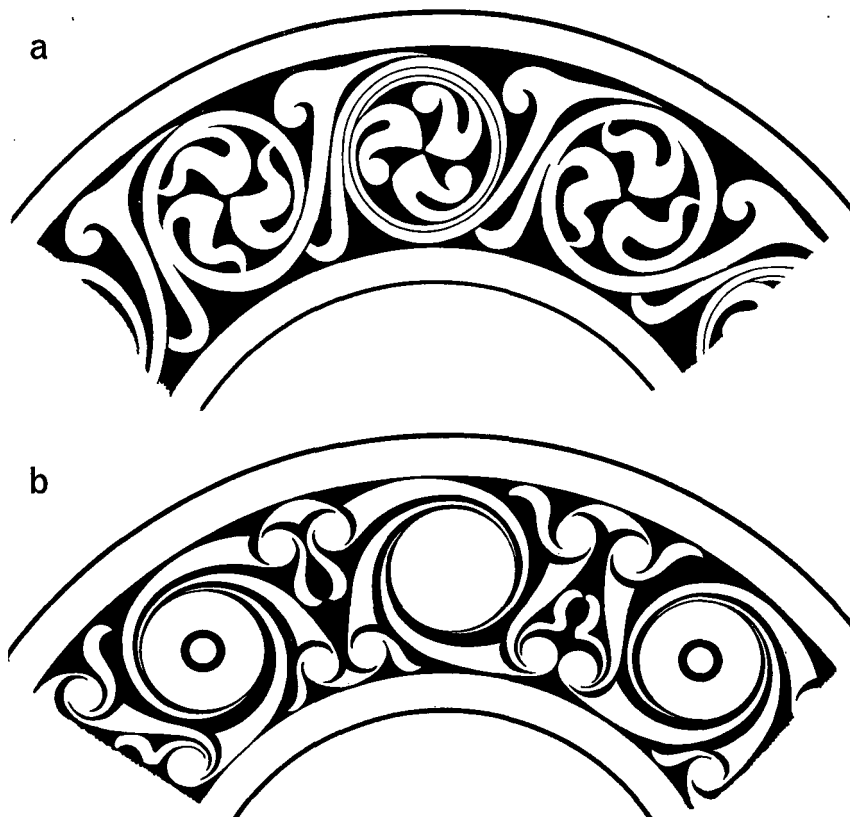


FIG 1 St John's Cross: ornament round central roundels; a, W face, b, E face

The following measurements are taken from the completed reconstruction, the position of the joints represents those in the original method of construction:

Total height of cross from top of base	14 ft 7 in (4.44 m)
Height without apex stone	13 ft 11 in (4.24 m)
Height to joint on upper arm	13 ft 2 in (4.01 m)
Height to joint between shaft and cross-head	7 ft 11½ in (2.42 m)
Total width across arms	7 ft 1 in (2.15 m)
Width at top of shaft	1 ft 7 in (0.48 m)
Width at bottom of shaft	1 ft 9½ in (0.54 m)
Thickness at top of cross	7½ in (0.19 m)
Thickness at bottom of cross	10½ in (0.26 m)
Height to centre of central roundel	10 ft 1 in (3.07 m)
Diameter of roundel (back and front)	1 ft 9½ in (0.54 m)
Diameter of central setting (front)	11 in (0.27 m)
Diameter of central setting (back)	10 in (0.25 m)
Diameter of circular interstices	1 ft 9½ in (0.54 m)

DESCRIPTION OF ORIGINAL CROSS

The cross is composed of three separate stones which are held together by mortise and tenon joints in a manner similar to carpentry.⁴ The cross-head fits on to a tenon at the top of the shaft and the extension piece, which completes the shape of the cross, tenons into the upper arm. Including the root, which extends 3 ft (0.91 m) into the base, the shaft is formed out of one stone measuring 11 ft 6 in by 1 ft 10 in by 12 in (3.50 m by 0.55 m by 0.30 m), and the stone for the cross-head measures 7 ft 2 in by 5 ft 3 in by 12 in (2.18 m by 1.60 m by 0.30 m). These two particular stones appear to have been brought from the mainland of Argyll, probably from a quarry in the Crinan district (Stevenson 1956, 88). For the extension at the top of the cross, however, a piece of local schist has been used. Considering the size and weight of these stones as unhewn blocks, their transport to Iona seems to be an achievement showing considerable skill and effort. Presumably the blocks were conveyed on a specially built raft to Iona and there conveniently beached below the settlement.

