

The Loch Lomond Bell

For hundreds of years the Celtic Church had a profound presence along the shores and on the islands of Loch Lomond. Saints such as Kessog and Kentigerna brought the light of Christianity to the people of these green hills and glens.

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“The hill on Inchtavannach is called Tomnaclag (“hill of the bell”) after St. Kessog’s bell. Some of the ancient Celtic bells have been preserved and one of these is in the possession of the Burgh of Dumbarton. It is called the Skellat Bell, the word “skellat” meaning a hand-bell. Like other Celtic bells, it is almost rectangular in section and it dates probably from the ninth or tenth century.”

(Dr. I.M.M.MacPhail: Short History of Dumbartonshire)

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To the ancient Church the bell symbolized the voice of God, and the monastic communities of the Celtic Church used special bells which were ritually blessed and greatly venerated.

The “Loch Lomond Bell” is made of bronze and was fashioned around 900 AD. It is an especially fine and well preserved example of its kind. It was used for both practical and spiritual purposes – calling to prayer and worship, casting-out of evil spirits, healing, celebration and, at a time when the folk of Western Scotland lived in fear of Viking raids, it would have sounded warning.

Few such bells remain with us, yet such was the regard with which they were held that some were preserved in richly decorated relic containers and carried before armies in battle.

W. Scobie

