

M044 Restoration of Iona Cathedral

Introduction

The island of Iona, where the Irish missionary Columba settled in the 6th century, is widely regarded as the cradle of Scottish Christianity. A Benedictine abbey was built in the 13th to 15th centuries, later becoming a cathedral. It fell into ruin after the Reformation, but in the late 19th century its hereditary owner, George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, sought to restore it. John Honeyman made proposals in 1891 which were not implemented. In 1899 the Duke established a trust to carry out the restoration, and between 1901 and 1904 the transepts, crossing and choir were re-roofed.

Authorship: It is clear from the minutes of the Iona Cathedral Trust that John Honeyman was personally responsible for the work carried out in 1903–4. He had retired from the practice of Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh by this date, but from August 1905, due to his failing eyesight, he was dependent on his old staff to make working drawings for Iona under the direction of John Keppie. There is no evidence that Mackintosh had any specific involvement in this work.

Alternative names: Iona Abbey; St Mary's Cathedral; St Mary's Abbey.

Cost from other sources: Work carried out under John Honeyman's direction during the year to 31 December 1904: £1878 12s 6d ¹

Status: Standing building

Current use: Cathedral (2014)

Listing category: A

Historic Scotland/HB Number: 12310

RCAHMS Site Number: NM22SE 5

Grid reference: NM 28683 24515

Chronology

1891

19–25 March: John Honeyman & Keppie incur costs of £4 15s 3d in connection with unspecified work for Iona. ¹

April and August: John Honeyman & Keppie make plans of the Cathedral. ²

11 May: John Honeyman & Keppie incur costs of £6 13s 9d, probably for travelling expenses to London in connection with work on Iona. ³

14 July: John Honeyman & Keppie commence a job-book entry for Iona, but it remains incomplete. ⁴

1899

22 September: 8th Duke of Argyll vests ownership of the Iona ruins in a body of trustees, and expresses the wish that the Cathedral will be 'reroofed and restored'. ⁵

1901

December: Trustees commission Thomas Ross to re-roof the choir. ⁶

1903

February: John Honeyman, 'the architect consulted by the late Duke', has 'offered to advise the Iona trustees non-professionally'. ⁷

6 October: Honeyman's detailed plans and estimates are approved ⁸

1904

23 February: The trustees authorise Honeyman to accept tenders from E. C. Morgan & Son for mason and joiner work, and William Anderson for slater and plumber work. ⁹

1905

2 March: Honeyman reports to the trustees on work completed during 1904. Walls of ruined N. transept have been built up and transept roofed; sacristy completed, and blocked arcade between it and choir opened up; floor erected within tower; floors paved; internal walls pointed; effigy of Abbot Mackinnon and E. window of S. aisle both restored. ¹⁰

5 May: Honeyman informs the trustees that his eyesight is no longer good enough to do jobs such as judging the quality of materials, but he can still design. He will carry out site visits at least twice a season, but 'I should get working drawings and other office work done by my old staff and under direction of my late partner, Mr Keppie'. ¹¹

August: John Keppie begins co-operating with Honeyman. ¹²

27 September: Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh pay T. & R. Amman & Sons £2 5s 4d for 'Iona photos'. ¹³ These may have been for a slide lecture on 'The Shrine of St Columba at Iona', given by Honeyman to the Edinburgh District of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society in November 1905. ¹⁴

1907

4 January: Alexander McGibbon is paid £4 4s 0d for 'Iona perspective'. ¹⁵

7 March: Honeyman informs Iona trustees that his designing days are over, due to his failing eyesight, and that he has handed over all plans to Keppie. ¹⁶

5 July: Honeyman resigns as architectural adviser. ¹⁷

22 October: Trustees decide to pay off Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh. ¹⁸

19 November: Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh are paid £44 10s 0d for 'Iona Cathedral with expenses'. ¹⁹

Description

The island of Iona, where the Irish missionary Columba settled in the 6th century, is regarded as the cradle of Scottish Christianity. A Benedictine abbey was built in the 13th to 15th centuries, later becoming a cathedral. It fell into ruin after the Reformation, but in the late 19th century its hereditary owner, George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, sought to restore it. He consulted John Honeyman, no doubt because of the architect's reputation as a scholar of medieval buildings. ¹ Plans were drawn by John Honeyman & Keppie in 1891, ² and the practice incurred a number of expenses, including the cost of a visit to London. ³ A job-book entry was begun, but no tenders were recorded and no payments made. ⁴

On 22 September 1899, before his death the following year, the Duke vested ownership of the ruins in the Iona Cathedral Trust, and in December 1901 the trustees commissioned Thomas Ross to re-roof the choir. ⁵ Ross appears not to have given satisfaction, and Honeyman, who in 1901 had signalled his continuing interest in the restoration by exhibiting 'Iona: as proposed in 1891' at the Royal Scottish Academy (632), offered early in 1903 to advise the trustees 'non-professionally'. ⁶ They decided to engage him, and in October his fully-costed programme for the comprehensive restoration of the cathedral and monastic buildings was approved, though lack of funds meant it could only proceed in stages. ⁷