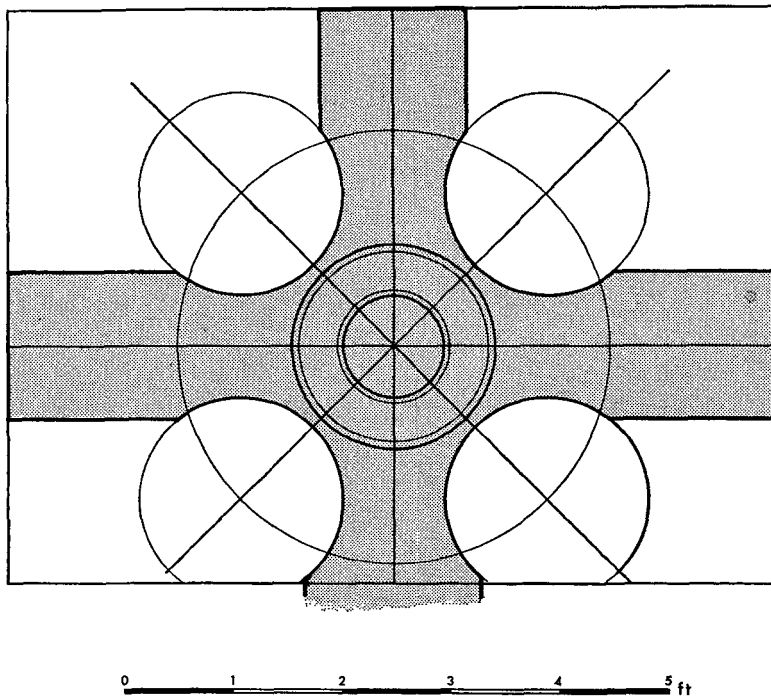


FIG 2 St John's Cross; drawing demonstrating the method used to mark off the cross-head on the stone

A close examination of the cross-head is most instructive, as it clearly reveals some of the methods of the sculptor. It seems that after smoothing the surface of the stone, a centre point was established from which the circle of the central roundel was scribed. Using the same radius, with centres on the diagonals of the cross-head, the circular interstices were then drawn to obtain the outline (fig 2). Evidently the circles were scribed with compasses, an instrument which was used frequently in this form of art to mark off designs (Henry 1965, 216-24). The cross-head is quite irregular in shape, retaining to some extent the natural stratum of the stone. On both back

and front, this uneven surface is reduced just enough to produce the desired projection for the bosses on the arms. The central roundels are given still greater prominence by sloping the background into the perimeter of each of these features.

The unfinished East Cross which stands at Kells (Meath) in Ireland demonstrates clearly the method of a stone-carver of this period (Henry 1967, 151-2). It shows how the stone was shaped and prepared and also how much work was carried out prior to the erection of the cross; the decorative details were added later (pl 10). In this instance, the orderly handling of the work, such as blocking-in all the panels to shape and size before carving any of the decoration, appears to confirm the view that, in crosses of this particular order, the shape of the cross and the general character of the ornament was known before the work was started.

The circular setting in the centre of the central roundel on the front of the St John's Cross is unusual. It has a curious conical background which slopes downwards from the centre-point to a depth of 1 in (2.5 cm) into the undercut edge of the surrounding border (fig 3). There is no doubt

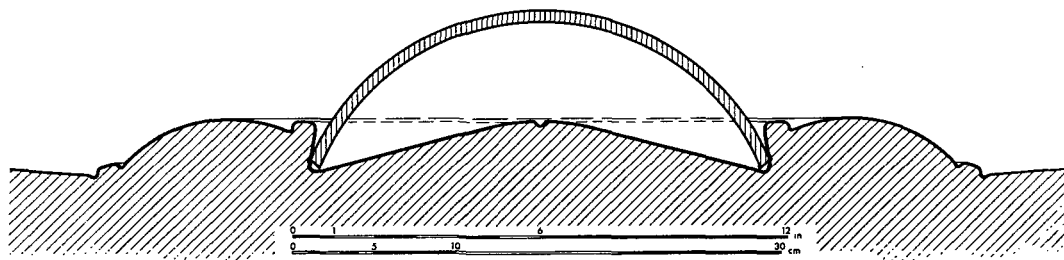


FIG 3 St John's Cross; section through central roundel with metal boss in position

that it is an indent for holding another ornamental feature such as a projecting boss. For this purpose, however, an inset of bronze rather than stone would be more efficient, and a well defined groove on the inner edge of the recess supports this suggestion.⁵ This metal disc would be carefully made to drop neatly into the recess, then, by lightly hammering its convex surface, the base would expand and lock tightly behind the undercut edge of the recess. In effect the complete roundel, with its decorative border and bronze centre-piece, must have resembled a great circular brooch. The circular recess at the top of the shaft on the W face of the cross also held an implanted boss. This method of inserting the boss was used, no doubt, to gain extra projection and so give that feature greater prominence.

