



## **Saint Columba's cell discovered by scientists on Scottish island of Iona**

The remains of a wooden hut used by Saint Columba, who is widely credited with bringing Christianity to Scotland, have been discovered on the island of Iona.

Archaeologists have used radiocarbon dating to place

samples of burned wood in the middle of Columba's time there almost 1,500 years ago.

The charred remains of a 'cell' were excavated in 1957, but it has taken until now for science to date them accurately.

The cell, or scriptorium, is where St. Columba worked, prayed and spent his last day.

Columba – whose Gaelic name is Colum Cille, meaning 'the dove of the Church' - arrived on Iona from Ireland in the year 563.

His vision led to Iona Abbey, which became a centre of literacy, learning and worship, and after his death Iona became a place of pilgrimage for kings and commoners. Some 60,000 members of the public and pilgrims today visit the rebuilt abbey every year.

Columba's successor Adomnán, writing 100 years after the saint's death, described him working in his cell on a rocky knoll called Tòrr an Aba - 'the mound of the abbot' - and sixty years ago the site was excavated by a team led by the Cornish historian and archaeologist Charles Thomas.

That was near the beginning of Thomas's career, which saw him become the leading archaeologist of early Christianity in Britain and Ireland, with posts at Edinburgh, Leicester and Exeter universities.

In 1957, on Tòrr an Aba, diggers found hazel charcoal, apparently the remains of a wattle hut.

According to the **BBC**, the site had been deliberately covered with beach pebbles and there was a hole where a post - possibly a cross - had been placed.

Thomas took the remains with him from university to university. After he retired he stored them in his garage in Truro, which is where they stayed until five years ago when a project led by University of Glasgow archaeologists Dr Ewan Campbell and Dr Adrián Maldonado took up the cause.

Thomas happily handed them over for testing using radiocarbon techniques of an accuracy unimaginable six decades ago.

The project was funded by Historic Environment Scotland and supported by the National Trust for Scotland. It saw the samples tested by the

Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre.

The result was that the remains of the hazel stakes date the hut between the years 540 and 650. Columba died in 597.

## **The late Valerie Jones remembered as author royalties presented to charity**

The memory of the late Dr Valerie Jones was honoured on Friday last (July 7) when the author royalties of her book 'Rebel Prods: The Forgotten Story of Protestant Radical Nationalists and the 1916 Rising' were presented to the Irish Cancer Society.

Valerie's daughter, Dr Heather Jones, presented a cheque for €1,000 to the Irish Cancer Society. This is in addition to €1,125 donated to the organization from royalties of sales of the book from the Church of Ireland website.

Valerie was a former lecturer at the Church of Ireland College of Education and Diocesan Communications Officer for Dublin & Glendalough. Her book was launched in November 2016 and has been very well received. Valerie died in February 2014 and the



**Erich Steyard, Irish Cancer Society Fundraising Administer, Dr Susan Hood, Librarian and Archivist with the RCB Library; Dr Heather Jones; Brenda McCarthy, Irish Cancer Society Community Fundraiser; the Rt Revd John McDowell, Bishop of Clogher at the presentation of the author royalties from the sale of the late Dr Valerie Jones's book 'Rebel Prods'.**

book was brought to fruition by Heather, an Associate Professor in History at the London School of Economics, and her son Mark. It is published by Ashfield Press and its publication was supported by the Church of

Ireland's Historical Centenaries Working Group as one of its several contributions to marking the centenaries of 1916.

Heather was joined in presenting the cheque by the Bishop John McDowell (Clogher), former chairperson of the Church of Ireland Historical Centenaries Working Group, and Dr Susan Hood, Librarian and Archivist at the RCB Library.

Heather thanked Bishop McDowell and Dr Hood for all their support and help in publishing the book. She said her mother had been researching the book since 2001 and she and her brother had promised to see that it was published. "It's really nice to see the culmination of all my mother's hard work being put to good use for a good cause. Other families experiencing cancer will benefit from this," she said.

Bishop McDowell said it was a great privilege to be associated with the publication of the book. "As well as the sentimental connections to Valerie, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that this is a first rate book which begins to fill a gap in the historiography of the period," he stated. Dr Hood noted the very positive impact that the Church of Ireland Online Bookstore had on sales of the book. She added, "This book provides an interesting insight into Irish history written by a

fondly remembered member of the Church of Ireland community.”

