CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	The Early Christian and later medieval ecclesiastical site at St Blane's Kingarth, Bute
Authors	Laing, Lloyd;Laing, Jennifer;Longley, David;MacDonald, Aidan D. S.
Publication date	1999-11-30
Original Citation	Laing, L., Laing, J., Longley, D., & Macdonald, A. D. S. (1999) 'The Early Christian and later medieval ecclesiastical site at St Blane's Kingarth, Bute', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 128, 551-565. https://doi.org/10.9750/PSAS.128.551.565
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.9750/PSAS.128.551.565 - 10.9750/PSAS.128.551.565
Rights	© Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
Download date	2026-10-10 17:34:16
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/14167

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Proc Soc Antiq Scot, 128 (1998), 551–565

The Early Christian and later medieval ecclesiastical site at St Blane's, Kingarth, Bute

Lloyd Laing*, Jennifer Laing† & David Longley‡
with a contribution by A D S Macdonald

ABSTRACT

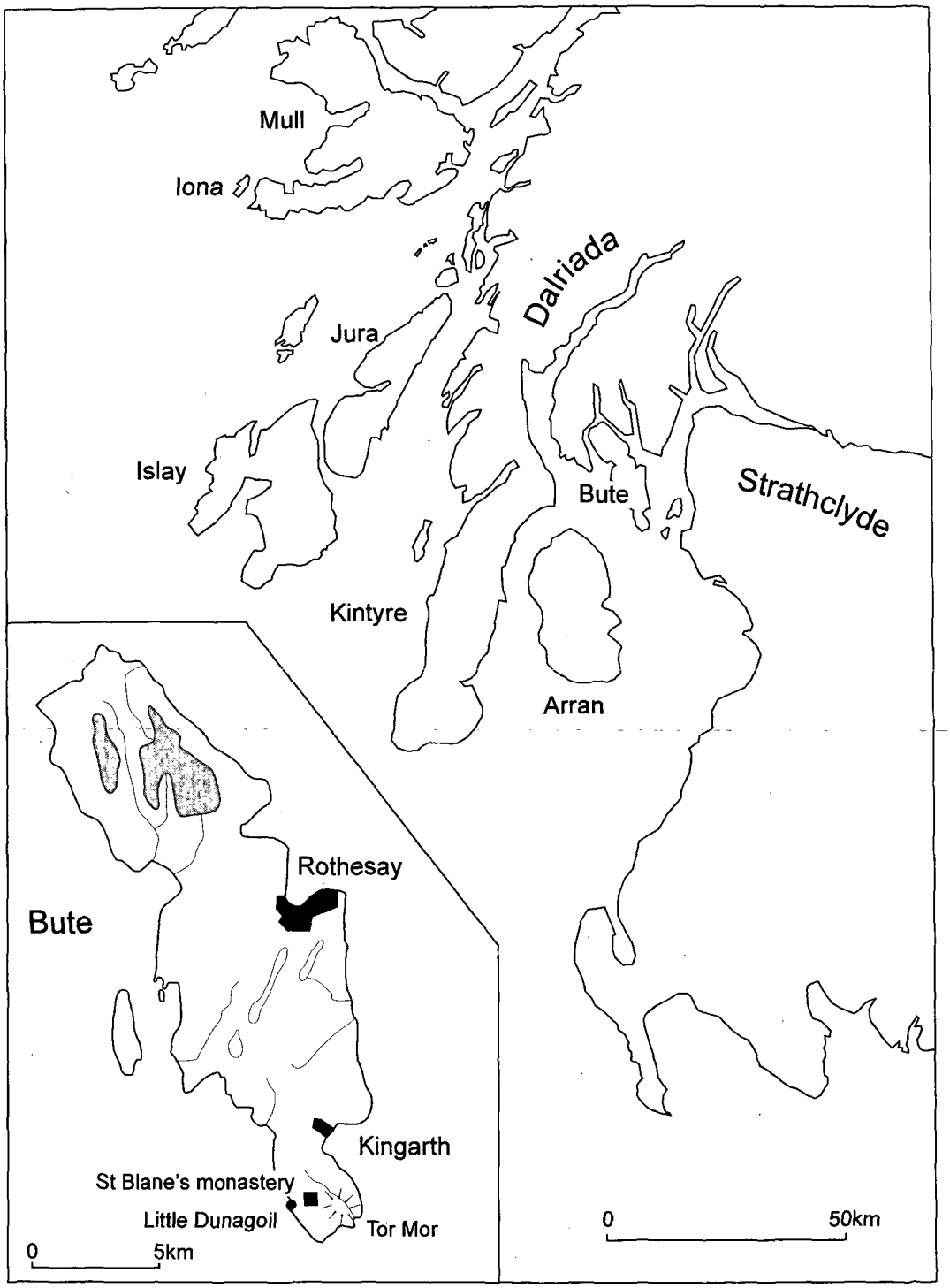
A reappraisal of the Early Christian monastic site of St Blane's, Kingarth, Isle of Bute, began in 1997. Following a week of field survey including geophysical work a limited area was excavated which had previously been investigated in 1896, south-west of the present churchyard, as well as one small cutting adjacent to the south-east corner of the churchyard. The documentary and other evidence for the early monastery is discussed and the results of both episodes of archaeological work — in 1896 and 1997 — are described.

INTRODUCTION

The monastic complex at St Blane's (NGR: NS 0945 534) lies near the southern tip of the Isle of Bute (illus 1), on a level site in a valley above Plan Farm (possibly from Latin *planum*). Building remains and other features of several periods extend over an area of some 2 ha (illus 3). These are largely contained by the 'cashel', remains of a massive wall enclosing about 1 ha. Since 1973, St Blane's has been in the care of the Secretary of State for Scotland (via Historic Scotland).

Within the cashel, two smaller, conjoined enclosures form the upper and lower churchyards. In the upper or more northerly of the two enclosures there is a medieval church with elements of 12th-century work throughout; immediately to the south of the church is a 'hogback' stone traditionally believed to mark the grave of St Blane (Hewison 1896, 183–5). This and other sculpture fragments from the churchyard form a fairly homogenous group which shows strong Viking influence and which can be assigned to the 10th/11th century (Allen & Anderson 1903; Anderson 1900; Laing 1998), though some stones recovered during excavations in the 1890s (below) are likely to be older. Other medieval sculpture from the site includes at least five grave slabs of 13th- to 15th-century date. The small unicameral building in the lower enclosure may also have been a chapel but, despite its small size and short proportions, is unlikely to be of early medieval date. The building remnants lying on the periphery of the cashel on the south-west side are also thought to be of later medieval or even post-medieval date and, east of the cashel, excavation of a corn-drying kiln recovered pottery of 12th/13th-century date (Milligan 1963).

