

EMAS Archaeology

Study Tour to the Isle of Man



Peel Castle

4 – 11 April 2018



Itinerary

Wednesday, 4 April	London Embankment; Breedon on the Hill; Repton; overnight in Preston.
Thursday, 5 April	Leave Preston; St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham; 14:45 Ferry from Heysham to Douglas (arrives 17:45). Hotel in Douglas.
Friday, 6 April	Meayll Hill Stone Circle; Lag Ny Keeilly; Spooyt Vane Keeill
Saturday, 7 April	The Braaid; Tynwald; Peel Castle; Kirk Michael
Sunday, 8 April	King Orry's Grave; Cashtal yn Ard; Maughold; Ramsey
Monday, 9 April	Knock-e-Dhooney; Jurby; Andreas; Baldwin; Braddan
Tuesday, 10 April	Cronk ny Merriu; Balladoole; Burroo Ned Fort; Port Erin
Wednesday, 11 April	08:45 Ferry from Douglas to Heysham (arrives 12:15); The Whalley Crosses; London Embankment

St Mary & St Hardulph, Breedon on the Hill

The present day church of St Mary & St Hardulph at Breedon on the Hill is mainly of 13th and 15th century date, although the site was originally a 7th century monastic establishment which was built within the remains of an Iron Age hill fort called The Bulwarks

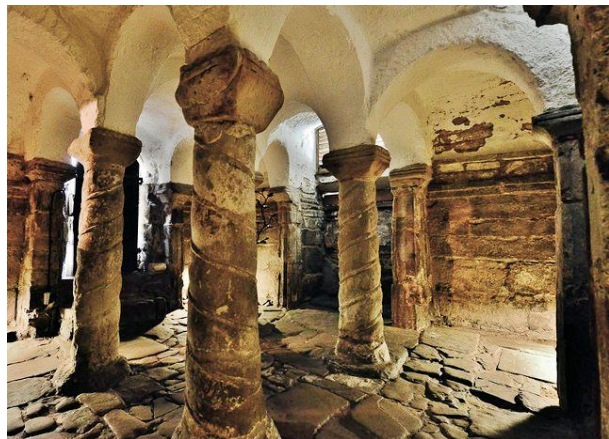
Today, the church is famous for its superb collection of Anglo-Saxon sculpture. These represent the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon sculpture and include some of the finest examples. The sculptures, which appear to date to the 9th century, are from the earlier monastery and have been built into the walls of the later church.



St Wystan, Repton

The Church of St Wystan in Repton is justly famous for its superb Anglo-Saxon crypt. This crypt was constructed in the early 8th century and was built over a spring, giving rise to the suggestion that it was originally designed as a baptistry.

Sometime around the middle of the 8th century, the crypt was converted into a mausoleum for King Æthelbald of Mercia (died 757) during his lifetime. King Wiglaf (died 839) and his grandson Saint Wigstan (died c. 840), after whom the later church is named, were translated into the crypt.



In the 1970's and 1980's, Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle carried out excavations in the churchyard and the vicarage garden at Repton. The churchyard excavations revealed Viking burials and a D-shaped enclosure which related to the Viking overwintering of 873 – 4; while the excavations in the vicarage garden uncovered a mass grave around an earlier Anglo-Saxon mausoleum.

St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham

The ruins of St Patrick's chapel stand on the headland above St Peter's Church in Heysham. The ruins are built of sandstone rubble and date to the 8th or 9th century.

The plan of the chapel is a plain slightly tapering rectangle 8m x 3m in size. Most of the south wall, the east gable wall, and the east part of the north wall are still present. The south wall contains a doorway with long-and-short jambs and an arch with concentric grooves. Close to the chapel is a group of 6 rock-cut tombs and a separate group of 2 rock-cut tombs. Each tomb has an associated socket which was probably intended for a timber cross or grave marker.