Brenda McCarthy, Community Fundraiser with the Irish Cancer Society, said the donation of the author royalties was a fantastic way to honour Valerie. She outlined the work of the organization in prevention, services and research and said 98 percent of their funding came from donations.

“We are so grateful to you. Without people like yourself, these services wouldn’t happen,” she stated. At the request of Heather and Mark, the funds will go towards the society’s night nursing service.

‘Rebel Prods: The Forgotten Story of Protestant Radical Nationalists and the 1916 Rising’ is still available to order through the Church of Ireland Online Bookstore.

The book provides the first overall study of the role of Protestant radical nationalists in planning, and participating in, the Easter rebellion and reveals that a far larger number were involved than previously known.

The revolutionary generation of 1916 spanned the deep religious divisions in the Ireland of the time – while still a predominantly Catholic

uprising, the 1916 rebellion was more religiously diverse than its later historical image suggests. Based upon a range of detailed sources, this study reveals the significant collective contribution of Irish radical Protestants to the Rising and their fate in the new Irish Free State.

## **Persian woman becomes first Bishop of Loughborough**

A woman, whose family was forced to flee Iran in the wake of the 1980 revolution, has been appointed as the first Bishop of Loughborough.

The appointment of Rev Canon Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani - who is the first female bishop from a minority ethnic community in the Church of England - was welcomed by the Bishop of Lichfield.

Rt Rev Dr Michael Ipgrave said: "I am thrilled to offer Guli my warm congratulations on her appointment. I have worked closely with her over the years, and I know that she will enrich the episcopate of the Church of England through her distinctive gifts of spirituality, pastoral care and theological insight.

"It is wonderful to see her following as a bishop in the footsteps of her father Bishop Hassan. In





his costly witness to the gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation, and in his commitment to Christian-Muslim dialogue he was one of the great saints of the 20th century, and his ministry has been a tremendous inspiration to me."

Canon Guli's father Bishop Hassan Dehqani-Tafti was the first Iranian to serve as Bishop of Iran from 1961 until 1990 before his death in 2008.

As the first Bishop of Loughborough, Canon Guli will take a full role in the work of the Church across Leicester and Leicestershire. She will focus on supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) clergy, lay workers and congregations in the county.

The mother-of-three - who prior to becoming a priest worked as a religious programmes producer for the BBC - is married to Canon Lee Francis-Dehqani, team rector of Oakham in Rutland.

She will be consecrated as Bishop of Loughborough by Archbishop Justin Welby in Canterbury Cathedral on November 30th and welcomed to Leicester Diocese at a service in Leicester Cathedral at a later date.

## **Lebanese woman pastor elected president of World Communion of Reformed Churches**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), of which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Kirk are members, has elected a new president from Lebanon.



**The Rev Najla Kassab, is a minister in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon**

The Rev Najla Kassab, a minister in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), was elected on Friday

“With her experience and many gifts, Najla’s vision, insight, spiritual strength and grace make her the right person to lead us forward as president,” said Alison McDonald, the moderator of a Nominating Committee that brought a slate of nominees for the WCRC Executive Committee to its General Council.

The elections took place on 7 July, the final day of the Council, which has been meeting in the eastern German city of Leipzig since 29 June. Of the 22 members of the new Executive Committee, 10 are men and 12 women; 15 are ordained and 7 are lay people.

Five of the members of the Executive Committee are young adults under 30 years of age, including one of the vice-presidents. Kassab, 52, has been a member of the WCRC executive committee since 2010.

The director of the Christian Education Department of NESSL, she was the first woman to receive a preaching licence in her church and, in March 2017, the second woman to be ordained. Kassab has a BA in Christian Education from the Near East School of Theology, and graduated with a Masters of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary (USA) in 1990.

“Since 1993 I have been struggling for women to be ordained in the Middle East, and I thank God that just two months ago two women were ordained as pastors in the Middle East,” Kassab told a press conference after her election. “I stand, as I said, for equal rights for women to fully use their talents in the life of the church and

for the church to grow through the talents of women.”