* University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD
† 6 Main Street, Kelham, Newark NG23 5QP
‡ Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Craig Bueno, Fford y Garth, Gwynedd LL57 2RT



ILLUS 1 Site location map. (*Based on the Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright*)

The site has special significance for the history of archaeological studies in Scotland because of the antiquarian interest shown by the second Marquess of Bute in the 1870s and the archaeological techniques pioneered by the third Marquess and his architect Robert Weir Schultz in the 1890s. This earlier work is reviewed below in the context of more recent investigations by the present writers.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St Blane ('Bláán') was the nephew of St Cattan, traditionally the founder of the site and a contemporary of SS Comgall (d. 600) and Cainnech (d. 598) (Watson 1926, 165). The *Martyrology of Oengus*, the *Martyrology of Tallaght* — both written c 800 (Hughes 1966, 180) — and the *Martyrology of Gorman* all state that Blane was born on Bute in the sixth century. There is no surviving genealogy, though Watson (1926, 165) saw him as Irish-trained, working amongst his fellow Britons in Galloway and Fortriu. Dedications to Blane appear in Pictland and according to Fordun, writing in the 14th century, he was buried at Kingarth (*Scotichron* xi, 21). Cattan appears as *aidde Blááin* ('tutor of Blane') in the *Martyrology of Gorman*. He died around 600, probably 30 years before Blane.

Historical records show a number of abbots and bishops at Kingarth, which indicate its importance in the early medieval period (see discussion by Macdonald, below). It has been suggested that Kingarth was the centre of a seventh-century bishopric which became monastic in the eighth century (Radford 1967, 115–16).

It has been assumed in the past that the monastery was sacked by the Vikings and then restored during the period of Norse rule in Bute in the 11th century (eg Radford 1967, 116). However, the loss of recorded interest in the site in (Irish) sources in that period may have been due to Bute's being transferred from Dalriada to Strathclyde. Watson (1926, 165) suggested that Bute was British-held at the time the saint was hailed as *Bláán buadach Bretan* ('triumphant Blane of the Britons') in the *Martyrology of Gorman*. The development of the complex in the 10th and 11th centuries is attested by sculptures from Kingarth which have strong affinities with those of Strathclyde, particularly those of the Govan School. This may imply that the development of Kingarth at this time was political, connected with a shrine and cult of St Blane.

In 1204, Alan the Steward disposed of St Blane's Church to Paisley Abbey, though a papal bull of 1224 omits it from the list of Paisley's lands (Hewison 1893, 175).

The building known as the 'Manse' (below) appears to have been occupied until 1593 when the last incumbent, Sir James McWharty, was removed for Catholicism. St Blane's was the parish church until the 18th century; the churchyard was used into this century and weddings have taken place in the very recent past.

EARLY KINGARTH

Aidan D S Macdonald

In the historical record, the first notice seems to be the obit of Daniel, Bishop of Kingarth, c 659; his festival was on 18 February (Anderson 1922, vol I, 176–7: *Daniel episcopus Cinn Garadh*, AU 660.1; *Daniel espoc Cind Garadh*, AT; also in CS (656); FM 659; A CLON 656; Annals of Roscrea 129; *Daniel dondghel*, 'Daniel the princely-fair', glossed *epscop Cinn Garad*, 'bishop of Cenn Garad' (FG); *Daniel epscob Chinn Garadh*, AD 659 (MD)). It may be his son Noah who died in 675 (Anderson 1922, vol I, 183: *Mors Nóe m. Danel*, AU 675.3; *Mors Noi maic Dainel*, AT; also

in FM 673; A CLON 671). Murgal, son of Nóe who died in 711 may, in turn, have been the son of this Noah (*Murghal filius Noe moritur*, AU 711.6: not noticed by Anderson).

At 688 occurs the obit of Iolan, Bishop of Kingarth (Anderson 1922, vol I, 198–9: *Iolan episcopus Cinn Garath obiit*, AU 689.1; AT is garbled — *Iohannes espoc Cind Galaráth obit*; also in CS [685]; FM 688; *Annals of Roscrea*, 150).

Anderson (1922, vol I, 228) thought that the cleric Teimnen who died c 732 belonged to Kingarth. This seems doubtful. The form of the place-name is consistently *Cill Garadh*: *T Cille Garadh, religiosus clericus, quieuit*, AU 732.8; *T Cille Garadh*, AT; *T Cille Garadh*, FM 726 (O'Donovan also thought that Cill Garadh was in Scotland); *Tymnen of Kilgarad*, A CLON 729; *T Cille Garat*, Annals of Roscrea, 183. The prefix *Kin-* can and does stand for *Kil(l)* (ie *cill*) in the anglicized forms of Scottish place-names, but never, as far as I know, in Gaelic. Hogan (1910, 194), moreover, lists four places in Ireland called *cell garad(h)* and rejects the identification of this instance with Kingarth. There do not seem to be any other Scottish entries under 732 in AU. In AT, on the other hand, the entry immediately preceding Te(i)mnen's obit is presumably Irish; that immediately following is the obit of Nechtan mac Derile, King of the Picts.

Ronan, Abbot of Kingarth, died in 737 (Anderson 1922, vol I, 336: *Mors Ronain abbatis Cinn Garadh*, AU 737.1; *Bass Ronain, ab Cind Garadh*, AT; also in FM 732). Maelmanach, Abbot of Kingarth, died in 776 (Anderson 1922, vol I, 248: *Mors Maele Manach abbatis Cinn Garadh*, AU 776.6; also in FM 771, *Maolmaenaigh*). And in 790 the annals record the obit of Noah, Abbot of Kingarth (Anderson 1922, vol I, 254: *Mors Nóe abbatis Cinn Garadh*, AU 790.1; also in FM 785).