Meayll Hill Stone Circle

Also known as Mull Circle, the site is a megalithic chambered tomb covering an 18 metre diameter circle. There are six pairs of graves believed to be from the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age. The site has seen a long history from the Neolithic to Medieval times. The site was excavated in 1911 by Kermode and Herdman and again in 1971 by Henshall.



The Keeills of the Isle of Man

A keeill is an early Christian chapel dating from before the introduction of the parochial system in the 12th century.

In the sixth century there emerged a class of clergy, independent of the monasteries, who lived a solitary and austere life. These hermits, known as Culdee's (from Cele De servant of God) from the 8th Century, would build their own cell or oratory ('Keeill') and act as spiritual father to the local families.

The earliest keeills were probably mud and wattle (nothing remains of these) but those that remain as ruins generally have earth walls lined inside with stone. These probably date from 8th to 12th century and typically measure 5m by 3m.

Lag Ny Keeilly

Lag ny Keeilly ('Hollow of the Chapel') lies almost at the foot of Cronk ny Irree Laa (Hill of Daybreak). It is the most isolated of the Keeills, and arguably the most spectacular.

The entry in the first First Report of the Manx Archaeological Survey (1909) says:

This most interesting of our ancient keeills, set on a ledge forming a small natural platform near the foot of a lag or hollow torn out of the almost perpendicular western face of Cronk-ny-Irree-laa, can be reached by boat, but the landing — a mile and three-quarters south of Dalby beach — can only be effected within about an hour of high water on a calm day, and the upward climb of about 200 ft. is steep and not easy. The proper mode of access is by the old pack-horse road through Eary Cushlin, which passes onto the Sloc by foot tracks, and so to the south of the Island. This roadway in itself is of great interest as the best existing survival of our pack-horse ways before the modern system of highroads.



N.B. The footpath from Eary Cushlin is just over a mile long and is quite narrow in some places.

Spooyt Vane Keeill

Spooyt Vane Keeill (Cabbal Pherick or St Patrick's Chapel) is the ruins of an early Christian Chapel 8th - 10th century with a boundary wall surrounding a graveyard. There are traces of a priest's cell remaining against the southwest boundary.

Some simple cross slabs were found here; they are now at Kirk Michael Parish Church.



The Braaid

The site appears to have originally consisted of a Celtic Iron Age roundhouse with stone foundations. The roundhouse was about 16.5 metres in diameter. Its structure was held up by massive standing stones around the circumference. The walls were made of stone and filled with earth. The roof was made of turf placed on rafters made of brush and supported by timber posts.



During the Viking Period two sub-rectangular buildings were constructed. One was a 'boat-shaped' house measuring c. 20 by 9 metres made of turf with the ends made of timber. The roof was supported by two rows of posts standing on a large stone.

The second building was used as a byre, with stone stalls along the wall. The roof was low and lightweight and did not have the curved walls like the other longhouse. The building measured 18 by 8 metres.

Tynwald

Tynwald Hill at St John's is the traditional ancient meeting place of the Manx parliamentary assembly; it dates to the late first millennium AD, although there is some evidence of earlier usage.

The hill itself is an artificial mound, approximately 25m in diameter at the base, and 3.6m high. Its earliest phase dates to later prehistory, when the first evidence of communal assemblies appears. Later, the development of a royal centre focused in the nearby upper Neb valley allowed the site to increase in importance, and by the early 2nd millennium AD Tynwald Hill was in use as a national meeting place.

Peel Castle

Peel Castle is situated on St Patrick's Isle and is linked to the mainland by a causeway. This naturally defended site began as a Celtic monastery - the round tower was part of this monastery; the battlements being added later.



In the 11th century, the site was turned into a fortification, under the rule of Magnus Barefoot, King of Norway from 1093 to 1103. However, earlier Viking presence included the grave known as 'The Pagan Lady' which dated to c. 1030.

