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Dewars and relics in Scotland: some clarifications and questions

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The cult of saints in medieval Scotland was a vital part of that society's understanding of itself, not only in matters of religious devotion, but in matters of law, lordship, spatial organisation, international relations and more.¹ Saints were patrons of monasteries and churches, parishes and wider territories, families and trades guilds. Saints left relics (and people had objects which they treated as saints' relics) which manifested their power – sometimes the power to heal and protect, sometimes the power to punish and to kill. Saints had swathes of territory whose boundaries were marked by place-names containing references to those saints and perhaps invoking the saints' protection of their territories.² Saints were not understood primarily as good examples held up for imitation by the faithful; they were seen rather as agents of divine power, bridges between earth (where they had once dwelt among us and where their body-parts and associative relics were still to be found and handled) and heaven (where they gazed on the face of God, while continuing to care for their clients on earth). Much interest in the past has been focused on the saints themselves as historical figures, attempting to 'get behind' each saint's dossier, the ramshackle heaps of evidence comprising *Vitae*, church dedications, liturgical material, annal entries, place-names, poetry and hymnody, and so to reconstruct a more or less accurate historical profile of the 'original saint' – what she did, where he went. But such an approach to the cult of saints in medieval Scotland is more often than not doomed to frustration.³ A more fruitful use of the materials available is to study them not as weak and distorted evidence of historical saints, but as strong evidence of saints' cults, and of the myriad ways in which those cults shaped the religious and social experience of those who celebrated them. In particular, we should turn our attention to the way the saint appeared as a figure of power in the experience and belief of ordinary men and women in Scotland – a power that could be used both creatively and destructively, arousing in people's hearts both love and terror.

It is the purpose of the present article to explore one aspect of the medieval Scottish cult of saints in particular: the cult of relics, the practice of appointing an official as the custodian of a relic, and the various ways in which such a custodian was expected to act. The older Gaelic word for such a custodian, whose office was apparently hereditary, was *deorad*; this has become *deòradh* in modern Gaelic (plural *deòraidhean*), a word which can also mean

¹ For a helpful introduction both to the medieval Scottish cult of saints in general and to the Columban cult in particular, see Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Columba, Adomnán and the cult of saints in Scotland', in *Spes Scotorum, Hope of Scots: Saint Columba, Iona and Scotland*, ed. Dauvit Broun and Thomas Owen Clancy (Edinburgh, 1999), 3–33. For more recent work on a variety of aspects of saints' cults in Scotland and elsewhere in the Insular world, see *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults*, ed. Jane Cartwright (Cardiff, 2003); *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford, 2002).

² Gilbert Márkus, 'Saints and boundaries: the pass of St Mocha and St Kessog's bell', *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* [hereafter *JSNS*] 2 (2008), 69–84; *idem*, 'Reading the place-names of a monastic landscape', *Cîteaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 59 (2008), 119–61, at 124–6. Also, forthcoming, Gilbert Márkus, 'Saints and their territories in Fife'.

³ As Rachel Butter remarked in the conclusion of her work on saints' dedications in Argyll, 'The seeming infinity of possibilities makes every one of them less convincing. The more one questions, the more the structuring narrative falls away, meaningless. One is left with chaos'. 'Cill-names and Saints in Argyll: a way towards understanding the early Church in Dál Riata' (University of Glasgow, unpublished PhD thesis, 2007), 219.

‘alien, stranger’, ‘helpless, afflicted, forlorn being’ or ‘fugitive, outlaw’.⁴ The word has also been borrowed into Scots as a lexical item, *dewar*, ‘official charged with the custody of a relic’, and is also contained in a number of Scottish personal names – or rather family names – the most common of which is Dewar, but which seem also to include such names as Duray, Macjarrow, Maclure or McLeora (from *Mac Gille Dheòraidh*, ‘son of the devotee of the dewar’) and Macindeor.⁵ Some of these personal names can be shown to have been held by people appearing in the historical record who had custody of a relic, as we shall see in due course.

Before turning to discuss in more detail the role of the dewar and his relic, there are two often repeated views of the dewar which I think are wrong: it will be helpful to discuss them at this point simply in order to dispose of them.

The keeper or the relic?

W. J. Watson noticed an entry in the Register of the Great Seal (*RMS*) which led him to believe that the word could refer not only to the keeper of a relic, but to the relic itself.⁶ He discussed a charter of 1497 which referred to ‘the staff of St Munn called in Gaelic (*Scotice*) *Deowray*’. The charter is a royal confirmation of the sale of several lands in Argyll. The relevant passage is reproduced in the printed edition of the Register of the Great Seal as follows:

... *dimedietate unius mercate terre (vocat. Pordewry) in territorio de Inverquhapil occupate per quendam procuratorem, cum baculo Sancte Munde, Scotice vocato Deowray.*⁷

‘... half a merk-land called Pordewry in the territory of Inverchapel occupied by a certain procurator/keeper, with the crozier of St Munn called in Gaelic Deowray.’

Given this rendering of the charter, where *vocato* in the ablative is naturally associated with *baculo* a few words earlier, it is inevitable that Watson should have understood the word *Deowray* to be a reference to the *bachall* or crozier-relic. This led him to reflect on how the same word could have referred in the tradition to both the relic and its keeper:

It may be that the term *deòradh* was in all cases originally applied to the relic and that its application to the custodian is an instance of transference; the relic and its keeper went together, and when, for instance, it was said ‘*thàinig an deòradh*’, ‘the *deòradh* has come,’ confusion between the relic and its bearer would arise readily.⁸

Again this seems reasonable, though ‘confusion’ is not the only reason why such a transference might take place, and there is no need to suggest that people hearing an announcement of the arrival of the dewar were confused about exactly what the announcement referred to. After all, Black Rod in the Palace of Westminster did not get his name by being ‘confused’ with his staff of office, but by simple metonymy. There is a certain

⁴ Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary*, 5th edn (Glasgow, 1949). This work does not include ‘relic-keeper’ as among the meanings of *deòradh*, although by the time this fifth edition appeared W. J. Watson had shown that *deòradh* had this meaning and discussed it at some length: see W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh and London, 1926), 264–7.

⁵ See George Black, *The Surnames of Scotland* (New York, 1946; repr. Edinburgh, 1996) s.nn.

⁶ Watson, *History of Celtic Place-Names*, 264. He was not the first to make this mistake. Anderson states that ‘The crozier of St Mund in 1497 ... was itself “called in Scotch *Deowray*”’: Joseph Anderson, ‘The architecturally shaped shrines and other reliquaries of the early Celtic church in Scotland and Ireland’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* [hereafter *PSAS*] 44 (1910), 259–85, at 277 n.

⁷ *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scottorum*, ed. John Maitland Thomson *et al.*, 11 vols (Edinburgh, 1882–1914) [hereafter *RMS*], ii, no. 2385. I will leave aside here the interesting sex-change undergone by the normally male St Munn implicit in the use of *Sancte*.

⁸ Watson, *History of Celtic Place-Names*, 264–5.

naturalness to this kind of process, and were the *deòradh* shown to have referred both to a relic and to its bearer, we need not be at all surprised. However, Watson's interpretation of the passage in the charter of 1497, which subsequently influenced the interpretation offered by W. Croft Dickinson in his important article on the *Toschederach* (which we will discuss below),⁹ depends on the printed edition in *RMS*. But if we turn to the original manuscript of this charter, it looks as though we have in fact been misled by the editor of *RMS*, for the original manuscript in the National Archives of Scotland says this:

... et dimedietate vnius mercate terre jacen. in territorio de Inuerquhapill occupat. per quendam procuratorem cum baculo Sancte Munde Scotice vocat. Deowray ...¹⁰

Here we see that the critical word *vocat.* is an abbreviation. The editor of *RMS* expanded this abbreviation to *vocato*, simply assuming that it referred to the last-mentioned noun, which was *baculo*. But given that there survive large numbers of other texts in which the word *deòradh* appears, from the early middle ages to the early modern period, and that none of them ever seems to refer to anything other than a human being, it surely makes far more sense to expand *vocat.* to *vocatum*, to connect the *Deowray* not with the *baculo*, but with the aforementioned *procuratorem*. The *Deowray* in this charter is therefore almost certainly the procurator – the keeper, steward, custodian of the crosier.

The deòradh and the toshedderach

A second misunderstanding concerning the *deòradh* seems to have arisen from the work of W. Croft Dickinson, whose article exploring the office of the *toschedderach* has been most influential on the work of subsequent scholars discussing the place of this legal officer in Scottish history. Though his explanation of the role of the *toschedderach* is for the most part convincingly argued, I believe he is mistaken in making a connection between the *toschedderach* and the *deòradh* – a connection he admittedly seems to make with some hesitation, but on which he elaborates with speculations as to how the *deòradh* as keeper of a relic might have become the 'coroner' or 'sergeant' of later Scots legal practice.¹¹ Dickinson's connection of the *toschedderach* with the *deòradh* has been followed by other writers: Lane and Campbell have speculated that Alan son of John Riabhach MacLachlan of Dunadd, who was appointed *thoisseachdeowra* of Glassary in 1436, may have been keeper of the Kilmichael Glassary bell shrine, for example, and Ascherson has described the same man as possibly 'hereditary custodian of a sacred site'.¹² Barrow seems likewise to have followed Dickinson's suggestion in his comment that when a *judex* makes his jurors swear on St Marnock's relics his role 'seems to come very close to that of the *toschedderach*'.¹³

We will discuss in due course the para-legal roles of the *deòradh* (roles which encouraged Dickinson in his linking of the *deòradh* and the *toschedderach*), but in the meantime we should note that in spite of the similarity of *deòradh* to the second part of

⁹ W. C. Dickinson, 'The *Toschedderach*', *Juridical Review* 53 (1941), 85–109, at 102: 'There is evidence, however, that the relic itself was called *deòradh*'.

¹⁰ Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland [hereafter NAS], C2/13/314.

¹¹ Dickinson, 'The *Toschedderach*', 89–91, 98–100, 103–4 and 106. The word appears in a bewildering variety of spellings in our historical sources, and for the purposes of this article I shall use the spelling adopted by Dickinson, for no better reason than that it is the spelling which has been adopted by many scholars since he published his article in 1941.

¹² Alan Lane and Ewan Campbell, *Dunadd: An Early Dalriadic Capital* (Oxford, 2000), 39, raising the connection between MacLachlan and the bell-shrine somewhat tentatively, and Neil Ascherson, *Stone Voices* (London, 2002), 57.

¹³ G. W. S. Barrow, 'The Scottish *judex* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *Scottish Historical Review* [hereafter *SHR*] 45 (1996), 16–26, at 19–20. See also his note in which he describes a *toft dereti* as 'the toft of the *deòradh*', but states that this refers to a 'relic or relic-keeper': *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. ii: *The Acts of William I, King of Scots 1165–1214*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Edinburgh, 1971) [hereafter *RRS*, ii], no. 358. Likewise a note in *The Books of Assumption of the Thirds of Benefices*, ed. James Kirk (Oxford, 1995), 30 n., 'The term "Derache land" is understood to denote the land pertaining to the office of *toschedderach*, a coroner, sergeant or mair', citing Dickinson's article.

toschederach they may not in fact have a common origin, as Dickinson assumed that they had. The first element of *toschederach* is unproblematic: it is Old Gaelic *toísech* ‘leader, chief, first’, in modern Gaelic *toiseach*. The second element of *toschederach*, on the other hand, is much more difficult to understand. Dickinson’s theory that it was *deòradh* has been questioned by Gillies, who has argued on philological grounds that the second element of *toschederach* is not *deòradh* but more probably *daor-rath*, ‘base-clientship’.¹⁴ This term emerges from the old Gaelic system in which a client who has received *rath* ‘stock, a fief of base-clientship’ from a superior lord becomes dependent on him, bound to him by an obligation to provide goods or services, and placed under his protection, while not enjoying certain kinds of legal autonomy which a ‘free client’ would enjoy. The use of the term *daor-rath* in the name of the crown-appointed *toschederach* might have arisen from the need to distinguish him from the *toísech clainne* ‘head of a (noble) kindred’, who was not a crown official, but a lord in right of his position in the native Gaelic legal tradition as the head of his kindred, with the right to certain dues and with certain powers.¹⁵

There is, however, another possible etymology for the second element of *toschederach*. The Middle Gaelic word *daorad* (Old Gaelic *doírad*), a verbal noun, means ‘taking captive, enslaving’, and is one of several words which Gillies says he has considered as underlying *toschederach*, only to reject it. He gives no specific reason for this rejection.¹⁶ But given that the capturing of thieves was central to the office of the *toschederach*, a derivation from *toísech daortha* ‘chief of capturing’ should perhaps still be considered as a possibility. In this context it is worth noting a reference to the *toschederach* which defines his office in terms of exactly this role. One of the ‘Laws of Kenneth MacAlpin’, a text which survives only in a sixteenth-century work but which is possibly a version of a twelfth-century document, warns that, ‘A beast that wanders is to be returned to its owner, or to the tracker of thieves, or to a priest, because if you keep it with you for three days you will be guilty of theft.’¹⁷ The ‘tracker of thieves’ to whom wandering animals should be returned, the *furum indagator*, is at this point glossed: *tocioderach ulgus apellat*. This identification of the *toschederach* as a person responsible for tracking (and presumably capturing) thieves, along with many other references to the *toschederach* in his role of attaching or summoning to court those accused of crimes,¹⁸ lends support to a possible interpretation of *toschederach* as *toísech daortha*, ‘chief of capturing’.

Whichever of the above explanations of the term *toschederach* is closer to the truth, a *toísech* of *daor-rath* or of *daorad*, the official himself appears consistently in the records as a crown official whom Dickinson shows to have been a servant of the court and a legal officer,

¹⁴ William Gillies, ‘Some thoughts on the Toschederach’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 17 (1996), 128–42, at 138–9. Gaelic *daor*, from the Old Gaelic variously spelled *doír*, *dóer*, *daor*, ‘unfree, base, servile, dependent’.

¹⁵ Dauvit Broun, ‘The property records in the Book of Deer as a source for early Scottish society’, in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. Katherine Forsyth (Dublin, 2008), 313–60. This was suggested by Gillies, ‘Some thoughts’, 138–9, though I do not accept the suggestion there of ‘two meanings (of *toísech clainne*) in the Book of Deer’.

¹⁶ Gillies, ‘Some thoughts’, 142. He discussed it in terms of the more modern form of the word, *daoradh*, gen. *daortha*, ‘condemning, inflicting, fining’. The verb is from *daor* (Old Gaelic *doír*), as discussed in n. 14 above.

¹⁷ *Aberrans pecus aut domino, aut furum indagator ... aut sacerdoti reddito, quod si triduum penes te retinueris, furti reus esto: Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, 3 vols (Oxford 1869–78), ii, 123. For dating, see Michael Lapidge and Richard Sharpe, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature, 400–1200* (Dublin, 1985), no. 1046. I have my doubts about this date: the material bears little resemblance to other twelfth-century legal texts such as *Leges Scocie*, but there may be elements of the sixteenth-century text as it stands which are based on twelfth-century material.