There seems to have been a significant change in the status of Kingarth in the late seventh or early eighth century, from episcopal to abbatial. And perhaps the most straightforward procedure is to accept at face value what the annals seem to be telling us. Some further observations need to be made, however, by way of qualification. The attribution by the martyrologies of episcopal status to Bláán might seem to confirm the original episcopal status of his church here. On the other hand, episcopal status might have been conferred upon him retrospectively, because the calendrical tradition as we have received it was crystallized at a time when bishops such as Daniel and Iolan ruled Kingarth. We cannot be sure that we have anything like a full list of the heads of the church of Kingarth from the mid seventh to the late eighth century. We do not know who is responsible for the record that we do have — Kingarth itself or another church — though it is certain that any community at Kingarth must have maintained at least a measure of literacy. And it can be suggested plausibly that the interest of the recording agency is in a particular family — that of bishop Daniel — rather than in the church as a whole. Not only are three generations of this family possibly identifiable from father to son between c 659 and 711; but the fact that the last recorded Abbot of Kingarth is called Noah suggests that he too may have been a member of the same family. Of course, we do not know the family affiliations of Bishop Iolan, or of Abbots Ronan and Maelmanach. But if they also belonged to the family of Bishop Daniel, it may be that the change of status of the church is more apparent than real, ie less a change of status of a church but rather a change of office within a family. The distinction may be a fine one, but such a shift of emphasis may obviate the problem of trying to account for an apparently fundamental change of institutional status for which neither the surviving documentary record nor the known historical background provides a satisfactory explanation.

Uncertainties abound: in the broader context, we do not know the position or connections of the church of Kingarth in relation to the churches of Dalriada, or Strathclyde, or other British or Gaelic churches of the south-west. But for a Scottish church (with the exception, of course, of Iona), the number of entries for Kingarth in the Irish annals from c 659 to 790 is noteworthy,

whatever the reasons. The final entry of 790 need not be taken as sinister: though many such churches may have suffered permanent or temporary damage at Viking (or other) hands in the late eighth or ninth centuries, loss of contact with the Irish centres of record seems just as likely to be the reason for the disappearance of Kingarth from the annals, and the disruption of communications caused, directly or indirectly, by Viking activity, is only one possible explanation for this. Loss of interest in Ireland for whatever reasons must also be considered; so must plain accident. Applecross, for example, is last mentioned by the annals in 802; Eigg, much earlier, in 752 (Anderson 1922, vol I, 258 & 240–1); but both churches survived in some form to achieve parochial status in the later Middle Ages (Cowan 1967, 7 & 100).

The place-name Kingarth (*Cinn Garadh*) seems to mean '(at) thicket/copse-head', perhaps 'denhead' (Watson 1926, 470–1). As so often, if that is the case, the name of an important church is not ecclesiastical, but rather derives from a (pre-existing?) topographical description of the site.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

WORK ON THE SITE IN 1874

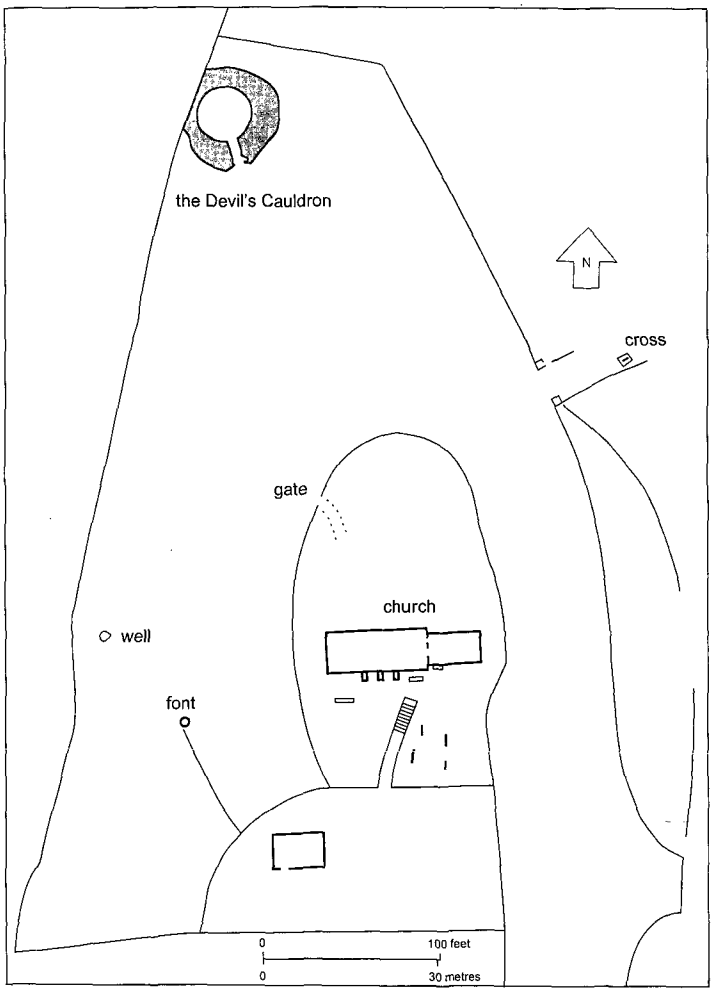
The steps between the upper and lower churchyards (illus 2) which are prominent today are shown on a plan of 1874 reproduced by Hewison (1893). It is notable that these end close to the hogback stone that traditionally marks St Blane's grave. Hewison indicates the pre–1874 limits of the churchyard by a broken line in the same way he denotes what is now the outer (rebuilt) precinct wall. However, no walling round the churchyard is visible in an 1850s engraving in *Wilson's Guide to Rothesay and the Isle of Bute* (1855, 129), nor in a painting by Horatio McCulloch executed between 1830 and 1833 (now in Bute Museum) nor in any of the late 19th-century photographs of the church in the Mount Stuart archive. The now curved south-east and south-west corners of the churchyard appear angled in Hewison's plan.

The present shape of the churchyards is likely therefore to reflect the fact that 'The [third] Marquess of Bute in 1874 had this romantic spot judiciously trimmed and enclosed' (Hewison 1893, 188). Slates were noted in the western side of the lower churchyard wall in 1997. Since the device of using slates to separate rebuilt masonry from ancient walling was used by the third Marquess of Bute at St Blane's Church and elsewhere, it is possible that parts of the extant churchyard walls pre-date 1874. However, since consolidation work on these walls is continually undertaken, further research is required to clarify this point.

THE 1896 EXCAVATIONS (ILLUS 2, 3 & 5)

In the late 19th century, stabilization of the ruined church was undertaken, but led to archaeological interest in the site generally (Anderson 1900, 307). Funding was a problem: a letter to Robert Weir Schultz (the architect who designed furniture for nearby Mount Stuart) from the Factor of Bute Estate asks plaintively 'Cannot you do with the one mason at St Blane's? Mason's wages in Rothesay just now are 10d an hour and they are practically not to be got' (quoted in Stamp 1981, 42).