Viking Age Cross-slabs in the Isle of Man

The Isle of Man has a splendid collection of carved cross-slabs. The earliest of these crosses probably date from the 7th century, and the largest collection of them is to be found at Maughold. From the 10th century, Norse influence cross-slabs start to appear. In fact, the Isle of Man has the largest collection of Viking Age art outside of Scandinavia. Several of the cross-slabs bear depictions of Norse Pagan myths.

Kirk Michael

The church at Kirk Michael houses a fine collection of Viking Age cross-slabs, including the famous Gaut's Cross-slab (Michael 101). This is decorated in Gaut's Interlace – an insular development of the Borre art style, formed of a distinctive “ring-chain” pattern. The cross-slab bears a runic inscription which reads: “Melbrigdi son of Athakan the smith erected this cross for his sin... soul but Gaut made it and all in Man”.



King Orry's Grave

“King Orry's Grave” is one of perhaps ten Neolithic chambered tombs that are known on the island. It is a rare example in the British Isles of where two such tombs have been built so close together that they have become confused as one: in fact, the tomb across the road from this site is probably a few hundred years more recent.

The original construction involved the chamber nearest the house, but a second chamber was later added. A ‘forecourt’ was built at the end furthest from the house which took the form of a shallow horseshoe overlooking the nearby gully and the main Laxey valley. Only one tall stone and the stumps of several others survive to indicate how these standing stones held back a cairn of rubble which was built up over the burial chambers.



Cashtal yn Ard

Cashtal yn Ard, or the Castle of the Heights, is a well-preserved chambered tomb situated on higher land overlooking the parish of Maughold. The monument was originally a megalithic chambered cairn – a conical heap of stones built as a landmark – and is one of the largest and best preserved of its kind in the British Isles. Cashtal yn Ard dates back to around 2000 BC and although the stone cairn has been stripped away, the large firmly set stones create a dramatic burial site. Situated on raised land near the coast, the site also provides views overlooking most of the parish of Maughold and across the sea to the Lake District.



Maughold

Maughold was named after a minor Celtic Saint Machaoi and is believed to have been the main pre-Norse religious community on the Isle of Man. The site has produced the largest collection of crosses and cross-slabs from the early Christian period. Many of these were found in the churchyard, which was the site of a 7th century monastery of which three keeills remain.

Maughold also houses the Sigurd Slab (Maughold 122), which shows a scene from the Völsunga Saga showing the killing of an otter as it is eating a salmon taken from the pool below. Above this design separated by an interlacing pattern is a later scene of the steed Grani (the grey one) with a gold hoard on his back, which was won by Singuar upon slaying the dragon Fafni.



Knock-e-Dhooney Ship Burial

Viking Age ship burial. The prominent, grass-covered burial mound at Knock e Dooney was excavated by Philip Kermodé in 1927. The mound was 15.5m in diameter and 2.4m high. It proved to contain a Viking boat burial of 900-950 AD, the boat being defined by about 300 iron rivets, most having decayed wood attached to them. The positions of the rivets showed that the boat was 8.5-9m long and 1.8-2.4m wide.



The body had been laid in the boat wrapped in a cloak, and accompanied by a sword, shield and spear. Domestic articles such as fishing gear, tools including a hammer and tongs, knives and harness links were laid in the stern. A horse and a dog also accompanied the burial.

Knock-e-Dhooney Keeill

Although Knock-e-Dhooney was surveyed by P. M. C. Kermodé for the third report in 1909, the survey was restricted to the keeill itself and not the surrounding area. This is what generally happened in the Manx Archaeological Survey due to time constraints and financial limitations.



Jurby Mound Burial

A Viking burial mound remains in Jurby churchyard and from it can be seen another mound Cronk-ny-Arrey Lhaa, which could be a Viking mound or may date back to late Neolithic times.



Andreas

Among the important collection of crosses in Andreas Parish church is 'Thorwald's Cross' (Andreas 128). One side of this cross shows the Norse god Odin (recognised by the raven on his shoulder, and with his spear) being devoured by Fenris the wolf at the Battle of Ragnarok..

The other side is filled with Christian symbolism - a figure with a book and a cross, by a fish and a defeated serpent.