¹⁸ See, for example, *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Thomson and Cosmo Innes, 12 vols (Edinburgh, 1814–75) [hereafter *APS*], i, 58; i, 380; i, 599; i, 633. See also Dickinson, ‘The Toschederach’, *passim*.

and who was closely connected to the sergeand, coroner and mair of fee.¹⁹ John Skene explained the term thus:

Some alleagis <it> to be ane office pertaining to execution of summonds ... sik as ane quha summondis, attachis or arreistis ane uther, to compeir before ony judge. ... Uthers understandis the same to be ane crowner ... Last, summe understandis it to be ane searchour and taker of thieves and limmers.²⁰

The term *toschederach* is indicated by some medieval sources to be more or less interchangeable with such terms as thane, coroner, sergeand, and mair of fee, or at least to be closely related to them.²¹ In the law-code *Regiam Majestatem*, for example, those accused of crimes are ‘attached’ to appear at court ‘by a sergeant, a coroner, a *toschederach*, or another summoner’ (*per seriandum vel coronatorem vel tosordereh vel alium summonitorem*), suggesting that all the offices have at least this role in common.²² In 1447 Duncan Campbell of Loch Awe grants to Reginald Malcolm of Craignish ‘all and hail the office of stewardship, *tosachisdori* and mair of all our land of Craignish’ (*totum et integrum officium senescalliatus, tosachisdori ac mari tocius terre nostrie de Craginche*), and it is perhaps significant that these three titles are at first given as the titles of one office, *officium* in the singular, though a few lines later they are plural (*dictis officiis*). It is also noteworthy, given that the ‘mair of fee’ is someone who holds his office heritably, that the office granted by the charter of 1447 is granted to Reginald and to his male heirs (*heredibus masculis*).²³ In Argyll the office of *toschederach* of Kintyre, first appearing as *Tossochdoir* in 1539,²⁴ is identified with the mairship or ‘majorship’ by 1685, when the family of Argyll lost a series of offices in Argyll, including ‘The Heretable Sheriffship of Argyle and Tarbat Shires, The Heretable Crownership and *Toshdorich* or Majorship in these Shires’.²⁵ In 1550 the queen confirmed a charter of Archibald, lord of Argyll, a grant which included the *officium coronatoris alias thochisdoir*.²⁶ In a grand conflation of three titles for what seems to be the same office, it appears that David II (1329–71) granted to his armiger John Wallace ‘the office of the sergeanty of the earldom of Carrick, which office is called *Toschadorech*, or vulgarly mair of fee’.²⁷ Given the fluidity of the titles of these offices, it may be that the role of the *toschederach* was adjusted in various ways over time, and coincided with the offices of sergeant, coroner and mair of fee to greater or lesser extents at different times. But there can be little doubt that the *toschederach* was an officer of the crown or of an earl, with jurisdiction over a particular named territory, that his was a hereditary office, and that he functioned in some ways like a mair of fee.²⁸

¹⁹ Dickinson, ‘The *Toschederach*’, 95 and *passim*, though his discussion of the *toschederach*’s functions is confused by the occasional digression into the functions of the *deòradh*.

²⁰ John Skene, *De Verborum Significatione* (Edinburgh, 1597), s.v. *Toscheoderache*.

²¹ Skene seems to identify the two offices: ‘The *Toiseachdera* or Mair of Fee occurs repeatedly in connection with <thanages>’: W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, vol. iii: *Land and People* (Edinburgh, 1890), 280. This also seems to be the implication of Dickinson’s observation that ‘It is to be noted too that the opposite officer, the ‘mair’, appears to be of Welsh origin, and it is significant that in certain sheriffdoms we do not find mairs, but only sergeands, until a comparatively late date’: Dickinson, ‘The *Toschederach*’, 103.

²² *APS*, i, 380.

²³ The charter is quoted in Dickinson, ‘The *Toschederach*’, 110; he describes its location as ‘MS Argyll Charters, Inveraray Castle.’

²⁴ *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, ed. M. Livingstone *et al.*, 8 vols (Edinburgh 1908–82), ii, no. 3098.

²⁵ *APS*, viii, 493.

²⁶ *RMS*, iv, no. 467.

²⁷ John Skene, *Regiam Majestatem Scotie Veteres Leges et Constitutiones* (Edinburgh, 1609), 13: ‘*officium serjandiae comitatus de Carrik, quod officium Toschadorech dicitur, vulgo ane mair of fee*’.

²⁸ For the role of this officer, see W. C. Dickinson, *The Sheriff Court Book of Fife, 1515–1522* (Edinburgh, 1928), lxii–lxvi.

Though it may be unclear which of the above explanations of the *-derach* of *toschederach* is to be preferred, neither of them lends any support to Dickinson's connection of the *toschederach* to the *deòradh*. There are at least three other features of the *toschederach* as he appears in the surviving record which make it highly unlikely that he has anything to do with the *deòradh*. First, I have found no *toschederach* ever appearing in the record in association with the relic of a saint, while the *deòradh* appears frequently with mention of his relic, as we shall see. Secondly, no *deòradh* is described as *deòradh* of a territory, while the *toschederach* is always described as '*toschederach* of X' or 'having *toschederach*-ship of X', where X is a sheriffdom, or another lordship or territory, such as Mar, Kintyre, Melfort or Lochaber. Thirdly, when the *deòradh* is granted land it is often associated with church-land, as we shall see when we go on to examine the records in more detail; the *toschederach* on the other hand appears to be infert in far larger estates and these estates do not tend to have any visible ecclesiastical character. It seems that the time has come to sever any connection that Dickinson might have imagined between these two offices, and to subject the *deòradh* to a new examination without reference to the *toschederach*.

The footprints of the dewar

What can we learn about the *deòradh* from the surviving documents which may reveal something of his origins in the early medieval period, and record his presence, his functions, and such like in the later medieval and early modern period? It seems likely that the earliest Gaelic-speaking Christians in Ireland and Scotland were familiar with the cult of relics, even though we have no clear record of such a cult in the early sources until perhaps the very end of the sixth or the early seventh century.²⁹ If the poem *Amra Choluimb Chille* can be dated, as seems likely, to within a very few years of Colum Cille's death in 597, it seems that his body was providing miraculous help for his devotees very early on:

You find his grave good in its virtue
appointed for every trouble of weather.³⁰

Columba is credited by Adomnán, later in the seventh century, with several miracles of weather-control,³¹ which might be the hagiographical correlative of this verse. The miracle-stories of a saint found in his or her *Vita* should often be read as the literary reflection of other aspects of the cult of that saint, and in particular they might reflect the uses to which his or her relics were being put, even when there is no specific reference to any relic in the saint's *Vita*. It may even be that Adomnán's description of other miracles performed by Columba by the raising of his right hand are subtle references to a relic of his right hand known to Adomnán.³² Adomnán is certainly concerned to point out the importance of Columba's body, which dwelt in brilliant light during his lifetime, and does so still in its grave:

²⁹ On the early near-universal devotion to relics, from the fourth century onwards, see A. T. Lucas, 'The social role of relics and reliquaries in ancient Ireland', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 116 (1986), 5–37, at 5–6. See also Charles Doherty, 'The use of relics in early medieval Ireland', in *Irland Und Europa: Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter/Ireland and Europe: the Early Church*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1984), 89–104.

³⁰ *Fó lib lige a aí, ar cach saeth sretha sína*: Thomas Owen Clancy and Gilbert Márkus, *Iona: the Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh, 1995), 110–11.

³¹ *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, ed. and trans. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1991); see also *Adomnán of Iona: Life of St Columba*, trans. Richard Sharpe (London, 1995). This work [hereafter VC] is referred to by book and chapter numbers, and translations will be my own. VC i.18; ii.4; ii.12; ii.13; ii.15; ii.44; ii.45.

³² See Gilbert Márkus, 'Diormit of Iona: Columba's right-hand man', in this issue of *The Innes Review*.

the same heavenly brightness does not cease to be present, down to the present day in the place in which his holy bones rest, as well as the frequent visits of holy angels, as is known to have been revealed to certain elect persons.³³

There is also perhaps a hint in Adomnán's *Vita* that Columba's stone pillow, 'which even today stands beside his grave (or shrine) as a memorial',³⁴ has become a relic.³⁵ We will discuss in due course the way that hagiographies can function as an indication of both the existence of relics and their cultic or social use at the time of the hagiography's composition. In the meantime we should simply note that Adomnán seems to be hinting at a relic cult of St Columba's body. We might also remark, in passing, that he is aware of a tradition that relics may be kept in the custody of hereditary relic-keepers. In his work *De Locis Sanctis* he mentions a family of hereditary custodians of the Lord's shroud,

the fathers born of the seed of that thrice-blessed man continued to entrust the Lord's shroud to their sons, as if by hereditary right, believers to believers, according to the succession of the family, down to the fifth generation.³⁶

Adomnán was familiar with the idea that lay-folk could be hereditary custodians of sacred relics in spite of their important ecclesiastical connections. This must have some bearing on the fact that in the later period we find some relics in the care of abbots and other ecclesiastics, presumably passed on to their successors in office, while others are in the care of laymen and are passed on to their children.

Other seventh-century sources illustrate the cult of relics – both the bodily relics of saints and the 'associative relics' (objects associated with saints in their life-time, such as bells, crosiers, clothing and so on). So Cogitosus describes the shrine of Brigit and Bishop Conlaed in Kildare, and the innumerable miracles that take place there, as well as a miraculous millstone which 'cures the diseases of the faithful who touch it'.³⁷ Likewise the church of Lindisfarne, a foundation of the Gaelic monastery of Iona, had the body of its bishop Aedán buried in the cemetery of Lindisfarne by his brethren when he died in 651; his bones were later dug up and translated to a larger church and buried beside the altar with honour.³⁸ These bones were clearly already being treated as relics of some importance in 664: Bede tells us that after the synod of Whitby had ruled against Aedán's successor, Bishop Colmán,

³³ VC iii.23: *sicuti quibusdam electis ostensum habetur conpertum, locum in quo ipsius sancta pausant ossa usque hodie eadem caelestis claritas frequentare non cessat, et sanctorum frequens uisitatio angelorum.*

³⁴ VC iii.23: *qui hodie quasi quidam iuxta sepulchrum eius titulus stat monumenti.* Bannerman has rightly suggested that this *sepulchrum* may refer to a grave, or to a shrine, since Bede used *sepulchrum* to refer to the shrine of St Cuthbert on Lindisfarne: John Bannerman, 'Comarba Coluim Chille and the relics of Columba', *IR* 44 (1993), 14–47, at 22–3.

³⁵ A stone survives today which is known as 'St Columba's Pillow', but there is no good reason to connect it to the story by Adomnán, other than its slightly pillow-like shape. See *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Argyll: An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments*, 7 vols (Edinburgh, 1971–92), iv, 188–9.

³⁶ *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. Denis Meehan (Dublin, 1983), 52–4: *Et ita hoc Dominicum sudarium patres filiis de eiusdem ter beati hominis semine nati quasi hereditario iure fideles fidelibus secundum eorum prosapiae seriem fideliter usque ad quintam commendabant generationem.*

³⁷ Cogitosus, *Vita Sanctae Brigidae Virginis*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. -P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64) [hereafter *PL*], lxxii, 790 (*Et quis sermone explicare potest, maximum decorem huius ecclesie, et innumera illius civitatis qui dicemus miracula?*) and 788 (*et de fidelibus hunc lapidem tangentibus morbum expellit*).

³⁸ *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896; repr. 1961) [hereafter *HE*] iii.17.

Colmán, leaving the house (Lindisfarne), took some of the bones of the very reverend father Aedán; but he also left part in the church over which he had presided, and commanded that they should be placed in his *secretarium*.³⁹

Four years later we read of ‘the voyage of Bishop Colmán with the relics of the saints to Inis Bó Finne, where he founded a church’, and these relics presumably included the bones of Aedán which he had reverently removed from Lindisfarne.⁴⁰

In these examples we see the role of the relic as not only a locus of healing, protecting, weather-miracles and so on, but as substantiating a claim to ecclesiastical authority. The abbot of a monastery, or the bishop of a church, holds relics as a way of proving that claim and of making it effective. It is hardly surprising that people should be using relics to express such claims, given that the highest authority of the medieval church was rooted in the fact that the bishop of Rome possessed the relics of Peter and Paul. As Columbanus wrote to the pope,

We are bound to St Peter’s chair ... from that time when the Son of God deigned to be Man, and on those two most fiery steeds of God’s Spirit, I mean the apostles Peter and Paul, whose dear relics have made you blessed.⁴¹

As the popes drew authority from their custody of the apostles’ relics, so the abbot of a monastery or the bishop of a church was seen as the heir or *comarba* of the founding saint, both in the sense that he had inherited that saint’s authority by lawful succession, and in the sense that he had inherited that saint’s body (or some other relic held to be a definitive guarantee of the abiding presence of the saint). Peter Brown has shown how late-Roman bishops adapted the popular cult of the holy dead, the feasts around the graves of the saints: ‘the bishop has entered with greater certainty into his role as the visible *patronus* beneath the invisible *patronus*.’⁴² The *comarba* can almost be seen as a new incarnation of the patron saint’s original authority and power. So where we find Adomnán combining the narratives of Columba’s deeds of power with indications that he himself has inherited Columba’s relics, we should read this as an indication of how Adomnán saw the meaning of his own abbacy as the latest realisation of the presence and authority of his *patronus*. Not only does he lay claim to Columba’s authority, but he portrays Columba as having pursued the ecclesiastical, social and moral objectives which he intends to make his own – the protection of non-combatants, for example, which he sought by promulgation of the ‘Law of the Innocents’ in AD 697.⁴³

This role of the relic as a sign of abbatial or episcopal authority is the first of several uses of relics identified and discussed by A. T. Lucas in a splendid paper in which he listed a large number of medieval and later references to Irish relics and the various social, ritual, economic, legal and political processes in which they played a part. The great quantity of illuminating evidence that he cites for Ireland, incidentally, is in sharp contrast to the few scattered references that survive for Scotland. The first role he identifies is their function as

³⁹ HE iii.26: *Abiens autem domum Colman adsumsit partem ossuum reuerentissimi patris Aidani; partem uero in ecclesia, cui praeerat, reliquit, et in secretario eius condi praecepit.*

⁴⁰ *The Annals of Ulster*, ed. Seán mac Airt and Gearóid mac Niocaill (Dublin, 1983) [hereafter AU], s.a. 668 (‘corrected’ year): *Nauigatio Columbani episcopie [cum] reliquis sanctorum ad Insulam Uacce Albae in qua fundauit aeclesiam.* Interestingly, Bede tells us that after his defeat in 664 Colmán retreated to the island of Iona (*ad insulam Hii*), and from there went to Innis Bó Finne (*Inisboufinde*): HE iv.4). This probably implies that the relics of Bishop Aidán remained on Iona from 664 till 668.

⁴¹ *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. G. S. M. Walker (Dublin, 1970), 49. See also Greta-Mary Hair and Betty I. Knott, ‘The Office of St Andrew, patron saint of Scotland’, in *Notis Musycall: Essays on Music and Scottish Culture in Honour of Kenneth Elliott*, ed. Gordon Munro, Stuart Campbell, Greta-Mary Hair, Margaret A. Mackay, Elaine Moohan and Graham Hair (Glasgow, 2005), 17–94, at 18–19, for brief but illuminating discussion of the importance of the relics of St Andrew in Constantinople’s struggle for influence, and of course for the struggle of St Andrews in Fife for recognition as an apostolic church, and therefore for the independence of the Scottish church as a whole.

⁴² Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (London, 1981), 39.

⁴³ See Gilbert Márkus, *Adomnán’s Law of the Innocents: Cáin Adomnáin* (Kilmartin, 2008), 3–4.

‘insignia of office’.⁴⁴ This role clearly applied in Gaelic Scotland as much as it did in Ireland.⁴⁵ Perhaps we should add to this account, however, that the relic in this case is more than a mere sign – a ‘badge of office’ or ‘insignia’, as Lucas suggests.⁴⁶ It should rather be understood as what we might call an ‘effective sign’, since it actually brings about or conveys the very authority that it signifies, putting into the hands of its lawful bearer the *virtus* of the saint, for the blessing or punishment of those with whom the bearer comes into contact, and validating the bearer’s claim to the authority of the patron. So Bernard complained in his *Vita Sancti Malachiae* that the Irish treated a man as a bishop just because he was wandering round the country with a Gospel-book which had belonged to St Patrick and the great crosier-relic called the *Bachall Iosa*:

Of course <the relics> are famous and celebrated among the peoples, and held in such reverence by all that whoever is seen to have them, this stupid and foolish people would regard him as the bishop.⁴⁷

The forms of contact in which the abbot or bishop was involved, and where the relics appear so important, were discussed by Lucas in relation to Irish sources. One of the principal contexts is the enactment of laws by ecclesiastical authority, or for their enforcement or renewal, and this is clearly apparent in the use of Scottish relics: ‘The relics of Adomnán are brought over to Ireland, and the law is promulgated anew’.⁴⁸ Clearly the presence of the relics of Adomnán make present the authority of the saint, and as it is under this saint’s authority that the law in question was promulgated (his ‘Law of the Innocents’) it is particularly appropriate that it is his relics rather than those of Columba which are mentioned.