On the arms of the cross, the large bosses have fared badly from weathering and other causes and in their present condition it is easy to overlook the intricate carving on them. It is interesting to note, for instance, that some of these bosses bear the same ornamental design as appears on the border of the roundel on the W face.

The finial at the top of the cross is also badly weather-worn and little more than half survives today. It consists of two separate sculptures in bold relief which are set back to back on either side of a central plate. This plate, measuring $1\frac{1}{2}$ in (3.8 cm) thick, actually forms an extension to the profile of the upper arm. The front or W face bears a scene depicting a contest between two dwarf-like wrestlers, with two other very eroded figures supporting them, one on either side (pl 11a). There is no doubt that this sculpture represents 'Jacob wrestling with the Angel', a stock subject in both Early Christian and Romanesque art (Henry 1967, 200). This subject appears to be uncommon in Scotland, for the only other example is on a cross-slab on Eilean Mor in the Sound of Jura. Notwithstanding the similarity in the stance of the contestants, in this instance the figures seem to resemble animals with human heads rather than men (Allen

and Anderson 1903, 379). However, it is in the carvings of Early Christian date in Ireland where the evidence is more plentiful of the popularity of this theme. Close parallels to the Iona example are to be found on many Irish high crosses such as the Durrow Cross, the Market Cross at Kells and the crosses at Killamery and Kilrea. Bearing in mind the Irish Church and its early connections with Iona, the presence of this Old Testament scene on the St John's Cross is not so unusual. It is more difficult to explain why the sculptor chose this particular subject, the only anthropomorphic design on the cross.

On the weathered reverse face, a symmetrical composition is discernible, depicting two beasts standing facing each other; unfortunately the heads of both creatures are missing, but an apparent variation in profile suggests that they possibly represent two different kinds of animals (pl 11c). These animals with looped tails are not unlike the two isolated beasts on the W face of St Martin's Cross which, as Dr Radford points out, are a Northumbrian feature (Radford 1942, 5). Paired beasts appear frequently in sculpture during this period but, other than as decoration, their significance in this instance is uncertain.

The ring

Nothing remains now of the ring of the cross to show how it was originally treated, only the mortises in the cross confirm the actual existence of this feature. Evidently the ring was composed of four separate quadrant-pieces which fitted mortise and tenon fashion into the angles between the arms of the cross. As it was possible at the outset to combine the ring with the cross-head, there appears to be no good reason for using this cumbersome method of construction. For example, the cross at Kildalton on Islay, which is similar to the St John's Cross, is carved complete with its ring out of a single stone. On the Irish high crosses too, the ring is formed in conjunction with the cross-head, though in Ireland separate heads are not uncommon.

In view of the different method used for the ring on the St John's Cross it seems reasonably certain that the cross was designed primarily without this feature. Whatever its purpose, it could not have been solely to support the cross-head, as it was evident during the erection of the plaster copy that the cross-head did not require to be supported. The logical conclusion is that the ring was introduced as an afterthought, possibly in a last-minute attempt to amend the profile of the cross to the satisfaction of the sculptor.

It has been noted that the arms of the cross have concave sides, a feature which suggests an Anglo-Saxon influence. In fact, the complete cross-head, without the ring, is very similar in outline to the normal though smaller Northumbrian type (Stevenson 1956, 86). Therefore, the St John's Cross apparently represents an experiment in producing a standing cross more majestic and imposing than any other at that time. Consequently, it is arguable that the ring at the last moment was considered aesthetically necessary and introduced to fill the larger angle-spaces created by the lengthening of the arms. Moreover, in the absence of more evidence, the equal suitability of timber as a substitute for stone for the quadrants cannot be dismissed. Wood has been suggested for the extension pieces which possibly fitted into the slots at the ends of the arms of the St Martin's Cross (Richardson 1964, 5-6).

Decoration

The decoration of the St John's Cross consists of individual panels of ornament in which five distinct decorative elements are discernible in the designs. Three of these features, the spiral and trumpet, the divergent snake and the triple spiral appear, either singly or collectively, in the majority of the patterns. The triple-spiral element is an essential part of a very elaborate pattern which is evident in combination with other devices in four of the panels. In these panels the

designs include different arrangements of double rows of half-spherical bosses bearing triple spirals with flat C-curves connecting each pair both horizontally and vertically (fig 4). Another type of ornament is interlace, and several examples of it are present in various positions on the cross. A continuous border of very fine knot work for instance serves to enclose three of the panels on the W face of the cross-shaft (fig 5a). On the E face a narrower band of interlace of equal