Andreas church also contains the 'Sigurd Cross-slab' (Andreas 121), one of four crosses in the Isle of Man that show scenes from the story of Sigurd, as told in the Völsunga Saga.

The face of the cross shows the hero Sigurd and the dragon Fafnir. At the bottom of the cross we see Sigurd killing Fafnir with his sword.

The upper left of the cross shows Sigurd roasting Fafnir's heart. As he does so, he burns his thumb and as he puts his thumb in his mouth to cool it, he tastes the dragon's blood. As he tastes the blood, he understands the language of the birds, who warn him of Regin's treacherous intention to kill him.

Sigurd kills Regin and rides off with the treasure on his horse, Grani, whose head can be seen above and to the left of Sigurd as he roasts Fafnir's heart.

The back of the cross shows interlaced snakes and a figure with his hands bound. This is a scene from a later part of the saga. After Sigurd's death, the treasure has passed to Sigurd's foster brother, Gunnar.

Gunnar is eventually killed by being thrown into a snake pit. His hands are bound, but he charms the snakes by playing a harp with his toes. All the snakes except one fall asleep. The snake that remains awake bites Gunnar, killing him



Old Tynwald Site, Baldwin

The site of the early assembly site of Killabane. Early written statutes record a parliamentary assembly, or 'thing' at "Killabane" in 1428. A fair was held there until circa 1770 and 'seats' or tiers are said to have survived until at least the same time. The site was commemorated by an annual procession around it until about 1871.

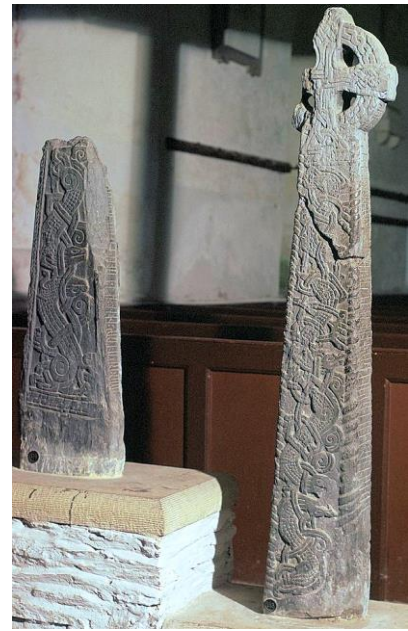


Braddan

There are twelve crosses at Braddan, including 'Thorlief Hnakki's Cross' (Braddan 135). This cross dates from 900AD - 1000AD and is a tapering pillar with an open cross head ring. The shaft is decorated with Scandinavian dragons in Mammen style, their tails and limbs interlaced. The inscription has been translated as 'Thorleif erected this cross to the memory of Fiac his son, brother's son to Hafr'.

The small cross shaft fragment in the left of the photo is 'Odd's Cross' (Braddan 136). This is another example of the Mammen style and is similar to 'Thorlief Hnakki's Cross'. One face shows two pelleted dragons with intricately interlaced bands.

There is an incomplete runic inscription which reads "Odd raised this cross to the memory of Frakki his father, but Tho(rbjörn)..."



Cronk ny Merriu

This site is a coastal promontory fort with a defensive ditch and rampart. It is situated high on the cliffs, with good views of the surrounding coast. The cliffs overlook a small sandy bay to the west which would have provided a natural harbourage.

Owing to its small size, and the lack of a source of water, the fort could not have held out for long in the event of a raid.

The site is believed to have been constructed during the Celtic Iron Age and then to have been reoccupied during the Viking Period. Within the fort is a rectangular building with three doorways and a central hearth, or langeldr.



Balladoole

Chapel Hill, Balladoole, is a site that has a wealth of archaeology. There are a number of Bronze Age burials and an Iron Age hillfort. The hillfort was reused as an early medieval burial ground. Some of the cist-graves of this cemetery were cut into when the boat burial was created in the late ninth or early tenth century. There is also a keeill (a small chapel) which dates to the 10th or 11th century.