Another important role for these major relics is to act as authorisation of ‘circuits’ by monastic or church officials for the collection of tribute, dues and so on from people in the lands subject to them. Lucas shows how dire punishments awaited the people of a saint’s territory if they did not contribute whatever was required, and these punishments are strongly reflected in saint’s Lives where saints bequeath their relics to their successors as a means of collecting tribute.⁴⁹ Though surviving examples are all Irish, there is no good reason to doubt that the same pattern existed in Scotland.

It may be that other significant public roles existed for the relic of a saint in the hands of a *princeps* of the church. It is possible that a relic of Columba was used in the inauguration of kings of Dál Riata, for example, or at least that Adomnán sought to persuade people that it should be.⁵⁰ It is recorded (albeit in a twelfth-century source) that in the eighth century Cillíne Droichtech, the abbot of Iona, brought to Ireland a shrine full of relics to make peace between

⁴⁴ Lucas, ‘The social role’, 13–17.

⁴⁵ See Bannerman, ‘*Comarba Coluim Chille*’, *passim*.

⁴⁶ Lucas, ‘The social role’, 13.

⁴⁷ Bernard, *Liber de vita et rebus gestis Sancti Malachiae*, in *PL*, clxxxii, 1089: *Nempe notissima sunt celeberrimaque in populis, atque in ea reverentia apud omnes, ut qui illa habere visus fuerit, ipsum habeat episcopum populus stultus et insipiens.*

⁴⁸ *AU* 727. See Lucas, ‘The social role’, 15–16 for other instances, particularly those involving the relics of St Patrick for the enforcement of the ‘Law of Patrick’ in Ireland.

⁴⁹ Lucas, ‘The social role’, 14–17. He cites among several examples St Maedóc’s gift of his crosier: ‘I bequeath the bachall for the exaction of my tribute’ (p. 15). St Lasair’s relic, the *Ceolán*, is a particularly fine example of this function: Sirig (her steward, or some such official) goes forth with the *Ceolán* to collect the saint’s tax and complains that he did not obtain it, so she exclaims, ‘I curse each one that will not pay my tribute, and I promise ill-fortune and poverty to such as turn against me and my tax. Anger, hatred, murder of kinsfolk, weakness, wounds and great war be their lot, save they pay my tax. But as for all who fulfil my tax, I lay the blessing of offspring and good fortune, and all benefit of happiness, of sex, of ready speech and of sageness on each who shall fulfil and levy my tribute and permits not my steward to be attacked in any place in which he may happen to be’. Lucius Gwynn, ‘The Life of St Lasair’, *Ériu* 5 (1911), 73–109, at 101.

⁵⁰ See Márkus, ‘Diormit of Iona’. See also discussion under *The relic as king-maker* below.

two great kindreds of the north, Cenél Conaill and Cenél nÉogain.⁵¹ Again we see the abbot engaged in the high affairs of the kingdoms or kin-groups for whom he and the saint he represents, whose relic he wields, are significant political forces. But in other circumstances it is hard to know whether the person wielding the relic in some ritual context did so as the *princeps* of a church or monastery, or whether that function had been delegated to some lesser ecclesiastic, or indeed to a layman who was a member of a designated family who exercised that office by hereditary right. As we look at some of the following evidence of relic-cult and of the office of *deòradh*, we should bear in mind that in some cases the person wielding the relic might be a cleric, while in other cases the person is clearly a layman or *deòradh*.

The relic as warrior

One role for the relic which has been well recorded in Scotland – at least for some of the most high-status relics – was its role in battle, effectively making the saint a warrior-protector of the nation that looked to him as its patron.⁵² The two most striking instances of this role are both related to relics of St Columba: the *Breacbennach* (possibly what is now known as the Monymusk reliquary⁵³) and the *Cathbuaidh*. Such confidence in Columba in particular as a warrior-saint is found as early as Adomnán's *Life* of the saint, where he tells us that

in the terrifying crashings of wars, he has obtained from God by the strength of his prayers that some kings should be defeated and that other kings should be made victors. This privilege was bestowed on him by God, who honours all the saints, not only in this present changing life, but also after his passing out of the flesh, as on a victorious and most mighty champion

– a fine example of the relic-cult echoing the literary cult.⁵⁴ The *Breacbennach* first appears in the record in a grant by William I to the monastery he founded at Arbroath. In this charter, dateable to c.1211, he grants 'to the monks of Arbroath the custody of the *Breacbennach* and ... with the aforesaid *Breacbennach* the land of Forglen, given to God and to Saint Columba and the *Breacbennach*'.⁵⁵ In return the monks were to do 'the military service which is owed to me from that land, with the foresaid *Breacbennach*'.⁵⁶ The shrine with its relic, evidently a relic of St Columba given the fact that the land of Forglen was 'given to God and to Saint Columba and the *Breacbennach*', was part of the nation's military equipment, making present the saint's power and protection over the army. The shrine itself is probably of eighth-century date,⁵⁷ and the fact that it is not William who is giving the land of Forglen to the shrine since he seems to regard it as already 'given' (*terram de Forglint datam Deo et Sancto Columbe et le Bracbennach*), suggests that the relic had already been associated for some time with Forglen (where the church is dedicated to Columba's successor, Adomnán) and probably that the role of the relic as a 'battle-standard' or something of the sort also preceded William's grant of the land to Arbroath abbey, perhaps by some centuries.

⁵¹ *Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé: The Martyrology of Óengus the Culdee*, ed. Whitley Stokes, Henry Bradshaw Society (London, 1905; repr. 1984), 210.

⁵² For a survey of the Irish material showing the relic in this role, see Lucas, 'The social role', 17–20.

⁵³ For a discussion of the *Breacbennach* and the Monymusk Reliquary, which casts much doubt on this identification (without however claiming to have disproved it), see David Caldwell, 'The Monymusk Reliquary: the *Breacbennach* of St Columba?', *PSAS* 131 (2001), 267–82.

⁵⁴ *VC* i.1: *In bellorumque terrificis fragoribus hoc a deo uirtute orationum inpetrauit, ut alii reges uicti et alii regnatores efficerentur uictores. Hoc tale praeuilegium non tantum in hac praesenti uita consuersanti, sed etiam post eius de carne transitum, quasi cuidam uictoriali et fortissimo propugnatori a deo omnium sanctorum condonatum est honorificatore.*

⁵⁵ *RRS*, ii, no. 499: *monachis de Aberbrothoc custodiam de Bracbennoch, et eisdem monachis dedi et concessi et hac carta mea confirmaui cum predicta Bracbennoch terram de Forglint datam Deo et Sancto Columbe et le Bracbennach.*

⁵⁶ *seruicium quod michi in exercitu debetur de terra illa, cum predicta Bracbennach.*

⁵⁷ This date is accepted by Caldwell, 'The Monymusk Reliquary', 267–8. See also Alfred Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men* (London, 1984), 136, for the tantalising suggestion that it 'may date from the closing years of Adomnán's rule on Iona'.

Stringer and Hammond have shed some very revealing light on this grant of Forglen to Arbroath abbey.⁵⁸ William I had been captured by the English at Alnwick in 1174: this defeat was in itself *prima facie* evidence of the failure of the Scottish saint, Columba, to protect the country and its ruler. More dramatically, as Hammond points out, the English

directly attributed the taking of King William to King Henry's penance for the murder of Archbishop Thomas ... Indeed, that Henry's submission (to penance) and William's capture were believed to have occurred on the same day is highly indicative of the light of divine favour shining on the English monarchy.

The capture of William on the very day that Henry did penance for having murdered Thomas of Canterbury was indicative not only of divine favour, however. It was also indicative of the superior power of St Thomas who was now acting as patron of the penitent English king, and of the failure of Columba in this moment of crisis. It is surely of great significance that four years later, when founding a new monastery at Arbroath, William dedicated it to Thomas of Canterbury (thereby perhaps placating the saint who had brought about his capture, as Hammond has suggested, but also appropriating some of the evident power of this saint for his own purposes, and perhaps also cocking a snook at the English king who had murdered him). But in addition to dedicating his new monastery to St Thomas, the king later gave the *Breacbennach* to the monks of Arbroath, putting the battle-relic of St Columba into the hands of the 'abbot of St Thomas'. This drama in which a king carefully adjusts the spheres of influence of two saints is a remarkable illustration of the way in which saints, their relics and their respective powers existed in relationship to each other and to social and political needs – a relationship which was open to re-negotiation in certain circumstances.

At this point the *Breacbennach* was a relic held by the abbot of one of the most powerful monasteries in the kingdom. It is possible that before this it had been held by a *deòradh* in Forglen, a cleric or a layman, but we have no information about it prior to the grant of 1211. Just over a century later, however, the relic changed hands again. In 1315 (a few months after the battle of Bannockburn⁵⁹) the abbot of Arbroath granted to Malcolm of Monymusk (*Malcomo de Monimusk*):

all our land of Forglen which belongs to the *Breacbennach*, with all its pertinents, together with the right of patronage of the church of that land ... The said Malcolm and his heirs will do service in our name in the army of the lord king for the land which belongs to the *Breacbennach*.⁶⁰

The burden of doing this same military service with the relic still belongs in fact to the abbots of Arbroath, but now the abbot requires Malcolm to perform the service 'in our name'. This is one example of how a relic, formerly under the control of a monastery, can end up in the

⁵⁸ Keith Stringer, 'Arbroath abbey in context', in *The Declaration of Arbroath: History, Significance, Setting*, ed. Geoffrey Barrow (Edinburgh, 2003), 116–41, at 119–23; Matthew Hammond, 'Queen Ermengarde and the abbey of St Edward', *Cîteaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 59 (2008), 11–36, at 15–16.

⁵⁹ Though we cannot be absolutely certain, Abbot Bernard of Arbroath, a close friend of Robert Bruce, was almost certainly present at the battle, and would presumably have performed his duty there in bearing the *Breacbennach* with him. See G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh, 1988), 225.

⁶⁰ *totam terram nostram de Forglen . que pertinet ad Bracbenniach . cum omnibus pertinenciis suis . una cum iure patronatus ecclesie eiusdem terre ... Dictus vero Malcomus et heredes sui facient in exercitu Domini Regis . nomine nostro . seruium pro dicta terra quod pertinet ad Bracbennach: Collections for a History of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, ed. Joseph Robertson, Spalding Club (Aberdeen, 1843), 511–17. The terms of this charter are repeated by another in 1213: *RRS*, ii, no. 513. I do not know whether Malcolm of Monymusk had had any earlier connection with this relic: it may be a complete coincidence that the keeper of the relic of Columba had a name which meant 'servant or devotee of Columba', but it may be that he or his family had some existing claim on it which this charter was now establishing in a more formal way.

hands of a lay custodian. Is this particular event representative of a wider process, and does it help to explain why the *deòraidhean* that we see in the record are generally laymen, not clerics? Or is this narrative about this particular relic in this particular parish not representative at all? An alternative explanation for the general appearance of relics in the hands of lay custodians may relate instead to the fact that church lands and church offices in Gaelic society often circulated among members of the kindred who had founders' rights in the church or monastery, or among those who had subsequently made grants to it. The appearance of relics among particular lay kindreds may reflect a more organic and well-established connection between church and kindred than the story of the *Breacbennach* implies.

The other Columban relic which had the power to win battles was the *Cathbhuidh*. Our principal source for this relic for the year 918:

Almost at the same time the men of Fortriu and the Norwegians fought a battle. The men of Alba fought this battle steadfastly, moreover, because Colum Cille was assisting them, for they had prayed fervently to him, since he was their apostle, and it was through him that they received faith. For on another occasion, when Imar Conung was a young lad and he came to plunder Alba with three large troops, the men of Alba, lay and clergy alike, fasted and prayed to God and Colum Cille until morning, and beseeched the Lord, and gave profuse alms of food and clothing to the churches and to the poor, and received the body of the Lord from the hands of their priests, and promised to do every good thing as their clergy would best urge them, and that their battle-standard in the van of every battle would be the crozier of Colum Cille – and it is on that account that it is called the *Cathbhuidh* from then onwards; and the name is fitting for they have often won victory in battle with it, as they did at that time, relying on Colum Cille.⁶¹

This *Cathbhuidh* or 'battle victory' is probably the crozier depicted on two seals from Dunkeld cathedral from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, surely indicating that this Columban relic was actually housed at Dunkeld, presumably in the cathedral itself.⁶²

Another relic which displayed military prowess was the arm of St Fillan which was said to have been venerated by Robert Bruce on the eve of the battle at Bannockburn in 1314.⁶³ In this case, the legend of Robert's veneration of Fillan's arm-relic has it that the custodian of the relic was at that time the abbot of Inchaffray. But later in the middle ages it appears that this arm was one of several relics of Fillan which were cared for by *deòraidhean*, laymen who occupied farms in the medieval parish of Killin, stretching from the head of Strath Fillan in the west as far as Killin in the east, at the head of Loch Tay.⁶⁴ The existence of

⁶¹ *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, ed. Joan Newlon Radnor (Dublin, 1978), 171–3.

⁶² Mark Hall, 'The cult of saints in Perthshire', *IR* 56 (2005), 61–88, at 69–71; Cormac Bourke, 'Insigniae Columbae II', in *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Dublin, 1997), 162–83, at 173–5. The later seal shows the crozier, or the crozier shrine, with what appears to be a large reliquary in the shape of a church building, presumably representing the principal reliquary of Columba at Dunkeld, the whole assemblage covered by a roof, towers and a series of arches, apparently representing Dunkeld cathedral itself.

⁶³ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 318, for this and other aspects of Robert's devotion to St Fillan. See *The Buik of the Cronicles of Scotland or A metrical version of the History of Hector Boece by William Stewart*, ed. W. Turnbull, 3 vols (London, 1858), iii, 227. Walter Bower cites thirty lines of verse attributed to Bernard, abbot of Arbroath, who is thought to have been at Bannockburn and may have borne the *Breacbennach* there. The poem names several saints: 'Happy is this day! John the Baptist was born on it; and St Andrew, and Thomas who shed his blood, along with the saints of the Scottish fatherland, will fight today for the honour of the people'. Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D. E. R. Watt *et al.*, 9 vols (Aberdeen and Edinburgh, 1987–98), vi, 365. There is no specific mention in Bernard's verse of Fillan or Columba as a national protector.

⁶⁴ For an extended discussion of the relics of Fillan and the territory in which his cult was so strong, see Simon Taylor, 'The cult of St Fillan in Scotland', in *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas R. Liszka and Lorna E. M. Walker (Dublin, 2001), 175–210; Joseph Anderson, 'Notice of the Quigrich or Crosier, and other relics of St Fillan in the possession of their hereditary keepers or dewars,

a dewar of Fillan's hand (Latin *manus* > Old Gaelic *man*, feminine) may lie behind a place-name *Dewarnamaynescroft* 'the croft of the dewar of the hand' in Killin.⁶⁵

The two relics of Columba and one of Fillan discussed above are the ones which have 'made it' into the historical record as fighting more or less successfully for the Scots. Elsewhere St Mungo or Kentigern is said to have fought for the bishop and people of Glasgow against an attack by Somerled in 1164 at Renfrew. A poem composed by William, a clerk of Glasgow, celebrates the saint's victory, following his invocation by Bishop Herbert: 'And to blessed Kentigern he attributed the victory, so keep you his memory always, and that fittingly.'⁶⁶ No reference is given here, however, to the relics of St Mungo as having brought about this miraculous victory. But as we have seen, references in a saint's literary dossier to miracles of a certain sort (whether in his or her life, or post mortem) sometimes reflect the cult of that saint's relics.

There is no good reason to doubt that saints were also invoked more locally to act for the militia of lesser territories and kindreds within the kingdom. I have found no clear indication of such uses of relics by lesser militia in Scotland,⁶⁷ but Lucas refers to several such uses of relics in battle by more local polities: the Cenél nÉogain of Tyrone for example, of whom it was said, 'Every difficulty and oppression in which the Clann Eoghain may be – if the bell is carried thrice around them, "twill save them from every danger"'.⁶⁸ It is likely that in Scotland similar patterns occurred, in which a saint would show fairly local loyalties when his clients were in conflict with their neighbours.