Anderson (1900, 307) noted that during the work on the church, Schultz brought to the attention of the Marquess 'the remains of the thick wall of enclosure of the precinct, known locally as the "causeway" '. The exact location or nature of this feature remains conjectural at the time of writing, though it may be identifiable with feature II of the 1997 excavations or, more probably, with the rebuilt outer enclosure wall visible today (illus 3). Trenches were dug to trace



ILLUS 2 A plan of St Blane's churchyard in 1874 (*reproduced from Hewison 1893*)

its original line and 'the remains of a series of foundations of early dwellings were discovered, extending over a considerable area south of the churchyard and inside the enclosing wall of the precinct' (Anderson 1900, 308).

Detailed plans of this work survive in the archive at Mount Stuart, with copies in Bute Museum, Rothesay. The main area of excavation is shown by illus 3; and illus 5 shows Schultz's plan of the excavated features. The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Collection (NMRS) holds a letter by Schultz to Joseph Anderson (dated 14 February 1900) stating that the supervisor of the work, Mr [Mortimer] Pechell, intended to visit Anderson with '3 photographs showing the excavations'. It is unknown whether these still exist since Schultz added 'I fear that the negatives are now not available'. He also wrote that 'His Lordship desired me to ask you to state very clearly that the excavations are only temporarily suspended and that he eventually hopes to explore the whole site within the enclosing wall'. No further work was recorded, however, though

features visible in aerial photographs taken in 1973 by John Dewar (RCAHMS) suggest that unrecorded excavations took place at some period (illus 4).

THE 1896 PLANS (ILLUS 2 & 5)

The plans made for Schultz in 1896 make it clear that he focused on a group of building remnants south of the churchyard known as the 'Manse' and on adjacent areas of paving and walling. The areas of paving and walling could be interpreted as the remains of structures associated with cobbles and stone-lined rectangular pits (illus 5). At least one circular structure (and possibly a second) is apparent, but the plans probably represent remnants of several buildings from more than one phase of construction. The overall character of the remains is in keeping with both Early Christian period and later medieval industrial sites. Useful parallels are provided by the Early Christian period remains at Ronaldsway, Isle of Man (Laing & Laing 1988, fig 1), and Reask, County Kerry (Fanning 1981, fig 13). Comparison can also be made with the later medieval work-camp at Lochmaben Castle (Macdonald & Laing 1975, fig 6). One stone-lined structure at the 'Manse' is described as filled with wood ash. This and other features could represent medieval open-air ovens which can be compared with 14th/15th-century examples at Rattray, Aberdeenshire (Murray & Murray 1993, 125–7) or the 13th-century example at Cruggleton, near Whithorn (Ewart 1985, 33–4). The flooring of one feature (illus 5) in the north-east corner of Schultz's largest excavated area was a worked slab, probably reused.

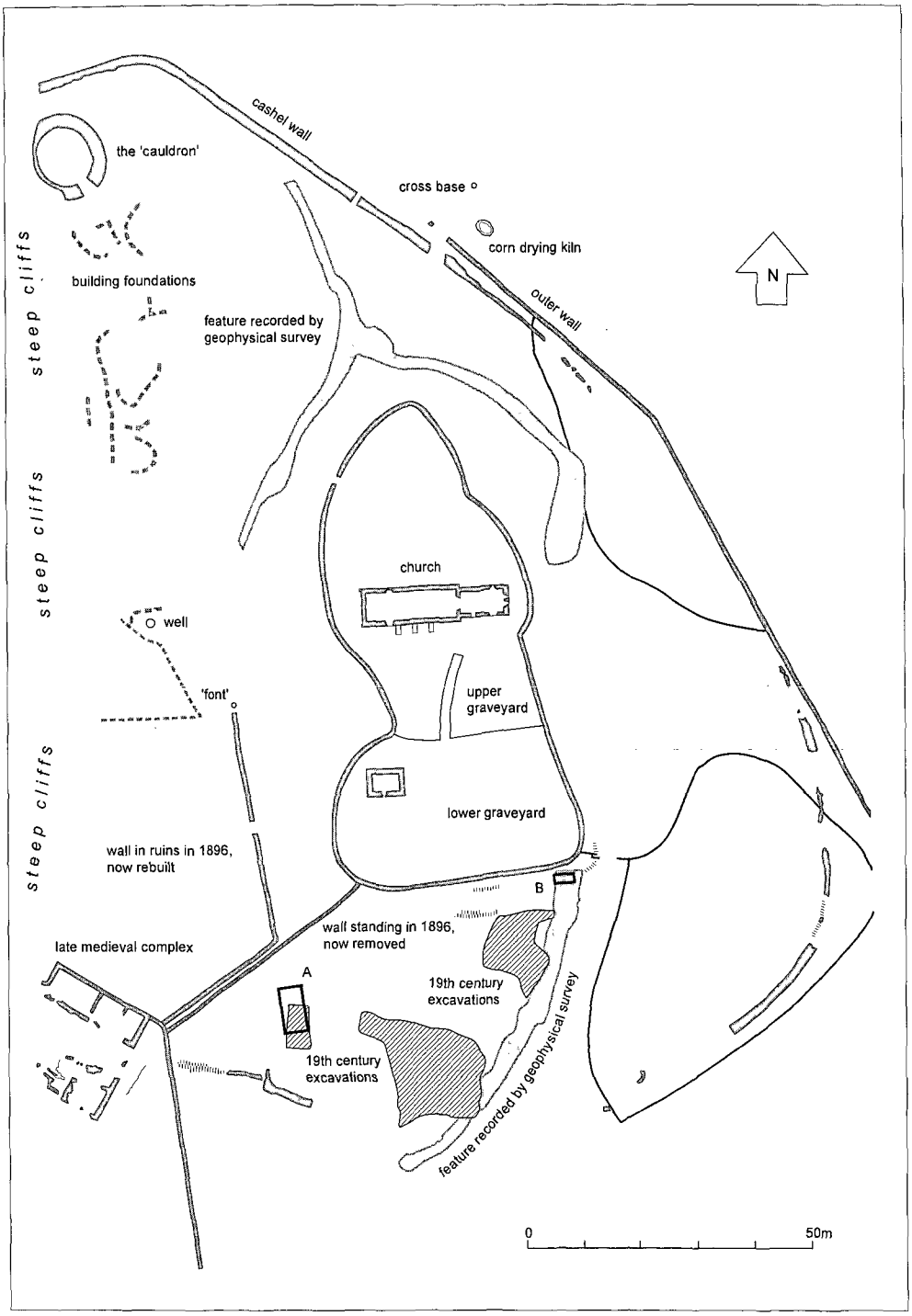
FINDS MADE PRIOR TO 1997 (ILLUS 6)

Finds were made during the 1896 excavations and surface collection was carried out by members of the Bute Natural History Society in 1985 (when a number of medieval sherds were recovered). The majority of objects are in the National Museums of Scotland (NMS GQ1–66), and most were published (though not all illustrated) by Anderson (1900). Two crucibles, pieces of lignite, a whetstone, medieval and later sherds, flints and pieces of slag are in Bute Museum, Rothesay. Some items are published here for the first time (illus 6 a–f).