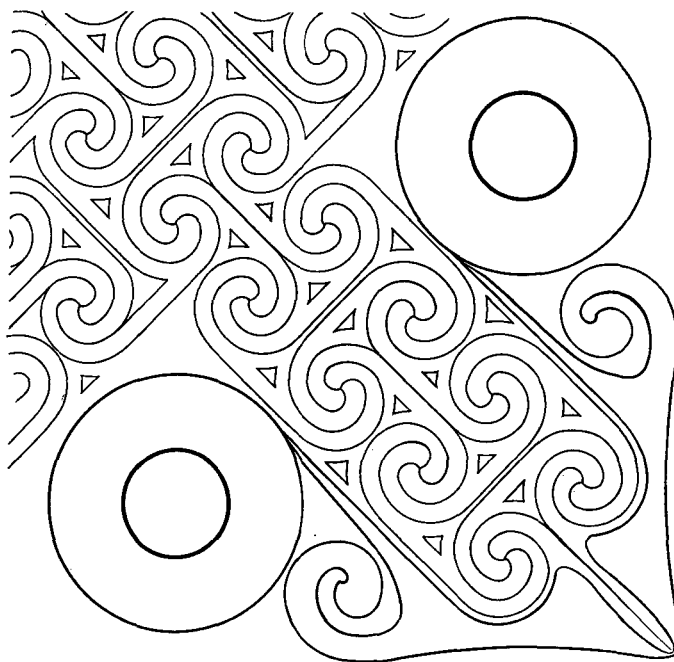


Fig 4 St John's Cross: detail from a decorative panel on the cross-shaft showing triple spiral bosses with connecting C-curves

quality surrounds the little figure panels on the constricted parts of the cross arms⁶ (fig 5b). In the same spaces on the reverse face a clumsier example of a close-knit three-cord plait confines the figure panels on that face (pl 6c). Lastly, there is an excellent example of a double interlocking diagonal step-pattern on the E face of the shaft. In the square and triangular open spaces of the pattern, there are separate interlace-work and trumpet designs.

The most interesting designs on the cross are, without doubt, those which incorporate the trumpet element in them. This elaborate form of decoration, which is characteristic of early Irish manuscript illumination, appears also on metalwork of contemporary date. Technically, however, it is not a style of ornament which is suitable for stone sculpture and on the St John's Cross there is a noticeable simplification of the details. Nevertheless, these carvings represent a competent and painstaking attempt to reproduce in stone, the divergent spiral patterns of manuscript decoration (pl 12a). The sculptor's intimate knowledge of this complex art system is quite evident in the masterly arrangement of each design.

The same artistic formula is also recognisable in the sculptured decoration of several other crosses in the neighbourhood of Iona. This group includes the so-called St Oran's Cross on Iona (pl 13), the Kildalton and Kilneave crosses on Islay and the cross at Keills in North Knapdale. The similarity in the character of the trumpet patterns on each monument is significant and seems to imply that the same craftsman was working on all five crosses. On the St John's Cross there is

an apparent difference in the workmanship of some of the adjoining designs. These particular panels of decoration consist of circular bosses around which snakes spiral and intertwine to form lively and complicated patterns (pl 12b). Though the designs are well contrived, they obviously lack the refinement and decorative quality of the other enrichment. Therefore, it seems probable that these simpler panels represent the handiwork of a less experienced assistant. After the erection of the cross it would be possible for two craftsmen to work on the project simultaneously, each

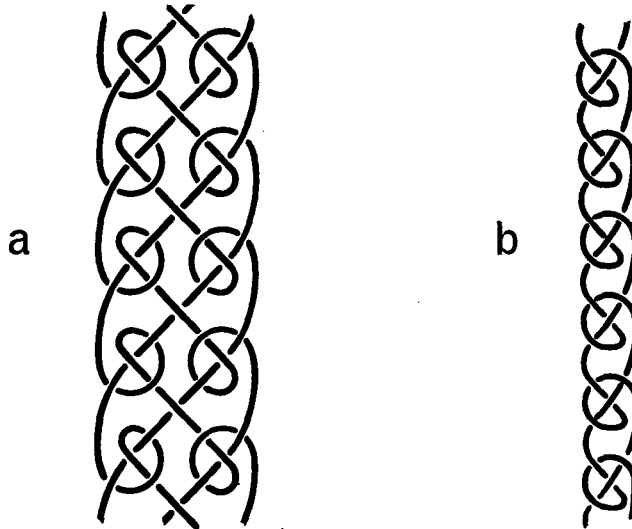


FIG 5 St John's Cross: interlace: a, border from W face of cross-shaft; b, border from constricted part of E face of cross-arm

working in his own style. As a result, the strange intermixture of techniques which is evident throughout the work is perhaps due to the two men exchanging positions as the work progressed.