There is one charter in particular that may suggest that a crosier or *bachall* was involved in military support of some sort. In the early fourteenth century the abbot of Dunfermline abbey gave to Mariota, daughter of Richard Cook (or 'Richard the cook') 'that half of Pitbauchlie which the said Richard, her late father, held of us'.⁶⁹ Certain exemptions were given to her at the same time: she and her heirs were not to be compelled to come to the abbey's mill or smithy, nor were they to pay '*Dereth aut Slother*', but they were to attend the abbot's court and perform forinsec service as much as belonged to a third of a dabhach of land.⁷⁰ We will discuss the term *dereth* later, but the *slother* mentioned here, a due from which Mariota is exempt, may be a word derived from *slógad* 'hosting, military service'. This is unlikely to be military service due to the crown, since Mariota's lands are still obliged to pay 'forinsec service as much as belonged to a third of a dabhach', and forinsec service usually involves a requirement to serve (or pay for someone to serve) in the Scottish army, though other duties may be involved in a dabhach's forinsec service.⁷¹ The *slother* or *slógad* from which Mariota is exempt may well be related to her holding half of the farm of

in Glendochart, in 1549–50', *PSAS* 23 (1889), 110–18; John Stuart, 'Historical notices of St Fillan's crozier, and of the devotion of King Robert Bruce to St Fillan', *PSAS* 12 (1878), 134–85.

⁶⁵ It appears as in the following forms: *crofta* in *Killin nuncupta Dewar-Namais* (1632, *RMS*, viii, no. 1981); *Dewarnamanscroft* (1640, *Inquisitionum ad Capellam Domini Regis Retornatorum*, ed. T. Thomson, 3 vols (Edinburgh 1811–16) [hereafter *Retours*], Perth no. 494); *croftam vocat. Dewarnamais* (1642, *RMS*, ix, no. 1058); *Dewarnamaynes-croft* (1670, *Retours*, Perth no. 806). Watson suggested a connection between this place-name and the hand of St Fillan, *History of Celtic Place-Names*, 265.

⁶⁶ Translated by Gilbert Márkus, in *The Triumph Tree: Scotland's earliest poetry, AD 550–1350*, ed. Thomas Owen Clancy (Edinburgh, 1998), 212–14.

⁶⁷ It has been suggested that the *bachall* or crosier of St Moluag, kept by a *deòradh* on Lismore, might have had this function for the Campbell lords of Lorn: Caldwell, 'The Monymusk Reliquary', 275. Caldwell makes this suggestion on the basis of a charter of 1544 in which Archibald Campbell grants lands to his *signifer*, together with the keeping of the crosier. But the word *signifer* does not necessarily refer to the bearer of an object used as a battle standard.

⁶⁸ Lucas 'The social role', 19, citing W. M. Hennessy, *The Book of Fenagh* (Dublin, 1875), 233.

⁶⁹ *Registrum de Dunfermelyn: Liber Cartarum Abbatie Benedictine S.S. Trinitatis et B. Margarete Regine de Dunfermelyn*, ed. Cosmo Innes, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1842) [hereafter *Dunf. Reg.*], no. 339: *illam medietatem de Pethbauchly quam predictus Ricardus pater suus quondam de nobis tenuit*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ See the recent discussion by Broun, 'The property-records in the Book of Deer', 340–1.

Pitbauchlie, a name which contains Gaelic *bachall* ‘crossier’.⁷² Her land is probably part of a farm once held by the *deòradh* of a crossier, a relic of St Serf in all probability as Dunfermline’s lands were carved out of a territory that was once the *paruchia* of that saint. The exemption of this land from *slógad* would be an echo of a time when the holder of that relic was expected to appear with it at times of military encounter. Mariota’s exemption could be understood as implying that although she holds land which was once held by a *deòradh* who did military service with his relic, her services in that capacity are not actually required. Alternately, and given that the charter says that she and her heirs will ‘not pay’ (*non soluent*) *dereth* or *slother*, it may be that the *slother* or *slógad* was a due payable by all persons in a district, but that as she was in effect the *deòradh* of the original *bachall*, and her predecessors would presumably once have served with the *bachall* in the military expedition, she is exempt from that payment.

There is another possible explanation of the word *slother*, however, suggested by Gillies: *soláthar*, which he would explain as ‘manual labour’.⁷³ The word *soláthar* as defined by *DIL*, ‘act of gathering, collecting, procuring’, would certainly make sense in this context as a payment from which Mariota was exempt – a payment which would otherwise have been made to the abbot of Dunfermline. If we accept this, then we might also accept Gillies’ suggestion that the *dereth* which precedes *slother* in this clause is not *deòradh* but *daor-rath*, which here would mean the tribute of a person in base-clientship which in this case might be ‘food tribute’.⁷⁴

The relic as peace-maker

While a relic might be used to seek victory in battle for the *túath* or nation who were clients of the saint, it might also be used to ensure that no battle took place at all. We have already seen how an abbot of Iona, Cillíne Droictech who died in AD 751, took a chest or *scrín* of relics to Ireland to prevent war between Cenél Conaill and Cenél nÉogain. Lucas has listed a number of occasions in Irish history when treaties were signed in the presence of relics, thereby putting an end to, or possibly averting, violence. The role of relics in making treaties must surely be connected to their role in the swearing of oaths (which will be discussed below), since such treaties must generally have involved sworn commitments by the leaders of the parties in dispute.

It is tempting to suggest that early Gaelic laws have this kind of use of relics in mind when, in a list of twelve categories of special women in the *túath* who are not taken away from their normal circumstances to be nursed following an injury, one of the categories is ‘the woman who turns back the streams of war’ (*ben sues srutha cotha*). A later glossator interprets this passage: ‘such as the abbess of Kildare, that is the female *aibellteoir*, that is she who turns back the multitude of the sins of war by her prayer’.⁷⁵ If the gloss accurately represents the original meaning of the law, it is surely significant that the abbess is characterised as a *comarba*, the ‘heir’ of a saint, and so presumably someone who can deploy that saint’s relics (in the case cited, the relics of St Brigit of Kildare). It is hard to imagine any group of women in early medieval Ireland other than abbesses who might be described as

⁷² For discussion of this name, and of the eponymous *bachall*, see Simon Taylor (with Gilbert Márkus), *The Place-Names of Fife* (Donington, 2006–), i, 346–9. Here, incidentally, the authors make the mistake of confusing the *toschederach* with the *deòradh* (348 n. 57).

⁷³ Gillies, ‘Some thoughts’, 137.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, ed D. A. Binchy, 6 vols (Dublin, 1978) [hereafter *CIH*], 2294.35–6 (text), 2295.5–7 (gloss): *ut est bancomarba cille dara .i. in banaibellteoir .i. impodus imad peccad na cocad for culta trena hirnaigthi*. The word *aibellteoir* (with various spellings) is usually translated as ‘contemplative, recluse, hermit’, but I am not at all sure that this is the meaning, or the only meaning, of the word. It is noteworthy that it sometimes occurs in combination with the expression *deorad dé*, in several references given in *Dictionary of the Irish Language, based mainly on Old and Middle Irish materials*, Royal Irish Academy, compact edn (Dublin, 1983; repr. 1990) [hereafter *DIL*], s.v. *oíbelteóir*.

having the power to 'turn back the streams of war', given the minimal legal and political competence of women in that society.

However, the person wielding a relic or relics to prevent an outbreak of violence was not necessarily an abbot, abbess or bishop. A fascinating report survives of an incident which took place c.1601, where battle was averted through the very dramatic use of a relic, not in the hands of an abbot or bishop, but those of a cleric. The report is worth quoting at length, although the events took place in Ireland, because it seems to be a near-contemporary description of the actual use of a relic to stop a battle. To set the scene, Somhairle Buidhe Mac Domhnaill was a member of the powerful lordship which held lands on the western coast and islands of Scotland and also the Glens of Antrim on the facing Irish coast. He had three sons: James, Raghnaill (in this account called Rannell) and Aengus (the youngest, here called Aneas). When Somhairle died in 1589, James inherited. When James died in 1601 his brother Raghnaill should have inherited, but Aengus raised an army against him and sought to seize control. Raghnaill, apparently in Scotland when he heard about the insurrection, sailed to Ireland and sought negotiations with Aengus, but Aengus refused to meet him. At this point the narrative introduces 'St Patrick's Clerk' and his relic:

However, God was pleased not to let them engage, for that very day came St Patrick's Clerk who was called O'Dornan, and St. Patrick's bell in his hand. He enters the camp ringing the bell, and they were all amazed seeing O'Dornan coming in that posture, for his duty was to curse, and he only was the messenger between men of quality that was in variance <to> be mediator in all controversies busieness to the laity from the Church, to bless the Church and curse the malefactors. Rannell McSourl and all his camp made obeisance to St. Patrick's Clerk O'Dornan and threw off their head clothes and cried pardon. O'Dornan said, 'No pardon or pardon.'

Rannell McSourl said, 'What is the matter holy Clerk, or what is done to you? Inform me and you shall be rectified.'

'Sir I want nothing, and there is nothing done to me for I am a free man and no Christian will rob or plunder my territories, but I am very much concerned for you and your foolish prodigal brother Eneas' design.'

Rannell McSourl said, 'That is none of my fault as all here can testify.'

'I am very well satisfied with you and was so always, and I pray God and my Patron St Patrick bless and prosper you. Therefore in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost and my holy patron St. Patrick, I proclaim you Lord and Master of the Baronies of Dunluce and Kilcowy with your ancient Baronies of Cary and Glenarm if the lawful successor James Oge Mac Eneas Mac James of Kintyre comes not to challenge them.'

O'Dornan St Patrick's Clerk goes and takes leave of Rannell and all his gentry, who were all right well pleased with O'Dornan. They all rendered him many thanks. O'Dornan goes straightways to meet Eneas Ultagh, Eneas and his powerful army coming down the Braes of Glenbresh. O'Dornan lights of his horse and takes the bell and looks after him and cried, 'Halt.'

The men of the Glens being rude cries, 'What, shall we halt for the old fellow?'

'For your lives,' said Eneas Ultagh, 'move not a step to or fro.'

O'Dornan comes. Eneas said, 'What is all this ringing for?'

'This ringing,' said O'Dornan, 'is to curse you and your army for your unlawful insurrection against your older brother Rannell. For last night came over the Ban Macquilin and a powerful army of Irish and English, and they are by this time on the Braes of Glenarm, and I'm sure they will burn and plunder all the country when you and your brother is at variance, and your brother and you will lose what was gained by the blood of your gentlemen and followers.'

'Pray, holy Clerk, bless me and I will go and ask my brother's pardon.'

'I will bless you conditionally: that is, you'll disperse your army and send them back to defend the Country.'

Eneas Ultagh immediately commands the people back to defend their country and that he himself would <come> after them as soon as possibly he could. Eneas comes to Lochguile, and his brother Rannell came to meet him and they both kissed and embraced each other to the great joy and satisfaction of all the people, and then O'Dornan St Patrick's Clerk gave them a

general blessing. And then the gentry of the Root saluted Eneas Ultagh kindly and proclaimed the second time Ranell MacSourl Lord and Master of the Root.⁷⁶

We will return to other aspects of this story in due course, but for the moment it is sufficient to note that the keeper of the relic here is not an abbot or a bishop, but is described merely as a ‘clerk’. This probably means he was a priest, but the term ‘clerk’ would include the possibility that he was a deacon, or even in minor orders. Nevertheless, with his relic in his hand he is able to ‘turn back the streams of war’ with apparent ease – though we should bear in mind the likelihood that this dramatic scene did not happen in complete isolation, but happened against a background of discussion and negotiation between various interested parties, perhaps with O’Dornan acting as go-between, as the account notes,

he only was the messenger between men of quality that was in variance <to> be mediator in all controversies busieness to the laity from the Church, to bless the Church and curse the malefactors.

Finally as we are considering relics in time of war, it is interesting (if perhaps slightly anachronistic) to reflect that the early uses of relics such as Adomnán’s can be seen as an appeal to the power of saints to enforce the two main strands of what would later become known as Just War Theory: the *jus ad bellum* (Cillíne’s expedition to prevent war between two *cenéla*) which requires all peaceful means of resolving a conflict to be exhausted before resorting to violence, and the *jus in bello* (Cáin Adomnán’s protection of non-combatants) which governs the conduct of war itself. It is slightly surprising, one might add, that Adomnán’s Life of Columba does not portray his saint as attempting to prevent outbreaks of war, though he frequently punishes acts of violence committed in peace-time.⁷⁷

The relic and the swearing of oaths

Medieval Gaelic society was held together by a web of commitments in law: people binding themselves to each other by oaths in countless legal encounters, with witnesses and sureties and guarantors standing by, all of whom were committed to upholding the contract, bearing witness to its reality if it should ever be called into question. Some would be guarantors in case of a debtor defaulting, others would pursue a defaulter to enforce compliance with the contract. Some simply swore that the evidence they gave, during the perambulation of an estate for example, would be true. Also bearing witness at these moments were the saints of God who were also called on to act as sureties, guaranteeing the contract or the truthfulness of the oath being sworn.⁷⁸ As Gerald of Wales wrote, on visiting Ireland towards the end of the twelfth century:

I should not omit to mention also that the people and clergy of both Wales and Ireland have great reverence for bells that can be carried about, and staffs belonging to the saints, and made of gold and silver, or bronze, and curved at their upper ends. So much so that they fear to swear or perjure themselves in making oaths on these, much more than they do in swearing on the gospels. For through some hidden power as it were divinely given to these, and the vindictiveness in which the saints of this country seem to be very interested, those

⁷⁶ Archibald MacDonald, ‘A fragment of an Irish MS History of the MacDonalds of Antrim’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 37 (1934–6), 262–84, at 272. I have added some punctuation to the account as given, for the sake of clarity. I am much indebted to Thomas Owen Clancy for drawing this article to my attention.

⁷⁷ Gilbert Márkus, ‘Adomnán’s Law of the Innocents – AD 697’, in *A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology: The Law*, ed. Mark Mulhern (Edinburgh, forthcoming).

⁷⁸ See Robin Chapman Stacey, *The Road to Judgement: from Custom to Court in Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Philadelphia, 1994), ch. 8, ‘The suretyship of the gods’, for extensive discussion of the role of God and the saints in the exercise of law.

who show disrespect for these objects are usually chastised, and those that have transgressed are severely punished.⁷⁹

The person swearing might be engaged in something as ordinary as buying or selling a cow, or something as weighty as negotiating the end of a war. The invocation of supernatural powers as sureties who would guarantee the oath-swearer's fidelity appears in countless contexts. The tenth-century prologue to the *Cáin Adomnáin* lists the sureties given to Adomnán to guarantee the fulfilment of his law by those subject to it. They include 'sun and moon, and the elements of God besides; Peter and Paul, Andrew and the rest of the apostles; Gregory, the two Patricks, the two Ciaráns, the two Crónáns, the four Fintáns' and so on, a long list of supernatural powers who would 'stand between' Adomnán and those swearing to abide by the Law, enforcing the oath. In many cases, perhaps most, the saint was invoked by the introduction of his or her relics into the legal ritual and by the touching or kissing of the relics by those swearing the oath. Indeed, so closely connected is the swearing of an oath to the relic on which it is sworn that the Old Gaelic word for 'relic', *mind* or *minn*, came to mean 'oath' in Middle Gaelic. The modern Gaelic word for 'oath' is *mionn*. The word is used in both senses in a single passage in the *Beatha Lasrach* (Life of Lasair) where a cleric accuses a youth of stealing his mass-vestments. St Lasair asks the youth to swear his innocence on a relic called the *Ceolán* (a bell), but he is guilty and so 'the youth put forth his hand from his mantle to take the oath (*na mionn*), but could not close his hand about the relics (*fana mionnaibh*):'⁸⁰

What the oath implies is that the person swearing calls down the saint's anger on himself should he swear falsely. The saint would be dishonoured by a false oath, and would then have an interest in defending his or her honour by whatever forceful or violent means of persuasion or vengeance were thought necessary. Such swearing of oaths with supernatural guarantees is common in many societies. Indeed, although it is almost certainly a native Gaelic practice that stretches back into the pre-Christian past, it also has biblical precedents, and was thus one of those features of native Gaelic society that was readily 'baptised' or incorporated into Christian practice.⁸¹

The practice of swearing oaths on the relics of saints provides the context in which we should read the countless episodes in Gaelic and Welsh saints' *Lives* where they appear in what is – to modern liberal Christian eyes at least – a most unflattering light. Stacey remarks on the profile of Irish saints: 'vengeful saints and self-righteous relics keep order with considerable ferocity'.⁸² Even Giraldus thought it remarkable:

That the saints of this country seem to be of a vindictive cast of mind. This seems to me to be a thing to be noticed that just as the men of this country are during this mortal life more prone to anger and revenge than any other race, so in eternal death the saints of this land that have been elevated by their merits are more vindictive than the saints of any other region.⁸³

It cannot be stated too often that the purpose of medieval insular hagiography was not primarily to provide moral exemplars for imitation by the faithful. It was to establish and illustrate the holiness and therefore the *virtus* or power of the saint and thereby – among other things – to validate the various aspects of the cult of that saint, which include as one of the most important daily aspects of cultic activity: the custom of swearing on relics. The Gaelic-speaking saints in the *Lives*, annals and liturgical texts perform terrifying acts of bloodthirsty

⁷⁹ *Gerald of Wales: The History and Topography of Ireland*, ed. and trans. John O'Meara (London, 1982), 116.