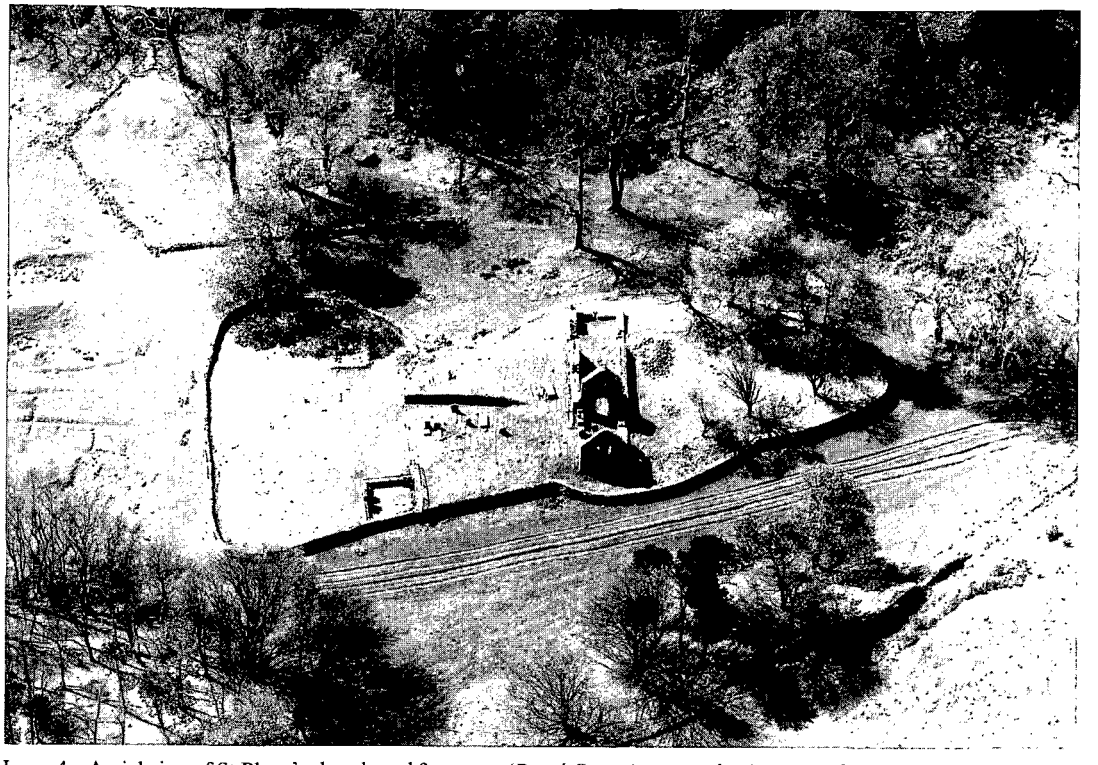
The majority of the finds are indicative of artistic and industrial activity on the site. Of the 1896 finds the most noteworthy were pieces of slate, presumed to be motif pieces from the various designs displayed on them. Some of these bear inscriptions or sketches or a combination of both. Two have peg holes (Anderson 1900, figs 11–12), indicative of roofing slates.

Roughly incised patterns are discernible on one piece of lignite in the National Museums of Scotland (NMS GQ50) and on others in Bute Museum (illus 6 c–d). These items may have been by-products of the manufacture of bracelets and rings (eg illus 6 e). It is likely that lignite was being worked at Kingarth into a variety of objects such as flat rings, and bracelets of D-shaped section (Anderson 1900, 311), a type common in Early Christian times (but also in other periods). Several pieces are from unfinished objects. From its high quality, the source of the lignite is likely to have been in Ayrshire rather than local.

The worked lignite at Kingarth compares very closely with that encountered in the excavation of two longhouses at the nearby fort of Little Dunagoil. Both sites produced pieces incised with graffiti. Graffiti found at Little Dunagoil are published by Marshall (1964, pl 15, 1–3). The lignite working at Little Dunagoil appears to have been contemporaneous with the longhouses. The dating of these is problematic — they were associated with pottery of 13th/14th-century date and a rim sherd of what appears to be a type of Carolingian cooking pot imported from France in the ninth century (Marshall 1964, pl 20, 4; for the type see Laing 1974, 187 &



ILLUS 3 General plan of the churchyard showing geophysical survey anomalies and areas excavated in 1997; also areas excavated in 1896 (*after Schultz 1896*)