The ornament on the St John's Cross is indisputably Irish in inspiration. Well-nigh every design on the cross is consistent in style with the work of Irish artists of the Early Christian period. A distinctive feature of their repertoire is the divergent spiral and trumpet motif which evidently derives its origin from an art of pre-Christian date. Although this particular element figures prominently in early Irish manuscript illumination and metalwork, its use in stone sculpture in Ireland is less evident. The probable reason is that this style of ornament, being essentially a linear art, is technically difficult to express in sculptural form. To overcome the problems, the Irish sculptors appear in most instances to show a preference for the chip-carving technique of the wood-carver or the metalworker. By this method, the principal lines of the design are emphasised by incising the field of the pattern. An outstanding example of this technique occurs in the enrichment of the South Cross at Ahenny in Tipperary. Its decoration includes spiral patterns which are very similar to those round the central roundel on the W face of the St John's Cross (pl 14b). Furthermore, the same designs, showing clearly the classic form of the patterns, are present on an ornamental page of the Lichfield Gospels (pl 14a).

However, in contrast to the Ahenny work, the designs on the St John's Cross are executed in quite a different manner. In this instance the ornament is not incised but carved in true relief. A significant feature of these carvings is the distinctive treatment of a particular detail in some of the designs. Without doubt, it is a mannerism which makes it possible to distinguish the handi-

work of an individual craftsman. More important is the fact that this characteristic is also evident in the decoration of all five crosses in the Argyll group.

This detail forms an integral part of the trumpet spiral pattern and the following illustrations show other interesting examples of the same feature. The first drawing is a detail from the

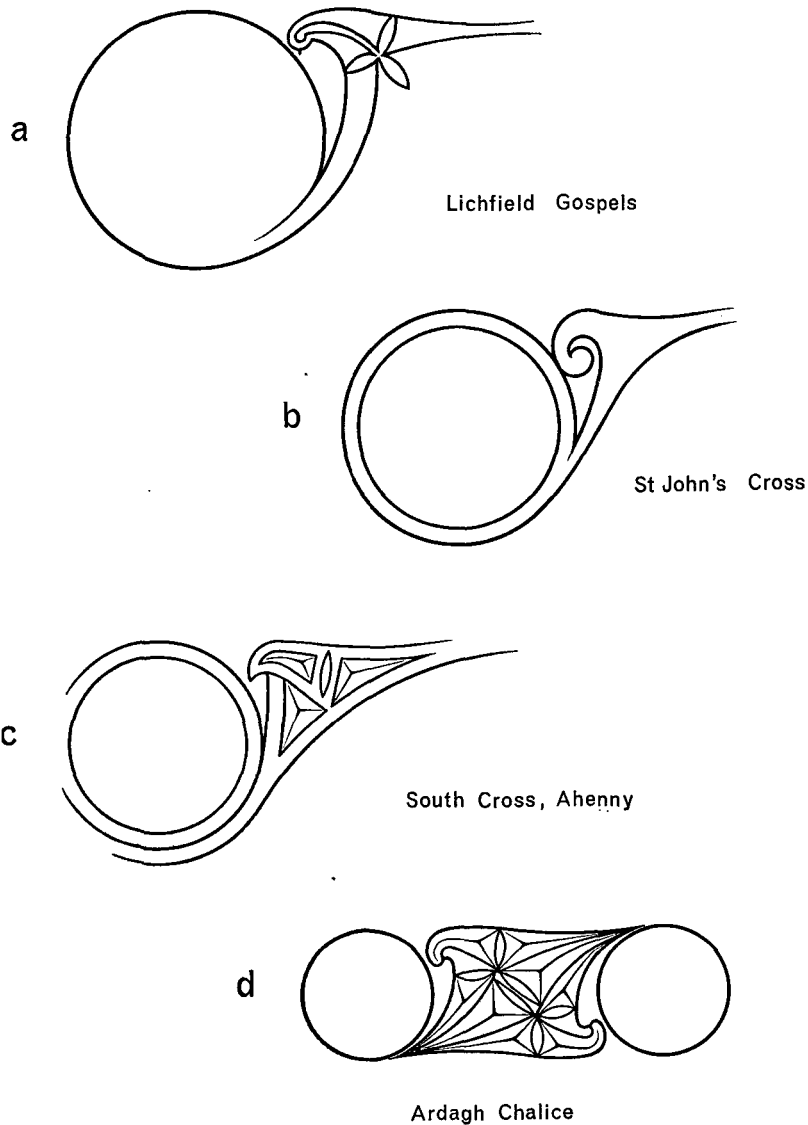


FIG 6 Comparative details

Lichfield Gospels which exemplifies the feature in its early form as it appears in manuscript illumination. It consists of a combination of four trumpets which are cleverly conjoined in order to maintain continuity in the trumpet spiral design (fig 6a). The next illustration showing the St John's Cross version has a similar form but a scroll-like terminal replaces the usual trumpet element (fig 6b). This feature appears to be a characteristic which is peculiar to the work of one