Tenders for the first stage were accepted in February 1904, the main contractors being E. C. Morgan & Son for mason and joiner work, and William Anderson for slater and plumber work. ⁸ Work went on during the course of that year, at the end of which Honeyman submitted an account of what had been accomplished: the walls of the ruined N. transept had been built up and the transept roofed; the sacristy had been completed, and the blocked arcade between it and the choir opened up; a floor had been erected within the tower, so the crossing was effectively roofed; the floors had been paved; internal walls had been pointed; and the effigy of Abbot MacKinnon had been restored (at the expense of Mr Duncan MacKinnon), as had the E. window of the S. aisle (at the expense of Miss Campbell of Blythswood). ⁹ The cost to the Trustees of all this work was £1878 12s 6d, as measured by Douglas, Hunter & Whiston. ¹⁰



By now Honeyman was 73 years old. He had retired from the practice of Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh, and his eyesight was failing. In May 1905 he assured the trustees that he could still design, but in future he proposed having 'working drawings and other office work done by my old staff and under direction of my late partner, Mr Keppie'. ¹¹ It is not clear what further work was actually carried out under Honeyman. He submitted a design for a new gate and gate pillars in the first half of 1906, but the trustees decided not to implement it. ¹² In 1907, apparently due to a combination of old age, poor eyesight and the diminishing prospect of money being available to complete the work during his lifetime, he tendered his resignation. ¹³ All the drawings made in Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh's office were handed over to the trustees, who decided in October to pay off the practice. ¹⁴

Honeyman stated that he was responsible for designing all the restoration work that had been carried out since he started work for the trustees, 'with the trifling exception of the roof of the sacristy, the drawings of which were supplied by Mr Ross'. ¹⁵ John Keppie's role, which began in August 1905, was merely that of a 'reliable co-adjutor'. ¹⁶ There appears to be no evidence that Mackintosh was involved in the project.

In the 1906 exhibition of the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts, Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh showed a pen drawing of Iona Cathedral (1000). The *Glasgow Herald* noted that it was a 'tiny structure', and briefly described the proposed next stage of the restoration: 'the view shows the nave walls carried up and a roof added; the west window is new.' ¹⁷



In 1908, P. MacGregor Chalmers was appointed architect for the continuing restoration of the Cathedral, and he rebuilt the nave between 1908 and 1910. ¹⁸ Restoration of the monastic buildings was carried out under Ian G. Lindsay from 1939. ¹⁹

People

Clients:

- George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll
- Iona Cathedral Trustees

Contractors:

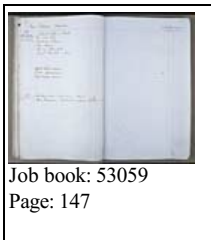
- William Anderson
- Douglas, Hunter & Whitson
- E. C. Morgan & Son

Job Book

The job books of Honeyman & Keppie (later Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh) are now held by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow and include four volumes related to the Mackintosh period. The books were used by the firm to keep a project-by-project, day-by-day record of contractors, suppliers and expenditure. The name of a project and/or client is usually at the top of the left-hand page, followed by information about tradesmen who tendered. The name of the measurer (quantity surveyor) is usually at the top of the right-hand page, followed by information about payments to contractors and suppliers. All of the data for M044 is entered in the tables below.

Page numbering is not consistent in the job books. Sometimes a single number refers to a double-page spread and sometimes each page is individually numbered. Here, each image of a double-page spread is identified by the number given at the top of the left-hand page. (Images of all of the pages from the four job books can be found at [Browse Job Books, Visit Book and Cash Book.](#))

The following information about M044 has been extracted from the job books:



Job book: 53059
Page: 147

Client: [George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll]

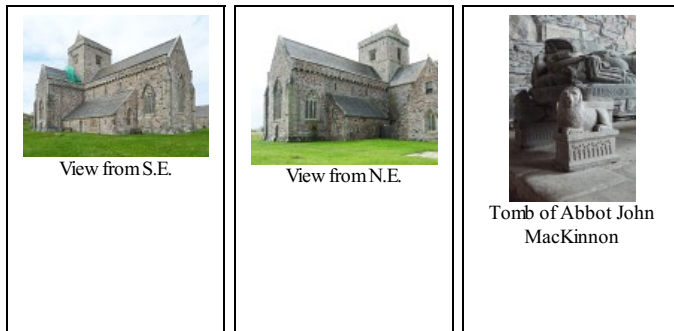
Measurer: W. H. Dinsmore

Tenders:

Contractor	Type	Address	Date	Value	Accepted
George Laird & Son	carpenter & joiner	no data in job book	14 July 1891	no data in job book	no data in job book
Hutcheson & Grant	carpenter & joiner	no data in job book	14 July 1891	no data in job book	no data in job book
Thomas Brown	carpenter & joiner	no data in job book	14 July 1891	no data in job book	no data in job book
Hunter & Marsahll	carpenter & joiner	no data in job book	14 July 1891	no data in job book	no data in job book
D. & J. Meikle	carpenter & joiner	Ayr	14 July 1891	no data in job book	no data in job book
Alex Muir & Sons	not specified	no data in job book	no data in job book	no data in job book	no data in job book
P. & W. Anderson	not specified	no data in job book	no data in job book	no data in job book	no data in job book
Alex Eadie & Son	not specified	no data in job book	no data in job book	no data in job book	no data in job book

Documents

Images



Bibliography

Published

- Frank Arneil Walker and Fiona Sinclair, *Buildings of Scotland: Argyll and Bute*, London: Penguin, 2000, pp. 509–19
- Rosalind K. Marshall, *Columbia's Iona A new history*, Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2013, pp. 117–130

Unpublished

- Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922

Notes:

- 1: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 98.
- 2: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie / Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh / Keppie Henderson cash book, 1889–1917, GLAHA 53079, p. 10.
- 3: The drawings are referred to in a later minute of the Iona Cathedral Trustees (Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 10 January 1900). A set of drawings dated 1891 survives (Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: AGD/23/630–635); these are included in the Drawings tab of this project entry .
- 4: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie / Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh / Keppie Henderson cash book, 1889–1917, GLAHA 53079, p. 11.
- 5: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie job book, GLAHA 53059, p. 147.
- 6: *Scotsman*, 30 September 1899, p. 10.
- 7: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, pp. 53–5, Memorandum for the Trustees of Iona Ruins, 21 February 1903.
- 8: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, pp. 53–5, Memorandum for the Trustees of Iona Ruins, 21 February 1903.
- 9: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 6 October 1903. A detailed description and costing of Honeyman's proposals, in the form of a report by MacGibbon & Ross dated 5 October 1903, is included in the minutes of the Trustees' meeting on 12 July 1904.
- 10: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 23 February 1904.
- 11: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 93, 'Report by Dr Honeyman, 2 March 1905, to the Iona Trustees, on the work done under his direction during the year to 31 December 1904'.
- 12: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 105, copy of letter from John Honeyman to trustees, 5 May 1905.
- 13: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees'

Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 152.

14: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie/Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh / Keppie Henderson cash book, GLAHA 53079, p. 94.

15: *Scotsman*, 20 November 1905, p. 9.

16: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie / Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh /Keppie Henderson cash book, GLAHA 53079, p. 107.

17: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 7 March 1907.

18: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 5 July 1907.

19: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 22 October 1907.

20: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie / Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh /Keppie Henderson cash book, GLAHA 53079, p. 112.

21: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, pp. 53–5, Memorandum for the Trustees of Iona Ruins, 21 February 1903.

22: The drawings are referred to in a later minute of the Iona Cathedral Trustees (Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 10 January 1900). A set of drawings of this date by Honeyman survives (Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: AGD/23/630–635). Much later, James Herbert McNair recalled having visited Iona in connection with this work, and it is possible that Mackintosh was also involved (Roger Billcliffe, 'J. H. MacNair in Glasgow and Liverpool', *Annual Report and Bulletin of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool*, 1, 1970–1, pp. 48–74.

23: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie / Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh / Keppie Henderson cash book, 1889–1917, GLAHA 53079, pp. 10, 11.

24: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: John Honeyman & Keppie job book, GLAHA 53059, p. 147.

25: *Scotsman*, 30 September 1899, p. 10; Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, pp. 53–5, Memorandum for the Trustees of Iona Ruins, 21 February 1903.

26: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, pp. 53–5, Memorandum for the Trustees of Iona Ruins, 21 February 1903.

27: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 6 October 1903. A detailed description and costing of Honeyman's proposals, in the form of a report by MacGibbon & Ross dated 5 October 1903, is included in the minutes of the Trustees' meeting on 12 July 1904.

28: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 23 February 1904.

29: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 93, 'Report by Dr Honeyman, 2 March 1905, to the Iona Trustees, on the work done under his direction during the year to 31 December 1904'.

30: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 98.

31: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 105, copy of letter from John Honeyman to trustees, 5 May 1905.

32: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 18 May 1906. Two drawings for a gateway, dated March 1906 and inscribed '140 Bath Street', the practice address of Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh, are in the Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, box 8, 23i and 23j.

33: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 5 July 1907.

34: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, 22 October 1907.

35: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees'

Minute Book 1899–1922, p. 152.

36: Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Iona Cathedral Trustees Archives, accession 2007/266, Trustees' Minute Book 1899–1922, pp. 105–7, copy of letter from John Honeyman to trustees, 5 May 1905.

37: *Glasgow Herald*, 14 April 1906, p. 5.

38: Frank Arneil Walker and Fiona Sinclair, *Buildings of Scotland: Argyll and Bute*, London: Penguin, 2000, p. 511.

39: Frank Arneil Walker and Fiona Sinclair, *Buildings of Scotland: Argyll and Bute*, London: Penguin, 2000, p. 511.

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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