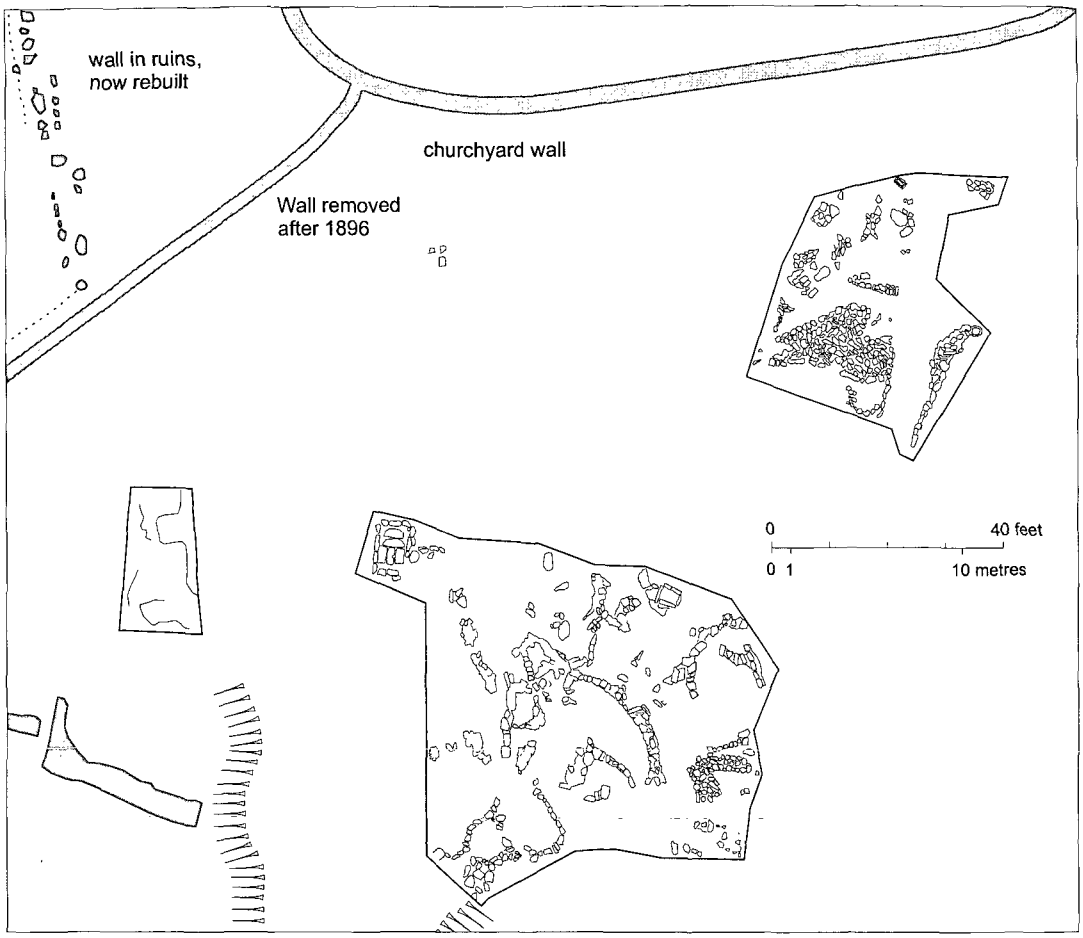


ILLUS 4 Aerial view of St Blane's churchyard from east (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland © Crown copyright*)

fig 3). Comparable material has been published from a kiln site at Saran, Loiret (Chapelot 1971, fig 21).

The motif pieces have recently been reappraised (Laing 1997, 131–4) but the epigraphy cannot assign a date to them closer than between the ninth and the 12th centuries. Such motif pieces are common on sites of the Viking period and earlier in Ireland (cf O'Meadhra 1979; 1987; 1987a) but rare in Britain, the only non-Viking examples in Scotland being those from Dunadd, Argyll, and one from Dervaig, Mull (Laing 1997, 128). They are well represented on monastic sites in Ireland, notably Nendrum, County Down (Lawlor 1925), and in such cases are assumed to be trial designs for ornamental work in metalwork and other media. The designs can be compared with some of those in the King's Cave, Arran (Laing 1997, 135–8), and to those from Tintagel, Cornwall (Laing 1997, 134), as well as to a series of medieval graffiti in England (Pritchard 1967, 32–7 especially, where the continuing use of interlace is discussed).

There is evidence of metal-working. The ingot mould which was found in 1896 (NMS GQ39) is readily paralleled on Early Christian period sites such as Dunadd (Craw 1930, fig 6.8) and the Mote of Mark (Laing & Longley, in prep). Of the crucibles in Bute Museum one survives only as a base (illus 6 b); the other is intact (illus 6 a) and of a handled type encountered in the Early Christian period (Laing 1975, type 8, fig 73.1). The type is represented at Ballinderry 2 crannog, County Offaly (Hencken 1942, fig 25) and in a slightly variant form at Dunadd (NMS GP223–24).



ILLUS 5 Detailed plan of the areas excavated in 1896 by the Marquess of Bute's architect, Robert Weir Schultz

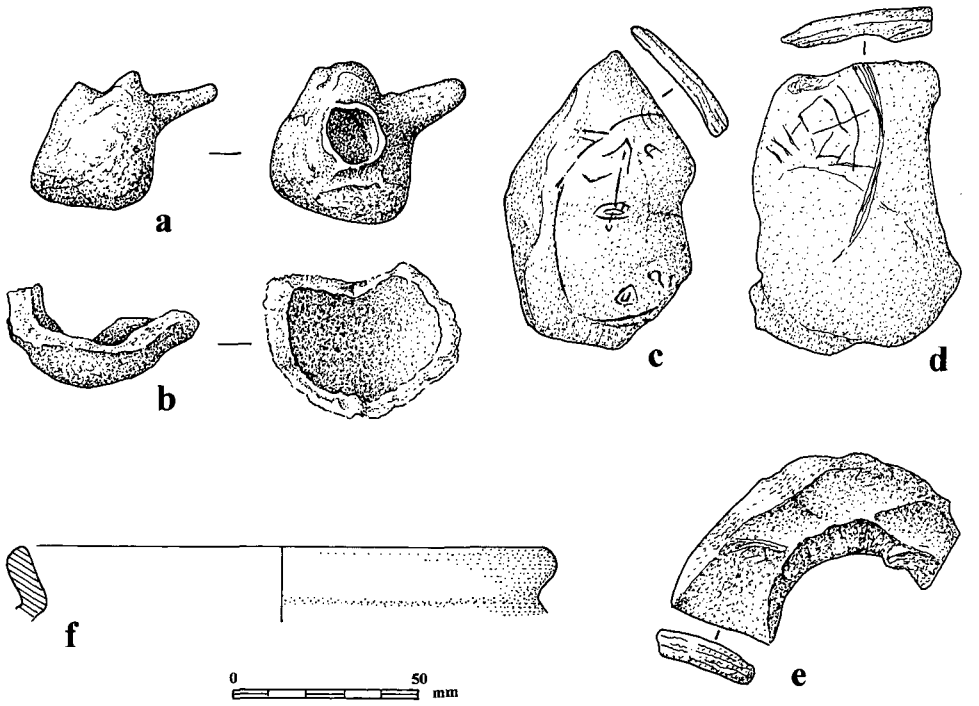
Sherds of 13th- to 16th-century pottery include one tentatively identified as 'E Ware' (illus 6 f), though a similar form is also found in the Scottish medieval cooking pot series (Laing 1974, type 5). Another body sherd may have come from a similar vessel. Thin-sectioning would be necessary to ascertain the identification.

A number of flint tools may be reused prehistoric implements, a relatively common feature on medieval, especially Early Christian period, sites, such as the Mote of Mark, Kirkcudbright (Laing & Longley, in prep).

Hill & Kucharski (1990) have drawn attention to the plough-pebbles from Kingarth, and their association with early monasteries, notably Melrose and Whithorn. They have suggested that use of mouldboard ploughs in the early Middle Ages may have been a feature of monasteries.