man, for it occurs only in the Iona group of crosses. The purpose of this modification is no doubt to give the ornament a form better suited to sculpture. All the evidence indicates that the craftsman in this instance was no mere copyist but an artist who was fully conversant with the art of illumination. His knowledge of this complex art system is evident not only in his ability to translate these patterns into sculptural form but at the same time to vary the details. Lastly, an example from the South Cross at Ahenny illustrates the technique favoured in Ireland to express the same type of decoration in stone (fig 6c). This particular technical treatment is clearly inspired by metal-work and it is well demonstrated in the enrichment of objects such as the Ardagh chalice (fig 6d).

On the Ahenny cross the workmanship suggests that the carver may have worked primarily with metal. In fact, the stone decoration is simply an enlarged version of a miniature prototype produced in metal. As for method, the choice would naturally be the one best known to the craftsman. The use of this distinctive technique in stone-carving appears to be confined solely to Ireland and to find evidence of it outside Irish territory is worthy of note. Therefore, the discovery of a fragment of a sculptured stone at Tarbat in Ross and Cromarty bearing ornament of the Irish chip-carving type is of considerable interest (NMAS cat no. 1B.130) (pl 14c). The presence of another slab in the same collection with an inscription in Hiberno-Saxon capitals supports the opinion that the former stone is of genuine Irish workmanship (NMAS cat no. 1B.286). It is equally significant that, beyond Argyll, Easter Ross seems to be the only other area in Scotland where any of the characteristic design elements of the St John's Cross occur. For instance, the trumpet spiral figures on the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab and the boss with divergent snakes is a feature of the cross-slab at Nigg. Then on the cross-slab at Shandwick, the decoration includes one of the few examples of the enrichment which consists of double rows of half-spherical bosses with connecting spirals. These three cross-slabs belong to a small group of monuments in N Pictland which are notable for the remarkable beauty of their decoration. Carved in bold relief, the designs combine Pictish features with elements which apparently belong to Irish and also Northumbrian art (Curle 1940, 113). These cross-slabs appear to represent an intermediate stage in the development of Pictish sculpture. They demonstrate how Pictish craftsmen were adopting ideas from a variety of sources and adapting them to meet their own artistic needs. One of these sources was certainly Iona and much of their inspiration must have been derived from the products of this artistic colony. Designs, transmitted probably in the form of illustrations, would reach this particular region of Pictland by way of the Great Glen. The new patterns were readily adopted by the local Pictish carvers who, by expressing them in their own individual manner, initiated what was eventually to become a national style of sculpture.

CONCLUSIONS

This investigation has shown that the decoration of the St John's Cross is based almost entirely on the elaborate patterns that are manifest in early Irish manuscripts. In the various compositions on the cross, five distinct elements are evident, the trumpet spiral being the most informative. The confident manner in which the designs of the latter type are produced is significant; it clearly indicates that at least one craftsman working at Iona was undoubtedly familiar with all the complexities of this particular art system. In fact, there is every indication that the sculptor was working in an art style which was actually in current fashion at the time of the erection of the cross. Furthermore, these trumpet spiral carvings clearly resemble in character the decoration which appears in several datable manuscripts. The works in mind are the Book of Durrow (late 7th century), the Lichfield Gospels (8th century) and some parts of the Book of Kells (late 8th century). Comparing the style of the ornament on the cross with that on the

aforementioned manuscripts, it seems reasonably certain that the St John's Cross belongs at the latest to the close of the 8th century. Certainly its trumpet spiral patterns display all the qualities of the purest and best examples of this elaborate art.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 The St John's Cross was scheduled as an Ancient Monument in 1938.
- 2 This work was carried out in the foundry of Mr George Mancini, Edinburgh, who produced the master replica in plaster of paris.
- 3 The synthetic stone replica was made and erected by Mr John R Scott and Mr John Lawrie of Exposag Limited, Edinburgh.
- 4 Several crosses on Iona have been constructed in this fashion, the method was no doubt adopted because of the lack of suitable stone on the island. St Oran's Cross is composed of three stones which are held together by mortise and tenon joints. There is evidence too to suggest that extension pieces were slotted on to the ends of the arms of the St Martin's Cross to lengthen the horizontal arms.
- 5 Mr Mancini, who has a wide experience in working with bronze, agrees with this theory.
- 6 The figure panels on the end slabs of the St Andrews sarcophagus are closely similar in effect.