The Balladoole Ship Burial

The Balladoole Ship Burial was excavated in the 1940's by Gerhard Bersu. The burial consists of the skeleton of a male which was laid in a clinker-built oak boat c. 11m long. This was set with a kerb of large stones and the whole burial was covered by small stones. It is likely that the stone mound was covered by a mound of earth, but this has since eroded away.

The boat burial disturbed a number of lintel-graves which were part of the small earlier Christian cemetery. This is something that also happened at Cronk yn How.

The presence of the other burials complicates the interpretation of the Viking burial. There was evidence of at least three individuals, but the disturbance of the earlier graves during the construction of the boat-grave, and the further disruption caused by considerable burrowing activity by rabbits, means that it is not possible to be certain that this was not a double burial similar to the sacrifice present in the Ballateare burial.

The only weapon found in the grave was a shield. There were two or three knives, a whetstone, a strike-a-light, the buckle and strap-end from a belt, and a ring-headed pin of Irish type, similar to the one found in the Ballateare grave.

There was also a bucket handle made of iron, a pair of iron spurs and cast copper alloy buckles, strap-ends and iron loops for stirrup-leathers. The riding equipment included a set of bridle mounts, indicating that this was the burial of a man of high status.

Burroo Ned Fort

This Iron Age promontory fort contains a group of structures, both round and rectangular.

At least 40 cup markings in 12 different locations have been found within the enclosure, and others found on the outcropping rocks in the vicinity.



Railway Museum, Port Erin

The museum traces the history of the steam powered railway from its inception in 1873 to the present day including the now defunct lines which used to serve Peel, Ramsey and Foxdale.

Inside are steam engines and carriages including the royal carriages which carried The Queen and Queen Mother in 1963 and Queen Elizabeth II in 1972. The museum is home to a fine collection of locomotives, the Royal Train, rolling stock, memorabilia, posters and interpretive displays.

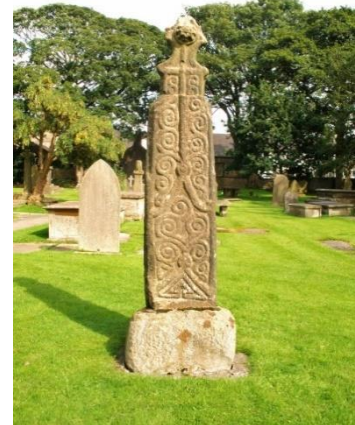


The Whalley Crosses

There are three Crosses in the churchyard of St Mary & All Saints at Whalley.

Cross No I (The Western Cross) is described as a panelled cross and is just under 3 metres high. This cross dates from the late 10th to early 11th century and is the earliest of the three. It displays a strong Anglo-Norse influence in its carvings, although now rather worn. There are six panels on the east face. In the top panel there is a dove representing the Holy Spirit. And there is also the usual interlacing and pattern-work. The head of the cross is now badly damaged.

Cross No II (Near the porch) is by far the best preserved of the three standing at 2.2 metres and dating from the late 10th to early 11th century. This sandstone cross stands on a large base-stone that is more recent in date. Part of the shaft is apparently missing at the top and the cross-head is badly mutilated although its central, carved boss is still quite prominent. The shaft is richly decorated with vine branches going off in both directions and ending in S-shaped scrolls, and there is more scroll-working and zig-zag patterning on both faces and the edges.



Cross No III (the Eastern Cross) is 2.1 metres high. The cross is now heavily eroded, but traces of Anglo-Saxon carving can still be seen (with a keen eye) on the front (west) face, whereas the opposite face is worn away and showing some damage. The cross-head is not the original – this one being a 14th century Gothic head. The shaft has two figures with haloes stood together half-way up with scroll-work and interlacing above and below all in a pelted edged-border that show signs of Norse origins. The Gothic head is very ornate and has the letters I.H.S in the centre and a crucifix on the opposite side.