The whetstones illustrated by Anderson are similar to examples of early medieval date from a number of excavated sites including Whithorn, Galloway (Hill 1997, fig 10), Reask, County Kerry (Fanning 1981, fig 25), Dunadd (Craw 1930, fig 6.1) and the Mote of Mark (Laing & Longley, in prep).

The finds also included a spindle whorl and pieces of antler.



ILLUS 6 A selection of the objects found at St Blane's before 1997: crucibles (a & b); trial motifs incised on lignite (c & d); lignite bracelet (e); E ware (f)

In 1863, adjacent to the site at NGR: NS 0976 5326, a hoard was found, comprising 27 coins, deposited in the mid 12th century (NMS FE39–44). It has been discussed by Grieg (1940, fig 58) and Graham-Campbell (1995, 165–6).

INVESTIGATIONS IN 1997

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

A geophysical survey was carried out by Patrick Strange in April 1997, covering an area of 2200 sq m to the north of the churchyard and another of 2500 sq m to the south. Readings were taken at 1 m intervals using a Geoscan RM4 resistivity meter, with computer enhancement of the resultant plot.

The Geoscan RM4 recorded a number of indeterminate anomalies south of the churchyard, where the 1896 excavations recorded stone structures. (A preliminary scan of this area with a fluxgate gradiometer also registered a number of areas of high readings.)

North of the churchyard two predominant bands of high resistance (skirting the north-east and north-west sides of the churchyard wall) joined to run northwards in a Y-shape (feature I, illus 3). The north-west spur of this feature appeared to line up with a further line of high resistance which curved from the south-east corner of the churchyard to the rock (feature II, illus 3). Schultz's excavation plan suggests that the positioning of the 1896 excavations was partly determined by knowledge of this feature's existence. Further geophysical investigation would address this, but excavation may ultimately be required for resolution.

THE 1997 EXCAVATIONS

For 10 days during August 1997 an area of 8 m by 4 m (Area A, illus 3) was re-excavated in the hope of recovering any finds the Victorians had discarded or overlooked, and of reappraising structures that they might have left intact. The large number of features visible on the Royal Commission's 1973 aerial photographs indicates the extent to which the present level surface was flattened during landscaping in 1985 (illus 4). It was assumed that this had taken the form of backfilling the partly covered Victorian cuttings using their original spoil mounds. The main 1997 cutting was calculated to coincide as closely as possible (given that the walls had been rebuilt and one demolished since the 19th century) with the most westerly of Schultz's cuttings, which was still visible on the 1973 photographs. Unexpectedly, almost immediately under the turf extending over the entire cutting, many tons of modern industrial waste, including pieces of tarmac, were encountered to a depth of up to nearly a metre. The presence of a field drain, laid immediately prior to the dumping of the waste, indicates the extent of the disturbance which probably took place in 1985. No definite trace of Victorian work was found before the excavation ended.

The 1997 finds (all in disturbed contexts) included sherds of 13th/14th-century pottery, featureless pieces of lignite, pieces of roofing slates and a modern jam-jar.

A second cutting, measuring 1.5 m by 3.5 m, adjacent to the south-east corner of the churchyard (Area B, illus 3) showed that the geophysical anomaly here was caused by a broad band of large stones (feature II). A scatter of boulders and stones to the east of the cutting lay on a bed of sand resembling builders' material. Roofing slates and one glazed, decorated sherd of 19th-century ware were recovered from between these boulders. In the west, the boulders continued to a greater depth, but were left unexcavated. The sand may be a remnant of the building activity at the south-east corner of the churchyard which was undertaken in 1874.

THE MONASTIC LAYOUT

Despite the 19th-century trimming and enclosing, and consolidation and landscaping works since then, it is possible to suggest that the surviving remains represent traces of a monastic arrangement similar to that in Period I (pre-730) at Whithorn in Galloway. Here, Hill (1997, 67) defined inner and outer zones, the former being divided by chords, the outer being separated by radial segments. The boundaries and internal divisions were generally insubstantial, but Hill noted that their persistence reflected the enduring organization of the site (*ibid*).

Feature I (the Y-shaped geophysical anomaly) and feature II at Kingarth could together represent an early phase of inner monastic enclosures, with feature II perhaps a boundary within the outer zone. Within these, the shape of the upper churchyard at Kingarth (albeit defined or redefined in 1874) could represent a circular or oval enclosure around the church with a northern extension which was slightly redefined in the north-east in 1874.

One explanation for the lower churchyard would be that it was originally a separate, oval enclosure. It is tempting to postulate that these may have been graveyards enclosing shrines to St Blane and St Cattan, although there is a long-established tradition (without supporting evidence at present) that the upper churchyard at Kingarth was for the burial of men, the lower for women.

The evidence for double precincts in sixth-century monasteries has been reviewed by Hill (1997, 34–5) and by Swan (1985), and includes the sites at Kiltiernan, County Galway, and Nendrum, County Down. The idea of segregating the sexes in graveyards is well attested in the medieval period, the classic example for present purposes being the women's cemetery at

St Ronan's, Iona. Here, it has been proposed that segregated burial in the Early Modern period perpetuated a practice established in the time of the Irish monastic community (O'Sullivan 1994, 360).

Further, non-invasive research is planned on the monastic layout at Kingarth, and will include such features as the 'Cauldron' (an enigmatic feature resembling an Iron Age dun, which was cleared ready for excavation on Schultz's orders in 1896).

CONCLUSIONS

Structural, cartographic, documentary, geophysical and archaeological evidence attests the use of the important monastic site at Kingarth from the sixth century to the present day. It has close parallels in a number of medieval and Early Christian sites and has produced evidence of artistic and industrial activity including sculpture, metal-working and the manufacture of lignite objects including jewellery. The monastic layout is potentially paralleled at Whithorn and research so far has pointed to a complex sequence of development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was carried out by a team of Nottingham University students and staff from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, assisted by members of the Bute Natural History Society, including Ian Maclagan of the Marshall Trust. Permission to carry out the work was very kindly granted by Bute Estate Ltd and Mr & Mrs Hill of Plan Farm. We are indebted to the National Museums of Scotland, the National Monuments Record of Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland for help in data collection, and to Patrick Strange for his work on the geophysical survey. We are very grateful to Anne Spiers of Bute Museum for organizing considerable help throughout the project and to Marianne Longley for site recording. Historic Scotland granted permission to excavate, gave practical help and a grant towards the costs. Other grants were generously given by the John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust, and the Dr J N Marshall (Island of Bute Memorial) Trust. A very generous donation of equipment was made by M & K McLeod, Builders. Throughout, Mr & Mrs Hill of Plan Farm and Mr & Mrs Bryden at St Blane's Hotel, Kilchattan, afforded much-appreciated practical help and encouragement for the project. Andrew MacLean, archivist at Mount Stuart, very kindly discussed the project and gave access to 19th-century plans and photographs.