⁸⁰ Gwynn, 'Life of Lasair', 98–9.

⁸¹ The biblical Hebrew oath takes the form of an utterance, 'May God do this to me and more if I do not ...', where the word 'this' was probably accompanied by some such gesture as touching the throat in such a way as to indicate death – perhaps with a slitting motion. See Paul Sanders, 'So may God do to me', *Biblica* 85 (2004), available on-line at <http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl85/Ani02.html>

⁸² Stacey, *The Road to Judgement*, 202.

⁸³ *Gerald of Wales: The History and Topography of Ireland*, ed. O'Meara, 91.

vengeance, vindictiveness and destruction. The annals of the Four Masters under the year 539 give a grim warning about swearing false oaths with the story of a deed of Saint Ciarán when he was still alive (his death is recorded in *AU* 549), a story that has clearly been cut from a pious legend about the saint and pasted into the annalistic record retrospectively.

The decapitation of Abacuc at the fair of Tailltiu, through the miracles of God and Ciaran; that is, a false oath he took upon the hand of Ciaran, so that a gangrene took him in his neck (i.e. St. Ciaran put his hand upon his neck), so that it cut off his head.⁸⁴

The implication is that if Ciarán could do this when he was alive, his hand-relic can do it still. Did an oath invoking Ciarán as a surety perhaps involve laying his hand-relic on the neck of the person swearing? Such stories were the background noise which reminded every medieval witness, cattle-trader, boundary-perambulator or judge of the terrible consequence of false swearing. They also provided reassurance: the person to whom an oath was sworn could be more confident that the person swearing was doing so truthfully, too terrified to do anything else. And even where the saint was not actually threatening dire vengeance on oath-breakers, the power of the relic to establish truthfulness was often stressed. In the *Vita Sancti Seruani*, for example, a thief utters a false oath, but the staff of St Serf reveals the truth:

Another time the man was in Airthrey, and he had a wether which he loved and cared for in his house. But a thief came and stole it. When they had searched the whole *paruchia* for the ram and not found it, see, the thief was brought into the presence of the blessed man. When he was asked by the saint if he was guilty of the crime, he denied it under oath. And as he began to swear again, on the crosier of the holy man, the wether bleated in his throat. And the wretch, confessing his sin, asked and received pardon from St Serf.⁸⁵

The story shows that, even without the explicit threat of dire punishment, the relic of a powerful saint can still be relied on to elicit the truth.

Numerous examples of actual oath-swearing on relics survive in the Scottish record, though vastly more survive from Ireland.⁸⁶ The medieval Welsh record, on the other hand, is positively awash with relics. As Stacey says of medieval Wales,

The relic was one of the cornerstones of Welsh legal process. Almost every oath offered in Welsh law was taken on relics, and almost every type of case had the potential to involve an oath. Relics were obviously expected to be readily available for legal purposes; indeed one passage allows an offender a maximum of three days to obtain the necessary relics, and this because he was a foreigner and was required in this case to use relics from his own particular locality ... Relics were as necessary to the legal process as were judges themselves.⁸⁷

For various reasons concerning the circumstances in which the surviving legal texts were composed, Gaelic laws have fewer and vaguer references to the central role of relics in legal processes than do the Welsh laws, but we can be confident that the two systems gave them similar roles.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, ed. J. O'Donovan, 6 vols (Dublin 1848–51), s.a. 539.

⁸⁵ Alan Macquarrie, 'Vita Sancti Servani: the Life of St Serf', *IR* 44 (1993), 122–52, at 142: *Alio tempore fuit ille uir in Atheren, et habuit quendam multonem quem diligebat et nutriebat in domo. Sed fur quidam ueniens furtim eum ei abstulit. Quesito autem ariete per totam parochiam illo non inuento ecce aductus fur ille in presentia beati uiri, et interrogatus a sancto si culpam criminis sibi illati haberet, sub iuramento renuit quod non habuit. Et incipiente eo iterum per baculum sancti uiri iurare, uerux in gutture suo balauit. Et ille miser confitens peccatum suum ueniam a sancto Seruano quesiuit et accepit* (my translation).

⁸⁶ See Lucas, 'The social role', 21–7, for a sample and useful discussion.

⁸⁷ Stacey, *The Road to Judgement*, 217.

⁸⁸ I am grateful to Bronagh Ní Chonaill of Glasgow University for her comments on the reasons for the discrepancy between the Gaelic and Welsh legal *corpora* in attestation of relics in oath-swearing.

In Scotland we find records of oaths taken on relics in quite varied circumstances. In 1221 Brice, the *judex regis*, supervised the perambulation of a disputed boundary near Balfeith, in Fordoun parish. He states that the good men who were performing the perambulation first swore ‘having received the reliquary from my hand’ (*accepto scrinario a manu mea*).⁸⁹ What is striking here is that it is the *judex*, not the *deòradh*, who actually administers the oath on the reliquary. Was there some overlap between the two roles? Could a man be simultaneously *judex* and *deòradh*? Did a *deòradh* turn up at the site of an assise and deliver the relics to the *judex*, who would then administer the oath? Clearly both officials could be concerned with administering the oaths of ‘good men’ in legal processes, but it is hard to identify the precise ritual involved. We should not assume, in fact, that the ritual was the same in all circumstances, nor that the same official always did the same thing with the relics.

In a dispute over some lands of the kirk of Aberchirder in 1492, it was agreed that the jurors would meet in assise ‘apone the soylve and grond of the saydis landis debatable’ to determine the lawful marches of the land ‘sworne tharto apone Sanct Marnoy’s ferteris in presens of the Kyngis iustice or his deput the bischop of Murray or his commissar’,⁹⁰ and when the assise met in January 1493 to resolve the dispute, the relic – St Marnan’s head – was the focus of the great oath sworn.⁹¹ The parish of Aberchirder was formerly called Marnoch, after the patron saint of the parish, Marnock or Marnan. Nothing in this charter indicates who had custody of the head, though the cult was apparently still flourishing in the early sixteenth century, when the Aberdeen Breviary reports,

his glorious head is accustomed to be washed on Sundays throughout the year with the clergy and people praying and lighting candles, and [the water] is accustomed to be given to the sick and those suffering from whatsoever illness ...⁹²

In 1518 members of Clan Macdulane entered into a bond of manrent with John Campbell of Cawdor and his heirs, the written form being confirmed ‘with our boydely aithis apone the mess buil and relic callit the *Arwachyll* at the Iil of Kilmolrue’.⁹³ The *Arwachyll* is clearly a crosier-relic, the name representing Gaelic *ar-bhachall* ‘the great crosier’. Again, there is no sign of a *deòradh* in the actual proceedings here, nor any sign of how the ritual process worked – except perhaps that the phrase ‘bodily oaths’ suggests actual physical contact with the relic. The crosier-relic was presumably a relic of St Maolrubha, given that the oath was sworn on the *Iil of Kilmolrue* (now called Eilean an t-Sagairt, ‘priest’s island’) and lies close to the shore of the Black Lochs in Muckairn where the lands of the farm of *Kilmolrue* (now Kilvaree, ‘church of St Maolrubha’) come down to the loch. Watson notes that Kilvaree is close to Balindore, and that this name is *baile an deòraidh* ‘farm of the dewar’, suggesting that the dewar of Balindore was custodian of the same relic (though Balindore actually lies 7km east of Eilean an t-Sagairt).⁹⁴ Campbell gives other evidence of the dewar’s family in the area around Balindore in 1541, suggesting that *Karistina nein a*

⁸⁹ British Museum MS. Add. 33245, fols 162v–163r, edited by G. W. S. Barrow in his *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 2003), 66–7.

⁹⁰ *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc*, ed. Cosmo Innes and Patrick Chalmers, Bannatyne Club, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1848–56) [hereafter *Arbroath Liber*], ii, 277, no. 339.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 278: *magno iuramento interueniente capite Sancti Marnani presente*.

⁹² *The Aberdeen Breviary*, feast of St Marnanus. An edition and translation of the Aberdeen Breviary, first published in 1510, is being prepared for publication by Alan Macquarrie, and should be in print (Four Courts Press) in the next year or two. I am most grateful to Dr Macquarrie for permission to quote from his text in its present state.

⁹³ *The Book of the Thaness of Cawdor*, ed. Cosmo Innes, Spalding Club (Edinburgh, 1859), 129.

⁹⁴ Watson, *History of Celtic Place-Names*, 266.

Dowra, Mora nein a Doura and *Joannis Glas Macgillemore vic indowra* listed among the inhabitants of Taynuilt, a few hundred metres from Balindore, were his kin.⁹⁵

While the evidence for swearing oaths on relics is clear in the few examples cited above, such examples are few in Scotland – especially, as I have said, in comparison with the material available for Wales and Ireland. The evidence from such surviving records is also disappointing as a source for understanding exactly how the *deòradh* behaved in such circumstances, what his rights and duties were, or even knowing whether he was necessarily present. It may be that in some cases relics were used *ad lib.* by local people who simply went to the church or chapel where the relic was kept and performed whatever ritual was required without the services of a *deòradh*. In other cases the terms by which the relic was held by the dewar might have required his presence at any occasion when it was used. In 1246 there was a perambulation of the bounds of Wester Fedale, and one of the sworn men (*iurati*) who had presumably sworn on some relic to give true evidence, was a man called ‘Simon Derech’.⁹⁶ The name Derech may indicate the presence of a *deòradh* at the perambulation, though one might question whether the man bearing the relic and administering the oath would be expected to swear and perform the perambulation himself. In yet other cases we might imagine that the dewar simply hired out the relic for whatever function it was used, as seems to have happened in Ireland with some relics.⁹⁷

The relic, the sick and the dead

It is hard to think of any medieval saint who did not have at least a couple of miracles of healing in his or her literary dossier. It is almost a *sine qua non* of sanctity – not for any doctrinal reason, but because it seems to have represented to the devout mind such a fundamental aspect of sanctity. But a saint who can work miracles of healing only in his or her lifetime is not of much interest to the devout. The point of recounting such stories in a *Vita* or a liturgical reading is to show that this saint is still worth approaching *now* as an instrument of God’s healing grace. We should see such stories not merely as attempts to show how holy the saint was when alive, but as proof of the healing power of the saint *after* his or her death – healing which might take place in a context of prayer, pilgrimage, or the use of a relic.

Similarly the devout looked to the saint for protection in the hour of death: *ora pro nobis peccatoribus nunc et in hora mortis nostrae* are words that could be addressed to any saint, not only to the Virgin as they usually are, and several saints have stories in their *Lives* of how they protected their clients during the ‘battle of the soul’, the struggle in the air between angels and demons which takes place over the soul of the dying.⁹⁸ The later manifestation of that power might be the promise that those who are buried close to a saint, in their churchyard, would benefit from his or her protection. Another manifestation of such a promise might be the power of the saint’s relic to protect the soul of the dying devotee.

The use of relics for healing may be illustrated by the cult of St Marnoch at Aberchirder, which included the rite in which

his glorious head is accustomed to be washed on Sundays throughout the year with the clergy and people praying and lighting candles, and [the water] is accustomed to be given to the sick and those suffering from whatsoever illness.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Alastair Campbell of Airds, *A History of Clan Campbell*, vol i: *from Origins to Flodden* (Edinburgh, 2000), 125. I am grateful to Alastair Campbell for sharing with me some of the results of his own investigation into the dewar in Scottish history.

⁹⁶ *Chartulary of the Abbey of Lindores, 1195–1479*, ed J. Dowden, Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 1903), no. 23.

⁹⁷ An interesting Irish example of this practice is cited by Joseph Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times: the Rhind Lectures in Archaeology 1879* (Edinburgh, 1881), 238.

⁹⁸ See, for example, *VC* iii.6, 8, 9, 13, describing such battles; for Columba’s power over demons, see *VC* iii.8, 13.

⁹⁹ *The Aberdeen Breviary*, feast of St Marnanus.

In the sixteenth century, in a time of plague, the bishop of Dunkeld sent his chancellor out with water in which a bone of St Columba had been washed, and many of the sick recovered their health on drinking it, while one man (wishing that the bishop had sent beer instead of water!) died and was buried along with twenty-nine others who had not drunk the blessed water.¹⁰⁰ At Ardchattan the bell of St Baodán was revered for its healing power, being taken to the sick in other parishes. Smith notes a local legend that ‘if it was not immediately carried back, it would take the matter into its own hands and fly through the air to its home’.¹⁰¹

As for the sick, so for the dead: protection by the saint in hagiographical literature was matched by the protection of his or her relic in local cult. Donald Dewar and his family held the forty-penny lands of *Garrindewar* until 1572 in return for the service they provided with a holy bell-relic: ‘for ringing of a bell before dead people in the parish of Kilmahog’.¹⁰² Likewise St Finan’s bell on Loch Shiel, Ardnamurchan, was used up until at least the nineteenth century to lead funeral processions to the graveyard.¹⁰³ It is likely that the relics used for the benefit of the sick and the dying were borne by the *deòraidhean* responsible for them, though there may also have been less formal arrangements in which people accessed the relic directly, or more formal arrangements where the relic was made available by a cleric in, or from, a church where the relic was kept.

The relic as king-maker

I have already mentioned the possibility that Adomnán had a relic of St Columba’s hand in the seventh century, and that it was a relic for which he urged a role in the inauguration of kings. A thirteenth-century seal of Scone abbey portrays the inauguration of Alexander III in 1249, showing a figure who is holding out in the direction of the king’s head an object which looks remarkably like a small house- or church-shaped shrine, of the sort exemplified by the *Breacbennach*.¹⁰⁴ I cannot tell from a photograph of the seal whether the man bearing the small object is a cleric or a layman, though two figures lower in the seal appear to be wearing chasubles or other long flowing (ecclesiastical) garments.¹⁰⁵

A later use of another important reliquary at the coronation of a monarch seems to occur in 1488 when the *Bearnan* or bell of St Fillan was used in the coronation of James IV at Scone. The king left a gratuity ‘til a man that beyris Sanct Fyllanis bell, at the Kingis commande, xvijij s.’.¹⁰⁶ Given the description of the bearer as ‘a man’, rather than an ecclesiastic of any sort, it is likely that the bearer was a layman, quite possibly the *deòradh* of the bell who held a croft at Suie in Glendochart called *Dewar-Vernans-croft*, ‘croft of the dewar of the *bearnan*’.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, the coronation of James IV took place not only on the anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn (24 June), but also with a relic (albeit a different relic) of the saint who had brought victory in that battle.