Among her priorities are strengthening the regions of the WCRC and supporting young people. “This is a time to listen to them, struggle with them, hear their contribution in the life of the church,” Kassab stated.

She noted that on some issues, WCRC member churches have different views. “The priority is to sit around the table and listen to each other in a spirit of discernment and dialogue guided by the Holy Spirit.”

She underlined the importance of ecumenism in the life of the WCRC. “As Reformed people we cannot survive without ecumenism,” she said. “What happened in Wittenberg is a strong ecumenical statement of the churches.”

## **Saint Teresa's famous sari trademarked**

Saint Teresa of Kolkata's famous blue-rimmed white cotton sari has been trademarked by the nun's former lawyer.



The design of the sari, which Teresa is believed to have purchased from a Kolkata market, is now the exclusive intellectual property of the Missionaries of Charity.

Biswajit Sarkar, a lawyer from the order she founded nearly 70 years ago, said he would take "severe" legal action against unauthorised use of the design to combat "misuse" of the saint's reputation, often for commercial gain.

He told the Guardian he had applied for the trademark in 2013 and, while it was formally granted in 2016, it was only recently publicised.



He also had the name "Mother Teresa" trademarked.

No exceptions for the use of the trademarked sari's design or name will be made for charitable enterprises or other religious orders.

Sarkar said: "There are many organisations starting schools naming themselves after Mother Teresa, and wearing the uniform, where the Missionaries of Charity have no connection."

He explained some teachers at schools named after the saint had been writing to the Missionaries of Charity complaining about late salary payments, unaware their schools were separate entities.

Sarkar also claimed other organisations and religious books published with the blue-striped trimming gave the impression the Kolkata-based order had endorsed them.

Some nuns have questioned the trademark but Sarkar said it's important to clamp down on the unauthorised use of the pattern.

In 1950, she founded the Missionaries of Charity, which went on to become a global order of nuns - identified by their trademark blue-trimmed saris, as well as priests, brothers and lay co-workers.

She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. She died in 1997 after a lifetime spent caring for hundreds of thousands of destitute and homeless poor in Kolkata, for which she came to be called the "saint of the gutters". St John Paul II, her most ardent supporter, fast-tracked her for sainthood and beatified her before a crowd of 300,000 in 2003. She was declared a saint in 2016.

## **History in North Antrim churchyard**

A fifth book by genealogist and author Dorothy Arthur has just been published. Titled 'St.



Patrick's Church Graveyard, Armoy', it includes photographs of each headstone, maps of the graveyard and an invaluable index for quick reference. Dorothy has also provided a brief history of this fascinating and ancient ecclesiastical site and the archaeological discoveries found there during recent excavations.

For those of us not familiar with the local Armoy landscape, she has added an essential list of the many impenetrable local townland names and an accompanying map which will enable readers to identify where their ancestors lived. Among the headstones at Armoy, Dorothy reveals the background of people from all walks of life; farmers, labourers, shopkeepers, blacksmiths and railway porters share their resting place with eminent clergymen, Olympians, Lieutenants in the Royal Navy, poets and Oscar Wilde's uncle!

There are the parents of 15 children and relatives who evidently couldn't agree about the spelling of their family name! (Is it McGuigan, McGoogan or McGugan?) The oldest legible headstones date back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, although early medieval bones unearthed during church renovations in 1997, including leprosy victims, prove that interments occurred long before that.

Large recumbent slabs mark the mass graves of those unfortunates who, local people tell us, died of the plague. Other interesting headstones include the tall, thin stone of Alex McDonel, who died in 1744, and the unsophisticated, yet memorable, carving for Barnet McElvar, of Nock (possibly Knocklayde or Knockans?) who died in 1767.

Dorothy's book has the endorsement of the Parish Church who generously allowed her access to their records in order to complete her research. It's worth mentioning that Dorothy adds her thanks to her accomplished support team - among them the vastly experienced genealogist and researcher Kathleen Connolly and map surveyor Bill Simpson - and others who contributed to the finished product. Further information about 'St. Patrick's Church Graveyard, Armoy' by Dorothy Arthur is at [ballymoneygraveyard.com](http://ballymoneygraveyard.com)

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