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St John's Cross, Iona, E face
of synthetic stone replica
(photo S H Cruden)



Photographic reconstruction of St John's Cross showing surviving stonework



a St John's Cross: decorative border of central roundel on W face



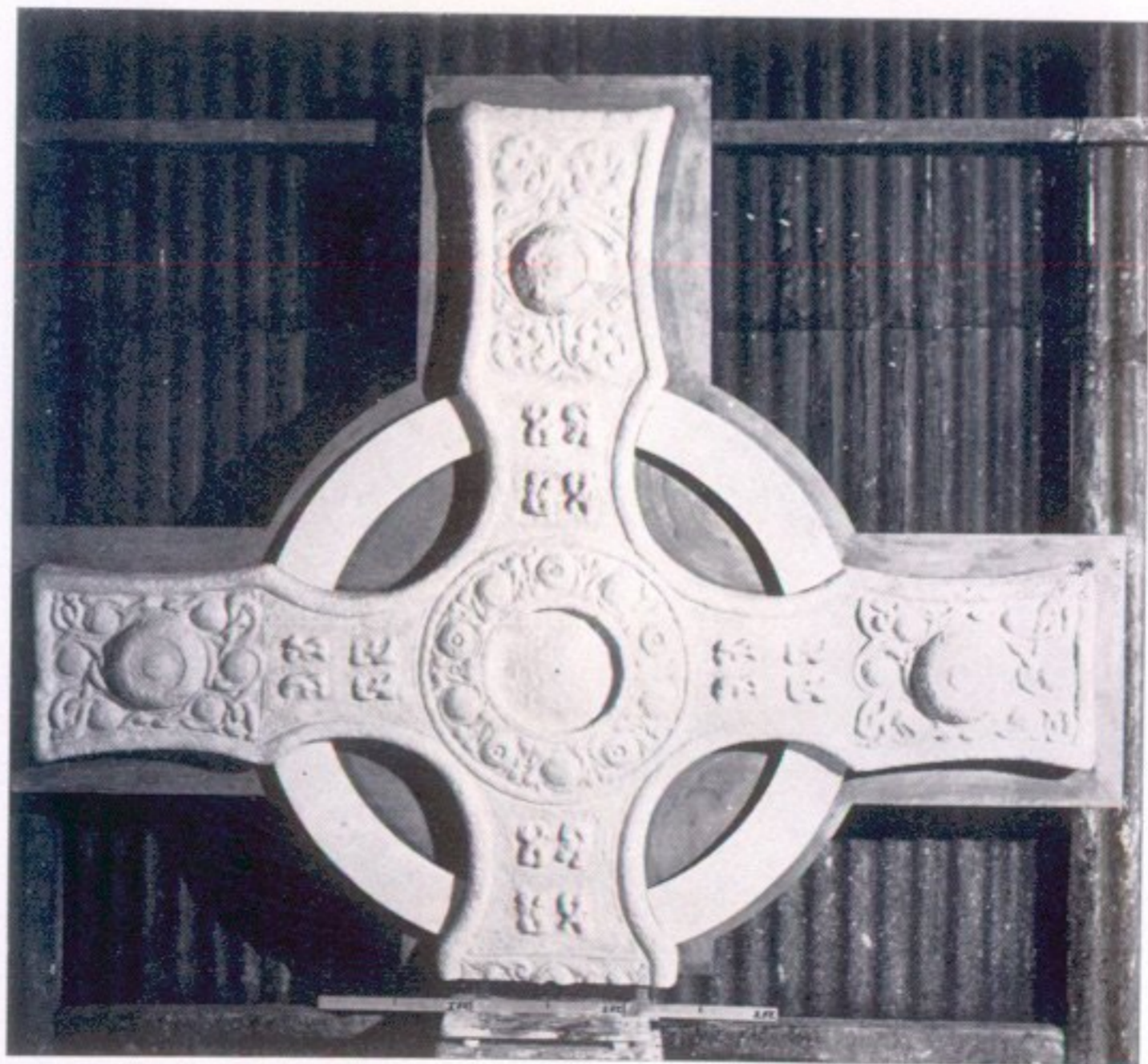
b St John's Cross: border of central roundel on E face



c St John's Cross: decoration on constricted part of cross-arm, W face



a W face



b E face

St John's Cross: reconstructed cross-head in stucco



a W face



b E face

St John's Cross: reconstructed cross-shaft in stucco



St John's Cross: master cast in stucco of complete cross



Kells, Meath, Ireland: the unfinished E cross (photo S H Cruden)