Protection of places and livestock

The saints whose relics were held by dewars were clearly concerned with the maintenance of law and order, with the proper swearing of oaths, as we have seen. Another feature of this concern was their interest in the protection of property, especially of livestock. This seems to have caused a certain amount of scholarly confusion in the interpretations to date of some of the records of the *deòradh* in Scotland. In September 1384 Abbot John of Arbroath granted

¹⁰⁰ A. Myln, *Vitae Dunkeldensis Ecclesiae Episcoporum*, ed. Thomas Thomson, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1823), 43.

¹⁰¹ R. Angus Smith, *Loch Etive and the sons of Uisneach* (London, 1885), 275–6.

¹⁰² RMS, iv, no. 2092: *pro pulsatione unius campae coram mortuis personis infra parochiam de Kilmahog*.

¹⁰³ Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 198.

¹⁰⁴ Bannerman, ‘*Comarba Coluim Chille*’, 127–31.

¹⁰⁵ The photograph appears in Ragnall Ó Floinn, ‘*Insigniae Columbae I*’, in *Studies in the Cult of St Columba*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Dublin, 1997), 136–61, at 145.

¹⁰⁶ *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Dickson *et al.*, 13 vols (Edinburgh 1877–1978), i, 88.

¹⁰⁷ RMS, viii, no. 1981 (1632).

‘the office of our *deòradh* of Tarves’ (*officium derethy nostri de Terwas*) to Thomas de Lochane and his heirs.¹⁰⁸ The church of Tarves had been held by Arbroath abbey since 1178, when the monastery was founded. Presumably the relic and the presence of a *deòradh* was an even earlier feature of the local church, and one which lay in the gift of the abbey as part of the patrimony of the local church. The same official, the dewar of Tarves, appears again in 1527, when ‘the office of *deòradh* within the said parish, with a toft and croft and other pertinents of the office’ (*officium de le deray infra dictam parochiam cum tofto crofta et aliis pertinenciis officii*) is set for nineteen years to William Gray and his family. The charter continues, most interestingly, to define the dewar’s reciprocal obligations:

and for the office of the *deòradh* they must guard the oxen, cows and all things assigned to them in the northern parts by the chamberlains and officers of the abbot, driving them and delivering them to the servants of the abbot in the town of Glenfarquhar at their own expense when they are required.¹⁰⁹

This role of the dewar as the ‘keeper’ or ‘guardian’ of herds of animals was discussed by Dickinson, who saw in this ‘keeping’ a reflection of the role of a *custos*, and speculated that this might resemble ‘the office of a *custos* or a serjeant’ elsewhere, or an office like that of the *custos pacis* in England, ‘an office usually held by the *serjeant* of the peace whether of the king or of the baron’.¹¹⁰ This was all part of Dickinson’s view of the *deòradh* as connected to the *toschederach*, and so he came to see the *deòradh* of Tarves as having once been favoured with a higher role, but ‘the service had fallen to that of taking charge of the bestial’.¹¹¹ I would argue, however, that the role of the *deòradh* of Tarves as guardian of the abbot’s herds was an original feature of the office, not the result of a fall in status, and that it has nothing to do with the *toschederach*.

Let us return to that passage from the *Vita Sancti Seruani* which we have already discussed with respect to Serf’s *bachall* or crosier and its power to detect a false oath. It is significant that the false oath in question was about the theft of the saint’s beloved sheep. If Serf’s *bachall* could protect his sheep in Airthrey while he was alive, it seems likely that it could also do so centuries later when his *Vita* was composed, the relic now in the hands of someone we must assume was the *deòradh* of St Serf in Airthrey, perhaps still holding a toft and croft there in return for looking after the sheep of the monks of Culross. We catch many other glimpses of saints in medieval literature guarding their livestock. In *Betha Colmáin maic Lúacháin* we encounter a man called Conchraid whose ox has been stolen:

He went upon its track with his bell in his hand, and each time he went off its track his bell sounded. And so they continued until they reached Caill Cellan in Fartullagh. And there he came upon the thieves skinning his ox. And Conchraid demanded it of them, and the thieves gave it to him. And the cleric said to it: ‘It is permitted to thee to rise.’ Forthwith the ox rose up.¹¹²

Such stories may not always refer so clearly to any object that might have become a relic, but as a relic was something which made a ‘real presence’ of the saint, and as the literary aspect of a saint’s cult often represented and legitimised other contemporary aspects of the cult (including the use of his or her relics), we can read all such stories as at least potentially

¹⁰⁸ *Arbroath Liber*, ii, no. 148.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, no. 676: *et pro officio de ly deray tenebuntur ad custodiam boum vaccarum et omnium per camerarios seu officarios abbatis in patribus borealibus ipsis assignandorum et ad agitandum et redeliberandum eosdem seruatoribus abbatis in uilla de Glenfarquhar sumptibus suis cum requisiti fuerint*. The ‘northern parts’ presumably refers to the northern territories held by Arbroath abbey, and therefore describes an area of operation for the *deòradh* – wherever the abbey has its bestial, there he must be guarding them.

¹¹⁰ Dickinson, ‘The *Toschederach*’, 91–2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹¹² ‘*Betha Colmáin maic Lúacháin*: Life of Colmán son of Lúachán’, ed. Kuno Meyer, Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series (Dublin, 1911), § 54.

representing a concern to use the saint's power (manifested in a relic or not) for the protection of livestock. So in the office of St Blane in the Aberdeen Breviary the saint's power punishes men who have stolen his cows: 'Suddenly they fall, felled by a bolt of lightning, who unjustly stole the bishop's cattle'.¹¹³

Saints could protect other parts of their property, too. In the cult of St Moluag, 'a thief stole books and went from the bishop's house; immediately he was struck blind and led to penitence'.¹¹⁴ St Machan had a yoke of oxen to cultivate the earth, for the feeding of himself and the poor. When they were stolen by thieves, Machan turned them to stone and later returned them to their natural state.¹¹⁵ Most dramatically of all, and in a hymn which seems to imply that St Ninian's *bachall* or pastoral staff was actually involved in the arrest of thieves, we find this verse:

A bull approaches the leader of the thieves,
The brutal one is cut down by the horn of the brute,
His belly ripped open, his life is destroyed;
But he is made alive and whole again.
The thieves flee, running to and fro;
They are captured in the town of his pastoral staff.¹¹⁶

This last line surely suggests that wherever the thieves were running they were bound to run out of luck 'in the town of his pastoral staff' (*in municipio baculi*). The presence of a pastoral staff in the verse suggests that there was a town (or perhaps *in municipio* would be better translated 'in the protected area') which was under the protection of a staff believed to have been Ninian's, and perhaps also a *deòradh* whose job was the protection of Whithorn's livestock, like the job of the dewar of Tarves.

We get a glimpse of a similar role for saints and relics in protecting church property, and other property too, in twelfth-century Wales. Giraldus writes of a situation where cattle can graze safely – safe from thieves, one supposes – because the people respect the church and its relics:

As I can bear witness, they pay greater respect than any other people to their churches, to men in orders, the relics of the saints, bishops' crooks, bells, holy books and the Cross itself, for which they show great reverence. This is the reason why the churches in Wales are more quiet and tranquil than those elsewhere. Around them the cattle graze so peacefully, not only in the churchyards, but outside too, within the fences and ditches marked out and set by bishops to set sanctuary limits.¹¹⁷

It may be that we can see an illustration, as early as the seventh century, of a similar interest in the protection of churches from violence and robbery, and in the role of relics in establishing that protection, in a section of Adomnán's Law:

There is another enactment of this *Cáin*: full honour price is paid to each church of lawful customs; half payment to her [for an offence committed] in her confines beyond the green; full payment to her for [an offence against] each ecclesiastical order, for wounding and robbery and burning; half payment for [offences against] her sanctuaries; half payment only for [an

¹¹³ Macquarrie, *The Aberdeen Breviary* (forthcoming), Office of St Blane: *Mox ictu fulminis prostrati corruunt, qui uaccas presulis iniuste rapiunt*.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Office of St Moluag: *Latro libros furatus, ab ede presulis egressus, illico priuatur lumine, penitencia tamen ductus*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Office of St Machan.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Office of St Ninian: *Ducem furum taurus aggreditur, cornu bruti brutalis ceditur; rupto uentre, uita discutitur, rursum uiuus ac sanus redditur. Discursu deuio uolant latrunculi; in municipio stringuntur baculi*. The story here is clearly based on the eighth-century account in the *Miracles of St Nynia* (*The Triumph Tree*, ed. Thomas Clancy, 131–2, trans. Gilbert Márkus), though this poem does not record the place of arrest as the town of the *bachall* as the Office does.

¹¹⁷ *Gerald of Wales: The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1978), 253–4.

offence against] the tonsured clergy if it is without wounding and without robbery. Full payment is made to any church for violating her relics, wherever it is done.¹¹⁸

Another *locus classicus* often cited for a similar role for the *deòradh* is the record of an inquest in 1428¹¹⁹ ‘concerning the authority and privileges of a certain relic of Saint Fillan which is commonly called *Coygerach*’.¹²⁰ The jurors swore a great oath concerning certain rights due to ‘the bearer of the relic of the *Coygerach*, who was commonly called the *Deòradh*’ (*lator ipsius reliquiae de Coygerach qui Jore vulgariter dicitur*), heritable rights which had been granted to his ancestor by King Robert Bruce, but which we might suppose to have been held by that man’s predecessors long before any royal grant. We will return to these rights later. Our interest for the present is in his duties as expressed in this document:

In return for these rights and privileges, the said jurors say that if some goods or chattels should happen to be seized or stolen from anyone dwelling in the said parish of Glendochart, and he from whom the goods or chattels were seized or stolen does not dare to pursue the said goods or chattels, either because of doubt as to the identity of the thief or because of the hatred of his enemies, then he should send a servant or a man to the same *deòradh* of the *Coygerach*, with four pennies, or a pair of shoes (or socks?), with food for the first night, and then the same *deòradh* will set off from there in pursuit of the said chattels at his own expense, wherever he might wish to pursue them in the kingdom of Scotland.¹²¹

The office of the *Jore* described here is probably in principle the same as that of the *deray* in Tarves: the enforcement of a saint’s protection symbolised by the presence of his crosier (the *coygerach*) over a certain territory, perhaps what was referred to as the *municipium baculi* in the hymn to St Ninian which we looked at above. The protected territory in this case is stated to be the ‘parish of Glendochart’.¹²² Note, incidentally that the protection seems to extend to all kinds of moveable goods. *Catalla* can simply mean ‘cattle’, but in the phrase *bona et catalla* it seems to reflect the common legal term for all moveable personal property, ‘goods and chattels’. We should not imagine that cattle were necessarily the only goods at stake when the *deòradh* of St Fillan’s crosier exercised his office.¹²³

The role of the *deòradh* of Glendochart in the pursuit of stolen goods in the fourteenth century has been seen as a reflection of a much earlier legal duty placed on the ‘Abbot of Glendochart’ by the *Leges Scocie*.¹²⁴ In a law which as it stands seems to date from the late twelfth century, but which may incorporate elements from the time of David I (1124–53), those accused of theft of cattle (or perhaps we should again read ‘chattels’ – *de catallo*

¹¹⁸ Márkus, *Adomnán’s Law*, 21, § 36.

¹¹⁹ *Black Book of Taymouth*, ed. Cosmo Innes, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1855), preface, xxxv–xxxvi; also in *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, vol. iii (Aberdeen, 1846), 237–40.

¹²⁰ *de et super autoritate et privilegijis cujusdam Reliquiae Sancti Felani, que vulgariter dicitur Coygerach*.

¹²¹ *Pro quibus commodis et privilegijis, prefati jurati dicunt quod si contingerit aliqua bona vel catalla rapta esse, vel furata ab aliquo dictam parochiam de Glendochirde inhabitante, et is a quo ipsa bona vel catalla rapta essent vel furata, propter dubium sue persone vel inimicitias hostium, eadem bona vel catalla prosequi non auderet, tunc unum servum suum vel hominem mitteret ad eundem Jore de le Coygerach, cum quatuor denariis vel pare so<c>ularum, cum victu prime noctis, et tunc idem Jore abinde suis proprijs expensis prosequetur dicta catalla ubincunq; exinde sectum querere poterit infra regnum Scotie*.

¹²² This is the parish now called Killin, but until 1617 it included what is now the parish of Strath Fillan. See Taylor, *The cult of St Fillan*, 183, and 187 for map of the territory.

¹²³ Taylor comments that ‘Glen Dochart (including Strath Fillan) was the chief conduit for cattle moving between the western Highlands to the central belt’: *ibid.*, 186–7 n. Of course, for most people in the highlands their cattle probably did constitute the greatest part of their moveable wealth or *catalla*. But the role of the *deòradh* is not necessarily concerned with cattle *per se*.

¹²⁴ Stuart, ‘Historical notices’, 140–1; Dickinson, ‘The *Toschederach*’, 104–5; Hector MacQueen, ‘Scots law under Alexander III’, www.stairsociety.org/bernems.htm (accessed 30 November 2009); Taylor, ‘The cult of St Fillan’, 185–6.

furato) are required to be taken to certain judicial centres for trial. They are also required to summon their warrantors, people who will give evidence on their behalf:

And if the accused cannot produce his warrantor, and if the warrantor refuses to accompany the accused, the sergeands shall summon the lord of the warrantor so that the lord himself shall make him come with the accused and be his warrantor.¹²⁵

Particular lords are given the power to compel warrantors in particular areas, and

if the accused calls some warrantor in Argyll which belongs to Scotia, then let him come to the Earl of Atholl or to the Abbot of Glendochart and they will send their men with him who will give evidence at the said assise.¹²⁶

The ‘abbot of Glendochart’ is the head of an earlier abbey associated with St Fillan, some of whose rights and lands were later taken over by the Augustinian priory of Strath Fillan, a dependency of Inchaffray abbey. But some of the earlier abbot’s rights passed to various families of what we might see as hereditary monastic officials – that is laymen exercising offices once attached to the old monastery.¹²⁷ The abbot of Glendochart in *Leges Scocie* is acting not as head of a religious house, but as secular lord of the lands of Glendochart, acting over his men in the same way that the earl of Atholl might be expected to act over his, compelling them to act as warrantors when someone is charged with theft. There is no question here of the abbot of Glendochart being concerned, as the *deòradh* was, with the theft itself, nor with recovering the chattels or cattle allegedly stolen, nor even with the conviction of the thief. His role here is limited to making sure that the warrantors comply with their obligation to turn up at the appointed time and place. In this respect, the abbot’s role is quite different from that of the *deòradh* and depends on his lordship over the men of his territory rather than on his religious authority or the custody of any relic. In his power to compel warrantors, the abbot acted like an earl, and should be seen as exercising this duty and power as any other secular magnate might – indeed *Leges Scocie* says that the earl of Atholl, the earl of Menteith and the sheriff of Inverness are all expected to act in this way.¹²⁸

MacQueen points out that the jurisdiction of the *deòradh* ‘involved the pursuit of stolen goods and may well have also included a witnessing function’,¹²⁹ and that the warrantor called by an accused person was also a sort of witness.¹³⁰ MacQueen is probably right that the *deòradh* was concerned with witnessing, but perhaps primarily in the sense that he used the authority and power of his relic to obtain truthful oaths from the witnesses in an attempt to establish the true ownership of cattle or chattels. But the abbot’s concern with witnesses or warrantors was different, and related only to the requirement that such warrantors should be made to accompany the accused to trial. A connection between the *deòradh* and the abbot should not be ruled out, therefore, but it is not entirely obvious exactly what the connection might be.

¹²⁵ Alice Taylor, ‘*Leges Scocie* and the lawcodes of David I, William the Lion and Alexander II’, *SHR* 88 (2009), 207–88, at 253: *Et quid debeat quod non possit habere warentum suum et si warentus noluerit sequi calumpniatum seruietes conueniant dominum warenti ut ipse dominus faciat illum uenire cum calumpniato et esse eius warentus* (my translation). For dating of this section of *Leges Scocie*, see *ibid.*, 243.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 254: *Item si calumpniatus warentum aliquem in Ergadia uocauerit que pertinet ad Scociam [tunc] ueniat ad Comitum Atholie uel ad Abbatem Clendrochard et ipsi mittent cum eo homines suos qui testentur supra dictam assisam* (my translation).