REFERENCES

A CLON Murphy, D (ed) 1896 *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*. Dublin.

Allen, J R & Anderson, J 1903 *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland.* Edinburgh.

Anderson, A O 1922 *Early Sources of Scottish History, AD 500 to 1286*, 2 vols. Edinburgh & London.

Anderson, J 1900 'Description of a collection of objects found in excavations at St Blane's', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 34 (1899–1900), 307–25.

CS Hennessey, W M (ed) 1866 *Chronicon Scotorum*. London.

Annals of Roscrea Gleeson, D & MacAirt, S (eds) 1979 'The Annals of Roscrea', *Proc Roy Ir Acad* 59C (1957–9), 137–80.

AT Stokes, W (ed) 1896–97 'The Annals of Tigernach', *Revue Celtique,* 17 (1896), 119–263, 337–420; 18 (1897), 9–59, 150–98, 267–303.

AU MacAirt, S & MacNiocaill, G (eds) 1983 *The Annals of Ulster (to AD 1131)*. Dublin.

Chapelot, J 1971 'L'atelier ceramique Carolingiene de Saran (Loiret): rapport préliminaire de fouille (1969–72)', *Bulletin Société Archéologie et Histoire de l'Orléanais*, new ser 6 (1971), 49–72.

Cowan, I B 1967 *The Parishes of Medieval Scotland.* Edinburgh.

Craw, H 1930 'Excavations at Dunadd and at other sites on the Poltalloch Estates, Argyll', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 69 (1929–30), 111–46.

Ewart, G 1985 *Cruggleton Castle: report of excavations 1978–81.* Dumfries.

FG Stokes, W (ed) 1895 *Félire Húi Gormáin: the martyrology of Gorman.* London.

FM O'Donovan, J (ed) 1854 *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters.* Dublin.

FO Stokes, W (ed) 1905 *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé: the martyrology of Oengus the Culdee.* London; repr Dublin 1984.

Fanning, T 1981 'Excavations at Reask, Co Kerry', *Proc Roy Ir Acad,* 81C (1981), 67–172.

Graham-Campbell, J 1995 *Viking Age Gold and Silver of Scotland (AD 850–1100).* Edinburgh.

Grieg, S 1940 *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, Part II, Scotland.* Oslo.

Hencken, H O'Neill 1942 'Balinderry 2 Crannog', *Proc Roy Ir Acad,* 47C (1942), 1–75.

Hewison, J K 1893 *The Isle of Bute in the Olden Time,* I. Edinburgh.

Hill, P 1997 *Whithorn and St Ninian: the excavation of a monastic town, 1984–91,* Stroud.

Hill, P & Kucharski, K 1990 'Early medieval ploughing and the chronology of plough-pebbles', *Trans Dumfriesshire Galloway Natur Hist Antiq Soc,* 65 (1990), 73–83.

Hogan, E 1910 *Onomasticon Goedelicum.* Dublin.

Hughes, K 1966 *The Church in Early Irish Society.* London.

Laing, L 1974 'The origins of the Scottish medieval pottery industry', *Archaeol J,* 130 (1974), 183–216.

Laing, L 1975 *The Archaeology of Late Celtic Britain and Ireland,* c AD 400–1200. London.

Laing, L 1997 'Alternative Celtic art — early medieval non-Pictish sketches on stone in Britain', *Studia Celtica,* 30 (1996), 127–46.

Laing, L 1998 'The early medieval sculptures from St Blane's, Kingarth, Bute', *Pictish Arts Soc J,* 12 (1998), 19–23.

Laing, L & Laing, J 1988 'The Early Christian period settlement at Ronaldsway, Isle of Man: a reappraisal', *Proc Isle of Man Natur Hist Antiq Soc,* 9 (3) (1988), 389–415.

Lawlor, H C 1925 *The Monastery of St Mochaoi of Nendrum.* Belfast.

Macdonald, A D S & Laing, L R 1975 'Excavations at Lochmaben Castle, Dumfriesshire', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 106 (1974–5), 124–57.

Marshall, D N 1964 'Report on the excavations at Little Dunagoil', *Trans Bute Natur Hist Soc,* 16 (1964), 1–69.

Marshall, D N 1992 *History of Bute.* Rev edn. Rothesay.

MD Todd, J H & Reeves, W (eds) 1864 *The Martyrology of Donegal.* Dublin.

Milligan, I D 1963 'St Blane's, Kingarth', *Trans Bute Natur Hist Soc,* 15 (1963), 55–7.

MT Best, R I & Lawlor, H J (eds) 1931 *The Martyrology of Tallaght.* London.

Murray, H K & Murray, J C 1993 'Excavations at Rattray, Aberdeenshire, a Scottish deserted burgh', *Medieval Archaeol,* 37 (1993), 109–218.

O'Meadhra, U 1979 *Early Christian, Viking and Romanesque Art: motif pieces from Ireland.* Stockholm.

O'Meadhra, U 1987 'Irish, Insular, Saxon and Scandinavian elements in the motif-pieces from Ireland', *in* Ryan, M (ed) *Ireland and Insular Art AD 500–1200,* 15–65. Dublin.

O'Sullivan, J 1994 'The excavation of an early church and a women's cemetery at St Ronan's medieval parish church, Iona', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 124 (1994), 327–68.

Pritchard, V 1967 *English Medieval Graffiti.* Oxford.

Radford, C A R 1967 'The early church in Strathclyde and Galloway', *Medieval Archaeol,* 11 (1967), 105–26.

Stamp, G 1981 *Robert Weir Schultz, Architect, and His Work for the Marquesses of Bute.* Curwen Press.

Swan, L 1985 'Monastic proto-towns in early medieval Ireland: the evidence of aerial photography, plan analysis and survey', *in* Clarke, H B & Simms, A (eds), *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in*

Non-Roman Europe: Ireland, Wales, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Russia from the ninth to the thirteenth century, 77–102. Oxford.

Watson, W J 1926 *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*. Edinburgh & London.

Wilson, 1855 *Wilson's Guide to Rothesay and the Isle of Bute*. Rothesay.