a St John's Cross: W face of top finial, 'Jacob wrestling with the Angel'



b Reconstruction



c E face of top finial. 'Two opposing beasts'



d Reconstruction





a St John's Cross: decoration of the horizontal cross-arms, W face



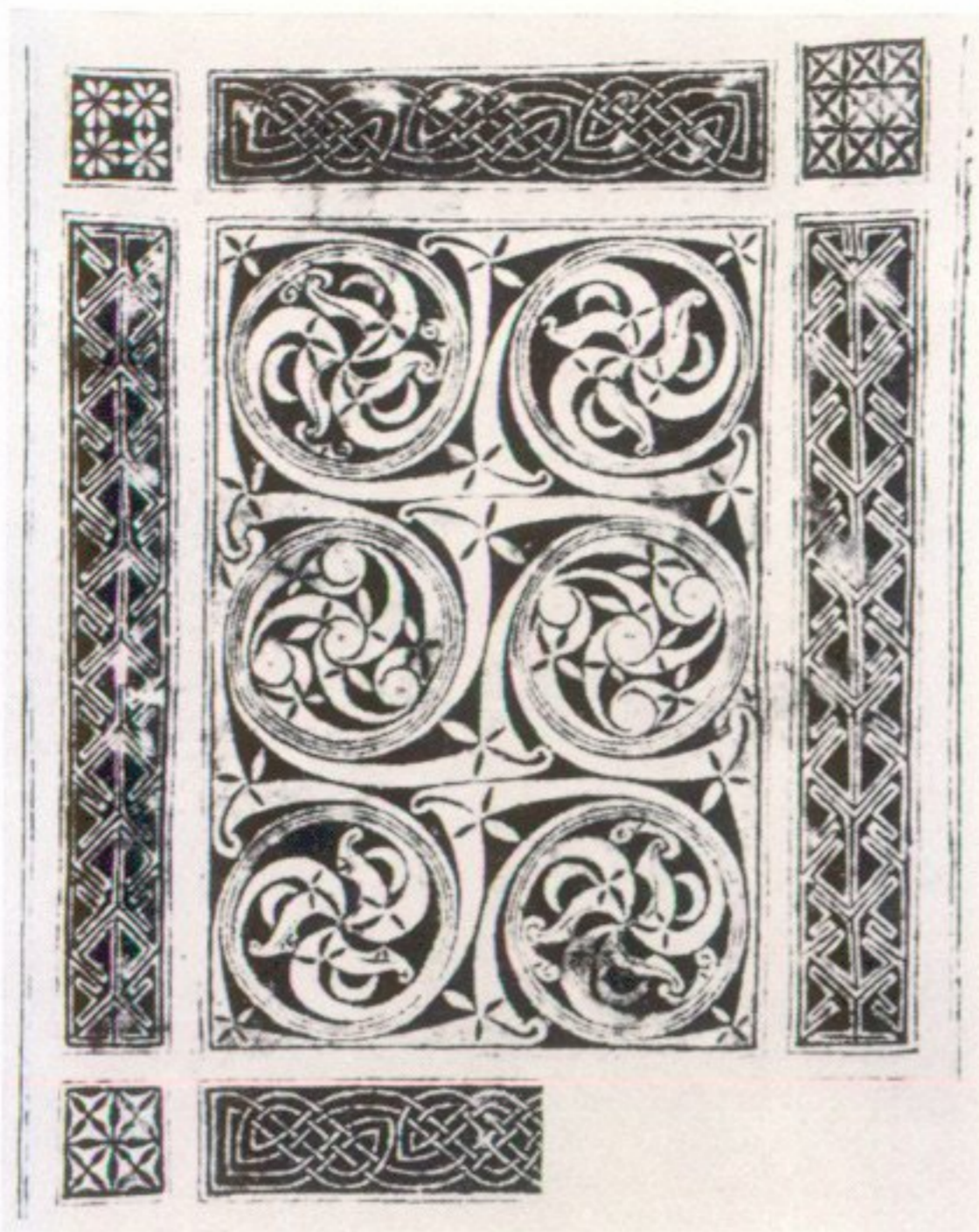
b St John's Cross: decoration of the horizontal cross-arms, E face



a and b St Oran's Cross, Iona: reconstructions showing mortises and tenons



c St Oran's Cross, Iona: surviving fragments



a Decorative page, Lichfield Gospels (photo Lichfield Cathedral)



b Detail, S cross, Ahenny, Tipperary, Ireland



c Tarbat, Ross and Cromarty: fragment of sculptured decoration of chip-carving type