¹²⁷ Taylor, ‘The cult of St Fillan’, 185–6.

¹²⁸ Taylor, ‘*Leges Scocie*’, 253–4.

¹²⁹ MacQueen, ‘Scots law’.

¹³⁰ The warrantor may not have been *merely* a witness, but witnessing was certainly part of his function, and it can be assumed that he was oath-bound to truthfulness. This is touched on briefly by Dauvit Broun, *The Charters of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland in the Early and Central Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1994), 26.

Finally, in relation to the protection of property by a *deòradh*, we might note that the work of the *deòradh* of the same relic in 1488, Malice Dowe (that is, *Maol Iosa Dubh*), was supported by a letter given under the privy seal by James IV, requiring that his subjects:

redily ansuere, intend and obey to the said Malice Dowe in the peccable broiking and joising of the said relic, and that ye, or nain of ye, tak upon hand to compell nor distrenyie him to mak obedience, nor ansuere to you, not till ony uther, but allenerly to us and oure successouris ... and that ye mak him nane impediment, letting nor distroublance in the passing with the said relic throu the contre, as he and his forbearis was wount to do ...¹³¹

Clearly the *deòradh* could hope to enjoy the public support of the king's subjects, as he enjoyed the support of the king. The protective power of the dewar and his relic was therefore not entirely dependent on the strength of local feeling and devotion to a particular relic (though that can only have helped), but could be knitted into and supported by the structures of authority at the highest level.

We might briefly examine one further charter in which a dewar appears in connection to some service to be rendered to an abbot. The abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Dunfermline granted, c.1300:

to Simon called *Dereth*, son of the late Thomas *Dereth* of Kinglassie, the office of *dereth* of the said place, and all of the annual renders belonging to the same office, to be held and possessed by the said Simon and his heirs ... well and quietly, as long as his heirs are found worthy, sufficient and useful in competently carrying out the said office. If however they should be useless at carrying it out, let whoever is abbot at the time provide for and organise the said office as seems best to him.¹³²

Dickinson cites this charter, and notes that the rubric of the charter describes it as *Carta de Dereth*, while a later hand has added to the rubric an explanation of the term *dereth: hoc est officium sergiandi*.¹³³ The fact that the later scribe thought that the word *dereth* needed explaining may suggest that the term might have become somewhat obscure in Fife by the time the later scribe produced this explanation, perhaps in the fourteenth century. Dickinson advises caution here, but the scribe's definition of the office of *dereth* as *sergiandum* gives him strong encouragement once again to connect the *dereth* or *deòradh* with the *toschederach*, since he knows that *toschederach* and *sergeand* were closely related offices (as we saw above). But the *officium sergiandi* of the rubric should not be seen as implying that the *dereth* is anything like the crown official who was called the 'sergeand' – a member of the caste of curial and crown officials which also included the mair of fee, the *toschederach* and the coroner.¹³⁴ 'Serjeanty', ultimately from Latin *serviens*, can refer to any kind of tenure held in return for services to a lord, and the services rendered by a sergeant may include almost any service – domestic, agricultural, medical, administrative and so on.¹³⁵ As it seems most unlikely that a Benedictine abbey like Dunfermline would have been in the business of giving out relics and setting up hereditary *deòraidhean* in the Gaelic pattern, the most plausible

¹³¹ *Black Book of Taymouth*, ed. Innes, xxxvi–xxxvii.

¹³² *Dunf. Reg.*, no. 234: *Symoni dicto Dereth, filio quondam Thome Dereth de Kynglassy, officium vel Dereth loci prenominati, et annuos redditus eidem officio pertinentes in omnibus et singulis, tenendum et habendum predicto Symoni et heredibus suis ... bene et quiete, si tamen heredes sui ad dictum officium competenter faciendum digni inuenti fuerint sufficientes et utiles. Si vero ad illud faciendum fuerint inutiles, abbas qui pro tempore fuerit de dicto officio prout melius viderit expedire prouideat et ordinet.*

¹³³ Dickinson, 'The *Toschederach*', 89–90.

¹³⁴ Dickinson, *The Sheriff Court Book*, lxii–lxvi. See also references to 'sergeands' in the early pages of the present article.

¹³⁵ 'Miss Bateson', cited in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edn (Cambridge, 1911), s.v. *serjeanty*, lists the services as including, 'the serjeanty of holding the king's head when he made a rough passage across the Channel, of pulling a rope when his vessel landed, of counting his chessmen on Christmas day, of bringing fuel to his castle, of doing his carpentry, of finding his potherbs ...'

explanation of the situation of Simon *Dereth* in around 1300 is as follows: most of west Fife seems to have once been part of the *paruchia* or sphere of influence of the monastery of Culross, founded by St Serf, perhaps around AD 700, and we can be fairly sure from the *Vita Sancti Seruani* and from place-names in Dunfermline parish such as Pitbauchlie (containing *bachall* ‘crosier’) and Pitliver (*leabhar* ‘book’) that some relics of the saint were kept in the area, including one in the lands of Kinglassie which was kept by a *deòradh* whose descendants still appear in the thirteenth century. With the foundation of a new Benedictine monastery at Dunfermline in the eleventh century, the Serf *paruchia* in this area collapsed, but the *deòraidhean* continued to function with their relics, though they were now incorporated into the new regime of Dunfermline abbey and were subject to the abbot of Dunfermline as their lord. The service that Simon *Dereth*’s ancestors had done for the ‘Servite’ monks of Culross and/or nearby Loch Leven were now to be done by Simon for the abbot of Dunfermline. Whatever service he was doing for the abbot, it was something that was sufficiently demanding for the abbot of Dunfermline to imagine that Simon’s heirs might be unable to do it, and so to think it worthwhile to include a clause about what would happen ‘if they should be found useless’. The protection of livestock could well have been the service which Simon and his heirs were to render, especially as there is some evidence that Kinglassie was an important area of dairy-production.¹³⁶

The economy of the deòradh

There was of course an economic aspect to the role of the *deòradh*, but the evidence suggests that there may not be a very simple answer to the question, ‘how did the *deòradh* earn his living’? The answer will probably not be the same for all places, all times and all relics. We have already looked at the narrative about O’Dornan, the keeper of St Patrick’s bell in Antrim in the early seventeenth century. The author adds at the end of this account,

This O’Dornan St Patrick’s Clerk was a free man; he had the firstlings of all the Diocese of Conor besides his rents which came to two hundred pounds sterling or more.¹³⁷

O’Dornan was clearly a wealthy man. But he was also a cleric, and St Patrick’s bell may have been a more than typically powerful relic. Certainly the record does not suggest that the typical Scottish *deòradh* enjoyed revenues on that scale. But Findlay Dewar (*Finlae Jore*) of Glendochart did enjoy a considerable revenue for his custody of St Fillan’s staff as defined by the inquest into his rights in 1428:

He is to have annually and hereditarily from every inhabitant of the parish of Glendochart who has or works a merk of land, whether freehold or in rent, half a *boll* of flour; and from everyone in this parish having half a merk of land, in freehold or for rent as above, a bushel of flour; and from everyone in the parish having forty-pennies of land, half a bushel of flour. And if anyone in the parish has more than a merk of land, he is to pay nothing more than was ordained to be paid for one merk of land.¹³⁸

In addition to this revenue, it will be recalled, Findlay Dewar and his heirs were to be paid on a case by case basis. Each time they were called out to pursue stolen goods they were to be paid four pence or a pair of shoes (*quatuor denariis vel pare so<c>ularum*).¹³⁹

In 1199 x 1209 an agreement was made between Gellin son of Gillechrìosd Mac Cussegerri and the canons of St Andrews priory, in which Gellin quitclaimed to the canons any right he might have had in two pieces of land, in return for which

the canons granted him that he might carry the *Morbrac*, as Gille<mur> carried it previously, and he would have from them (or from it?) food and clothing as Gille<mur> had, and

¹³⁶ Taylor (with Márkus), *The Place-Names of Fife*, i, 443–5.

¹³⁷ MacDonald, ‘A Fragment’, 273.

¹³⁸ *The Black Book of Taymouth*, ed. Innes, xxxv–xxxvi.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

furthermore the canons gave him annually for charity's sake a chaldre of oat flour for the rest of his life.¹⁴⁰

The *Morbrac* is presumably a reliquary of some sort, the first part being Gaelic *mòr* 'big, great', and the second part being *breac* 'speckled, variegated', a term used of decorated relic-shrines, as in the case of the *Breacbennach* which we discussed above. Quite what it meant for Gellin to 'bear' this relic is not clear. It could simply have been the right to bear the relic in a procession, but an alternative explanation, and one that would fit the pattern that we find in other cases, was that he was being appointed *deòradh* of a relic or reliquary called *Morbrac*, and that he should 'bear' it (the words used are *ferat*, *tulit*) in exactly the same sense that Findlay Dewar was said to be the 'bearer' (*lator*, from the same verb *fero*, *latus*) of the relic of St Fillan. What the relic was, and what his duties were with regard to 'bearing' it, we cannot now say, though the *Morbrac* may very well have held a relic of St Andrew.

But there are other interesting features of this charter to Gellin. First of all, he has no visible hereditary right to bear the *Morbrac*, but seems to acquire it by quitclaiming all rights in two pieces of land, *Sconin* (Scoonie, St Andrews and St Leonards parish) and a place called *Garried*, which is now lost. Secondly, Gellin had earlier owned the land of *Gariad*, and had at some point prior to this charter exchanged it for Scoonie, which the canons had held.¹⁴¹ Thirdly note that *Garried* appears in several early lists of lands belonging to St Andrews priory, in a position immediately preceding a piece of land called (in varying spellings) *Neuethin-Endereth*, a name which seems to represent Old or Middle Gaelic *nemed(in) in deoraid* (modern Gaelic *neimhidh an deòraidh*) 'church-land or glebe of the dewar'. Does the fact that Gellin had once held land which appears almost always in juxtaposition with 'church-land of the dewar' suggest that he may have had some connection with 'dewarship' already?¹⁴² The connection to the dewarship may not have been hereditary, however; it might rather have been attached to the land of *Garried* and/or *Neuethin-Endereth*.¹⁴³

When Simon *Dereth* was granted the office of dewar (*officium derethi*) of Kinglassie, around 1300, as discussed above, he was granted it with 'the annual renders belonging to the same office' (*annuos redditus eidem officio pertinentes*).¹⁴⁴ In 1485 the abbot of Arbroath assigned to Alexander Symson, vicar of Banchory-Ternan 'all right which we have ... in the bell of St Ternan of Banchory, with ... emoluments which come from it'.¹⁴⁵ Clearly the rights over the revenues of the bell are in some sense ecclesiastical and vested in the abbot (since Arbroath abbey held the parish kirk), but at the same time there is also a clear indication of a hereditary right to the bell itself and to a 'dewar's croft' associated with the bell, as witnessed by an indenture of 'the lease of the bell of St Ternan of Banchory-Ternan' (*assedacionis campani sancti Tiernani de Banchoriterne*) made in 1490 between the same Alexander Symson, vicar of Banchory-Ternan, and one John Stalker:

That nochtvythstanding the said Jhone Stalkaris clame of intreiss in and to the bell of Saint Ternen callit the Ronecht be the reson of heritage pertening and mowyn to hyme be his wife, the said Jhon has neuer the less for hym and his viffe, be consent of hir, renunciijt and frely gewyn ouer all rycht and cleme of intresse that he or his viffe haid, has or may hawe in tyme cuming for thame and thair ayris to the said Alexander and his successouris vicaris of

¹⁴⁰ *Liber Cartarum Prioratus Sancti Andree in Scotia*, [ed. Thomas Thomson], Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1841), 329: *Canonici uero concesserunt ei ut ferat Morbrac sicut Gillem<ur> ante tulit et habebit ab ill. uictum et uestitum sicut Gillem<ur> habuit. Preterea canonici dabunt ei intuitu caritatis annuatim in uita sua unam celdram farine auene*. The personal name here is *Gille Muire* 'servant or devotee of Mary'.

¹⁴¹ ... *terram de Sconin ... quam habuit de illis in escambio pro terra de Gariad ...*

¹⁴² For a fuller discussion of the lands of *Gariad*, Gellin's charter and the dewarship of this relic, see Taylor (with Márkus), *The Place-Names of Fife*, iii, 468–70, 499–502.

¹⁴³ This was suggested by David McRoberts, 'The glorious house of St Andrew', in *The Medieval Church of St Andrews*, ed. David McRoberts (Glasgow, 1976), 63–120, at 99.

¹⁴⁴ *Dunf. Reg.*, no. 234.

¹⁴⁵ *Arbroath Liber*, ii, no. 288: *omne ius ... si quod habemus ... ad campanam Sancti Ternani de Banchory cum ... emolumentis que exinde prouenire contingerint*.

Banquhoriterne. And eftyr the deliuerans and rasat of the said bell the said Schir Alexander considering the expensis and laboris sustenit be the said Jhone and the pouerte of hym at the requestis of the said lorde Erll marchel and Alexander Irwyn maid assedacion of the said bell wytht the profites and pertinentis of the samyn to the said Jhone for all the dayis of his liffe for the sowme of fourty schillingis scottis mone to be payit yerly to the said Schir Alexander and his successouris vicaris ... And the said Schyr Alexander sal mak the croft callit the *Deray Croft of Banquhoriterne* quhilk the said Jhone has nou fre to be till hyme for al the dais of his lyff and sal oblis hyme selffe and his successoris in presens of the chaptour of Abberden to paye to the abbot and conuent of Abberbrothok for the tyme zerly ten schillingis for the maill of the said *Deray Croft* and faillzand tharof till alloue ten schillingis to the said Jhon zerly of the said fourty schillingis he makand gud payment of the remanent to the said vicare his successoris factoris and procuratouris as said is.¹⁴⁶

The bell brings revenues to its bearers, though what the revenues are is not specified; nor is it stated whether they are an annual payment or a payment for each use of the relic, or both. There is also clearly a tension between two different sets of rights over the relic here: one is the ecclesiastical right, vested directly in the parish kirk and indirectly in the abbot of Arbroath whose abbey holds the kirk of Banchory-Ternan; the other is the hereditary right, which John Stalker enjoys *iure uxoris*, since his wife has made it over to him. Strangely, she remains un-named in spite of being the one through whom the hereditary right to the bell and the dewar's croft have come to him. It is likely, however, that his wife was Joneta de Deray (that is, Janet Dewar), daughter of the late John de Deray, who appears in a precept of sasine by George, abbot of Arbroath, in 1472. Here we find that

the late John de Deray, father of Janet de Deray bearer of these letters, died seised in a croft with a house situated on it ... in the toun of Banchory ... and that the said Janet is the nearest heir of the said John ... and that she is of lawful age

and so she is to be seised in the said croft and house (that is, the *Deray Croft* of the 1490 charter).¹⁴⁷

As in the case of Banchory-Ternan, the *deòradh* was often supported both by an income and by the possession of a property which he held in his official capacity. Such properties were often represented as kirklands, or in association with kirklands. They also appear to be fairly modest land-holdings, rather than major estates. Thus, as we have just seen, the *deòradh* of St Ternan's bell held a croft called the *Deray Croft*, which he resigns into the hands of the vicar, who in turn agrees to let the *deòradh* and his heirs continue to possess it.¹⁴⁸ In the parish of Conveth, now Laurencekirk in the Mearns, in 1646 there were lands called *lie Diracroft alias Belaikeris* then called *lie Kirkton de Conveth alias Sanct-Lawrance*.¹⁴⁹ The 'dewars-croft alias Bell-Acres' suggests that a *deòradh* in Conveth held a bell-relic, possibly one with a purported connection to St Lawrence, the patron of the local kirk. In 1189 x 95 William I confirmed the gift to St Andrews priory made by Hugo Giffard of 'the church of Teiling, with the priest's toft and the dewar's toft with all their rights, except for that carucate of land which belongs to the same church'.¹⁵⁰ At about the same time, William I granted to Cambuskenneth abbey:

¹⁴⁶ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, ed. Cosmo Innes, Spalding and Maitland Clubs, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1845) [hereafter *Abdn. Reg.*], i, 327–8.

