

Neutral Citation Number: [2024] EC Sodor 1

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF SODOR AND MAN

IN THE MATTER OF KIRK ANDREAS

**AND IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION BY THE RECTOR AND WARDENS OF
THE PARISH OF THE NORTHERN PLAIN**

Introduction

1. This is an application made by the Rector and 2 of the Churchwardens of the Parish of the Northern Plain in respect of the church of St Andrew, Andreas (“Kirk Andreas”) in order to instal new cabinets to accommodate a series of “Manx crosses”.
2. The items in question are in fact a mixture of crosses in the true sense and slabs with crosses and other decoration inscribed upon them. In this judgment I refer to them all as “the sculptures”, because that has been the approach adopted by the entry in Pevsner’s Architectural Guide to the Isle of Man¹. The entry on the sculptures in Andreas² is by the former Director of the British Museum, Sir David Wilson FBA. The numbering of the various items quoted below is taken from P M C Kermode’s “Manx Crosses”³ They date to the period of Viking occupation of the Island. The sculptures involved in the present application are Nos. 36, 37, 60 (a Celtic cross), 99, 109, 111, 121, 128,131, and 168. The sculptures display a mixture of Norse and Christian iconography and are regarded as being of major national significance on the Isle of Man. The Vikings were converted to Christianity at some point during their occupation of the Isle of Man and their sculptures reflect a combination of Christian and Norse symbolism (sometimes simultaneously).
3. Perhaps the most important of all of the sculptures at Andreas is no 131, which (to quote Pevsner) “is one of the tallest on the Island and inscribed with crosses on both sides. It was first mentioned in the churchyard in 1789. On one edge is an inscription in Norse runes ‘Sondulfr the black raised this cross in memory of Arinbjorg his wife.’ ... Birds above the cross-bar may represent the crow which crowed on the day of Christ’s crucifixion.”.
4. No 128 is commonly referred to as Thorvald’s cross. Again, to quote Pevsner “[It] calls the gods to battle, there is a great slaughter, Odin is swallowed by Fenrir and the pagan world comes to an end. On the other face Christ is shown trampling a serpent as he rises from the dead, carrying a cross and bible. ... On one edge of the slab is a fragment of the inscription ‘Thorvaldr raised this stone’.”.

¹ Kewley J. (2023) Pevsner Architectural Guides: Isle of Man. London: Yale University Press. The extracts below are quoted with Dr Kewley’s permission.

² Op cit., pp. 75-7.

³ Kermode, P M C (1907) “Manx Crosses. The Inscribed and Sculptured Monuments of the Isle of Man from about the end of the fifth to the beginning of the thirteenth century. London: Bemrose and Sons.

5. At present the sculptures are kept in what the petitioners refer to as “concrete coffins” and the intention is to place the most important of them in armoured glass cabinets which will then form the western wall of the church and divide it from the church hall. The petitioners also seek permission to replace what Pevsner (perhaps a little unkindly) terms “pretend Georgian” doors⁴ with glass doors which would tie in better with the glass cabinets.
6. The petitioners applied to the Diocesan Advisory Committee on 4 January 2023, and the Committee at its meeting on 2 March 2023 recommended the proposals to the Court. The petitioners applied for the faculty in these proceedings on 18 August 2023, and public notice having been given between 19 August and 10 October 2023 in accordance with the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules (Isle of Man) 2016, the matter was referred to me for decision on 15 November 2023.
7. Kirk Andreas itself is a Georgian church, built in the first decade of the nineteenth century. It is not in the list of Registered Buildings for the Isle of Man, maintained by the Island’s Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. I have therefore not considered the *St Alkmund* questions, although had it been necessary to do so, I am satisfied that they would not have prevented the works proposed, given the importance of safeguarding these pieces of physical evidence of the Vikings occupation of the Island and their gradual transition to Christianity.
8. No objection has been made to the proposals, which seem eminently sensible and will certainly provide much better protection for the sculptures. The proposals have been developed in consultation with the Manx Museum and National Trust (commonly known as Manx National Heritage).
9. A faculty will issue to authorise the works detailed in the application to the DAC within three years of the date of its issue. This is longer than would normally be permitted because the evidence in the papers indicates that the petitioners are still engaged in raising the funds to undertake the works.

W. Howard Connell
Vicar General and Chancellor of the Diocese of Sodor and Man
24 January 2024

⁴ Op. cit., p. 74.