¹⁴⁷ *Arbroath Liber*, ii, no. 188: *quondam Johannes de Deray pater Jonete de Deray latricis presentium obiit sasitus de vna crofta cum domo super eadem situata ... in villa de Banquhory ... et quod dicta Joneta est propinquior heres eiusdem ... Johannis ... et quod est legitime etatis ...*

¹⁴⁸ *Abdn. Reg.*, ii, 327–8.

¹⁴⁹ *RMS*, ix, no. 1668.

¹⁵⁰ *RRS*, ii, no. 358: *... de ecclesia de TheliN cum Tofto sacerdotis et Tofto dereti, cum omnibus rectitudinibus suis, excepta illa Carrucata terre que ad eandem ecclesiam pertinet.*

the kirk of Kincardine with chapels and teinds and offerings of all sorts and thirteen acres of arable land and the brewer's toft with a garden, and a toft belonging to Saint Lolan's Bell with a garden, and a toft belonging to Saint Lolan's Crosier with a garden ...¹⁵¹

In 1281, Bishop William of St Andrews confirmed a grant of Gilbert of Fergie of:

that part which belonged to the *deòradh*, which lies nearest to the house which is now the priest's, in the territory of Arngask, together with the right of patronage of the kirk of Arngask.¹⁵²

Isabel, countess of Fife made a grant in 1359 x 72, in her widowhood, confirming the grant made by her father, Earl Duncan, 'to Andrew of Strathmiglo, cleric, a toft and a croft which Maurice son of Derech, late father of the said Andrew, had in rent from us in the town of Strathmiglo'.¹⁵³ It is worth highlighting that the toft and croft was held by a cleric, whose father had held it before him, and whose grandfather was called *Derech*, or *deòradh*. In 1599 Archibald Campbell was retoured in 'a piece of land called *Aiker-Indeor* (that is, *an deòraidh*, 'the dewar's acre') extending to half a merk of land, lying in the lordship of Otter in Cowal'.¹⁵⁴ The *deòraidhean* of the relics of St Fillan in Glendochart appear frequently in the toponymic record as holding one croft each.¹⁵⁵ In 1572 Donald Dewar held the lands of *Garrindewar* in the lordship of Strathgartney in Menteith which were assessed as a forty-penny land.¹⁵⁶ The 'pennyland of (St Moluag's) *bachall*' (*Peynabachalla*) was mortified to John M. Molmore Vic Kevir in 1544, and is described in the nineteenth century as 'a small freehold, originally of about twelve acres, but latterly only of six'.¹⁵⁷ The purpose in citing all these is to give an impression of the size of holding that a *deòradh* in Scotland might typically be expected to hold in return for his services, and to show that many of these farms were regarded as kirk-lands. There are several more such examples, but citing them all would not add anything to this picture.

There is some fragmentary evidence that lands held by *deòraidhean* were free of certain burdens (rent for example), and were held simply in return for the service of their relics; and that this was an arrangement which was remarked on and at the same time subverted in the period around the Reformation. Thus in 1552 the queen granted certain lands in Glendochart in feu-ferme to Malicious Deware (*Maol Iosa Deòradh*), with an annual rent of forty shillings, but it was noted at the same time (with surprise or dismay?) that these lands

¹⁵¹ RRS, ii, no. 372: *ecclesiam de Kincardin cum capellis et decimis et oblationibus omnimodis et tresdecim acras terre arabilis et unum toftum brasiatoris cum uno orto, et unum toftum ad campanam Sancti Lolani cum uno orto, et unum toftum ad baculum Sancti Lolani cum unu orto.*

¹⁵² *Registrum Monasterii S. Marie de Cambuskenneth*, [ed. W. Fraser], Grampian Club (Edinburgh, 1872), no. 1: *illam scilicet partem que fuit Ledereth, que jacet propinquior domui que nunc est sacerdotis, in territorio de Arringrosk, vnacum jure patronatus ecclesie de Arringrosk.* In the phrase *que fuit ledereth* we should probably read two separate words, *le Dereth*. The first may simply be the definite article *le*, more commonly *lie*. It may on the other hand be the remains of a Gaelic term which has found its way into this Latin charter, and represent *leth deòraidh* 'the dewar's share'. We would normally expect the final *-th* of *leth* to be represented in such circumstances, but a non-Gaelic-speaking scribe's representation of *leth-deòraidh* might allow the final dental of *leth* to be hidden behind the initial dental of *deòraidh*. The name *Ledereth* also appears in *ibid.*, nos 2–4, and 22.

¹⁵³ Unpublished charter, 'Skene of Pitlour Muniments', in the keeping of Pagan, Osborne and Grace, W.S., Cupar, Fife: ... *Andree de Stramyglok clerico, unam toftam et unam croftam quas Mauricius filius Derech quondam pater eiusdem Andree, de nobis tenuit ad firmam in villa de Stramyglok.*

¹⁵⁴ Retours, Argyll no. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Taylor, 'The cult of St Fillan', 206–7.

¹⁵⁶ RMS, iv, no. 2092: *40 denariatas terrarum de Garrindewar.* I am indebted to Pete McNiven of the Department of Celtic, University of Glasgow, for the information that Garrindewar appears again on a plan made in 1775 (NAS, E777/313 pp. 176–7) as *Gartenjore*, a pendicle comprising 9¼ acres of arable.

¹⁵⁷ *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, ed. Cosmo Innes *et al.*, Bannatyne Club, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1851–5), ii (part 1), 163.

‘were never included in any rental, nor was any payment made from them to the queen’.¹⁵⁸ It appears that these dewar-lands had been held by Malicious Dewar and his ancestors free of rent, and were only now being incorporated into the feu-ferme system and being subjected to rent payable to the crown.

When Donald Dewar received his lands of *Garrindewar* in 1572 it is specified that they were:

founded for the ringing of a bell before dead people in the parish of Kilmahog in the time of papistry, and have come to the king by reason of the change in the arrangements of religion and the abolition of the foresaid service, for the annual payment of 3 shillings and 4 pence.¹⁵⁹

This suggests again that the sole render for *Garrindewar* in the medieval period had been the service of the bell, but the temporalities of the kirk having come under crown control, and the crown now disapproving of such ‘monuments of idolatrie’ as the ringing of saints’ bells, the land is henceforth to be held for a money rent.

The church of Strowan appears in 1572, when the commendator of Inchaffray set in feu-ferme to Patrick Murray and his wife the lands called the *Kirkland* of the parish kirk of Strowan, with various pertinents and ‘with lands called the *Dewarisland*, with their gardens, houses and buildings, occupied by Thomas Dewar’.¹⁶⁰ Rev. Mr Porteous was minister of the parishes of Monzievaird and Strowan from 1730 to 1774, and claimed that the Dewar family held the Dewar’s land (three acres in extent) for the service of ringing the bell of St Rowan (apparently a mistake for St Ronan¹⁶¹), and that ‘this land pays nothing to the public, to the minister, or schoolmaster’.¹⁶² In spite of Mr Porteous’ suggestions of the liberty of the *Dewarisland* from rent, the manuscript version of the *RMS* charter does in fact stipulate a rent of twenty pence from the lands of *Dewarisland* and nearby *Ballindewar*.¹⁶³

I have not found sufficient evidence to say with any confidence how common it was for *deòraidhean* to hold their crofts, tofts, acres and lands without any payment being required. It may well be that this was the norm in Gaelic society, however. Indeed it is what one would expect if the *deòradh* enjoyed his holding in return for service, as did the physician (*lìaiagh* or *ollamh*) for example.¹⁶⁴ Most of our records of the lands held by *deòraidhean* come from a period when the office was collapsing under the pressure of Reformation hostility to saints’ cults, and when kirk-lands were being taken over by the crown and leased to tenants for rent. As parliament legislated in 1587, ‘it sal be alwyse lauchfull to our said soverane lord in his awin tyme to sett in fewferme quhatsumevir the saidis kirklandis quhilkis wer not sett in fewferme befoir’.¹⁶⁵

Some desiderata

In the foregoing I have sought to correct a few misconceptions about the *deòradh*, and to clarify some aspects of his ministry (and it should be regarded as a ministry, in the proper ecclesiastical sense). I have also suggested that we should read hagiographical literature

¹⁵⁸ *RMS*, iv, no. 682: ... *que in rentalis nunquam computate fuerant, neque ulla solutio regine inde facta.*

¹⁵⁹ *RMS*, iv, no. 2092: ... *que olim pro pulsatione unius campane coram mortuis personis infra parochiam de Kilmahug tempore papismatis fundate erant, et regi devenerunt ratione alterationis status religionis et abolitionis servitii antedicti:—SOLVEND. annuatim 3 sol. 4 den.*

¹⁶⁰ *RMS*, iv, no. 2062: ... *cum terris nuncupatis the Dewarisland, cum earum hortis, domibus et edificiiis, per Tho. Dewar occupatis.*

¹⁶¹ Presumably inspired by a false interpretation of the place-name Strowan.

¹⁶² Joseph Anderson ‘The dewars or hereditary keepers of relics of the Celtic church in Scotland’, *Highland Monthly* 2 (1890), 84–103, at 95–6.

¹⁶³ *NAS*, C2/33/119.

¹⁶⁴ John Bannerman, *The Beatons: a Medical Kindred in the Classical Gaelic Tradition* (Edinburgh, 1998), 84–8.

¹⁶⁵ On 8 July 1587, an act entitled ‘Annexatioun of the temporalities of benefices to the crown’: *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, ed. Keith M. Brown *et al.* (St Andrews, 2007–8), <http://www.rps.ac.uk>, 1587/7/18 (accessed: 30 November 2008).

(*Vitae*, liturgical material, devotional poetry) as the tip of an iceberg – the iceberg being the cult of saints as a vast, living and dramatic process which underpinned much social and religious life. Some fragments of the ‘tip’ have survived, but most of the iceberg has melted in the hot water of post-Reformation hostility to such cult. Nevertheless, the surviving hagiographical literature can shed light on other aspects of the cult, and in particular on the place of the relic and the *deòradh* in a saint’s cult.

Much more work remains to be done, collecting material from the scattered sources where references to *deòraidhean* are lurking, in the hope that this will clarify the emerging picture of the ministry. Where a Scottish source is hard to understand, it may help to compare it with similar Irish sources such as those in the impressive collection of material found in Lucas’s ‘Social role of relics’, much cited above. But Irish sources must be used with caution. It may be significant that the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* does not give ‘hereditary keeper of relics’ as one of the meanings of the word *deorad*, while the word *maor* is regularly used in Irish sources in reference to a keeper of relics. The differences between Ireland and Scotland may extend beyond this difference in terminology.

Another important task is to conduct a systematic nationwide survey of Scottish place-names containing references to relics and *deòraidhean*. Watson listed a few, more by way of illustration than in an attempt to be systematic.¹⁶⁶ Anderson’s essay of 1890 mentions others, and discusses something of their history.¹⁶⁷ But to get a fuller picture of the reality of the office and its place in society we need an exhaustive survey. Place-names are also important because they can give precise spatial co-ordinates to the cult. What is the distribution of *deòradh* place-names? All those mentioned above have been north of the Forth-Clyde line, but Glenjorie (*Gleann an Deòraidh*) near Glencuce abbey in Wigtownshire¹⁶⁸ and the recently discovered Balinclog (*baile in cloic*, ‘farm of the bell’) in or near Tarbolton in Ayrshire¹⁶⁹ show that the *deòradh* has left footprints in the south-west of the country too.

A systematic survey of place-name evidence would not only give us a nationwide distribution map of the cult of the *deòradh*. It would also allow us to analyse the spatial data in terms of much more local patterns. Many of the *deòradh*-settlements discussed in this article have been found to lie very close to the local kirk – hardly surprising given the nature of the office. But in some cases we find a *deòradh*-settlement far from the kirk, at a far-flung boundary of the parish. The dewar of St Kessog’s bell in the medieval parish of Luss seems to have occupied a farm now called Ballinjour, near Buchanan, on the far side of Loch Lomond from the parish kirk, in what was then a detached part of the parish of Luss.¹⁷⁰ The significance of such local spatial differences should be explored.

It may be possible, when more materials have been gathered, to obtain a clearer picture of the rituals in which dewars exercised their ministry. Hagiographical material may help with this, as well as reference to the uses of relics in Ireland and elsewhere.

Would it be possible to shed more light on the relationship between the *deòradh* and the monastic authorities from whom it is likely that he, or rather his ancestors, had obtained his relic? In 1549 Hugh Currie, the prior of Strathfillan priory, attempted to retrieve the relics of St Fillan from three of the *deòraidhean* who held them, requiring them ‘to deliver and present in the kirkis of Killin and Straphillan certane reliques and nocht to be tane furth again without license of the said priour’.¹⁷¹ Currie presumably thought that he had the right to custody of these relics because he saw himself as the successor of the abbot of Glendochart.

¹⁶⁶ Watson, *Celtic Place-Names*, 265–7. It is not certain that all the place-names he cites are actually references to *deòraidhean*. For example, some apparently containing *deòradh* may simply contain the personal name Dewar, and place-names apparently containing *bachall* ‘crosier’ (gen. sing. *bachaill* in modern Gaelic, but in older Gaelic *bachla*) may contain *bachlach* ‘rustic, servant, labourer, serf’.

¹⁶⁷ Anderson, ‘The dewars or hereditary keepers’, *passim*.

¹⁶⁸ Watson, *Celtic Place-Names*, 265.

¹⁶⁹ Gilbert Márkus, ‘Balinclog: a lost parish in Ayrshire’, *JSNS* 3 (2009), 47–64.

¹⁷⁰ Gilbert Márkus, ‘Saints and boundaries’.

¹⁷¹ *General Register of Decrees*, vol. viii, fol. 328, cited by Anderson, ‘Notice of the Quigrich’, 110–11.

The attempt failed, but it does shed some light on the sometimes tense relationships between lay *deòraidhean* and ecclesiastical authorities, and further documents of this sort may help us to understand how relics which were originally part of the equipment of abbots and clergy found their way into lay hands, and the role they continued to play in the relationship between ecclesiastical authorities and *deòraidhean*.¹⁷²

There is also a question about why the word *deòradh* became the term for a relic-keeper. It does not seem to happen in medieval Ireland, where the word was *maor* (as noted above). There is work to be done on why the custodian of a relic should be referred to by a word which originally meant ‘foreigner’, later ‘pilgrim’ and such like, and it would be worth exploring the Old Gaelic term *deorad Dé* ‘stranger of God’, hence ‘pilgrim’, to see what light this sheds on the Scottish use of the term *deòradh* in the sense under discussion here.

Finally there remains what might be seen as a theological question to be explored, or a question of theological history. Recall that in the passage discussed above O’Dornan prevented a fratricidal war between Raghall and Aengus by ringing his bell. The relic was powerful in this context because it had the power to curse, and the author dramatically conveys Aengus’s terror: ‘For your lives, move not a step to or fro’. What is the relationship theologically, in the minds of medieval and early modern Gaels, between the love and devotion inspired by the memory of the saint and by his power to protect and heal, and the fear of the saint which underpins the relic’s efficacy in guaranteeing oaths, stopping warfare, and so on?¹⁷³

¹⁷² Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 233, describes the process thus: ‘The land granted to the monastery, conveyed to the ecclesiastical society of which it became the endowment all the rights of a chieftain or head of a clan, and these rights, like the rights of a secular chieftain, descended in hereditary succession. The Coarb, that is to say the ecclesiastical heir or successor of the original found in headship of the religious society, whether bishop or abbot, was the inheritor of his official influence, while the descendants in blood, or founder’s kin, were inheritors of the temporal rights of property and chieftainship.’

¹⁷³ Thomas Owen Clancy, Dauvit Broun and Rachel Butter, all of Glasgow University, read and made helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. I am grateful to them all.