

# Exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland throws the spotlight on early medieval Scotland


✘ New exhibition *Creative Spirit: Revealing Early Medieval Scotland* opens this autumn at the National Museum of Scotland. Treasures from the national collections as well as contemporary creations by artists and craftspeople will offer visitors a rare glimpse into the fascinating Early Medieval period of Scottish history.

Supported by The Glenmorangie Company, the exhibition will reveal new insights into the people and society of Early Medieval Scotland, a period when elaborate and sophisticated objects, sculptured stones and manuscripts were produced in Scotland.

Due to the organic materials that many Early Medieval objects were made from, such as horn and leather, only fragments survive today. To understand these objects and the skills required to make them, National Museums' archaeologists have been working with craftspeople and artists recreating these original techniques. Producing recreations of significant artefacts reveals what these objects might have looked like in their original state.

Mhairi Maxwell, Glenmorangie Research Officer, National Museums Scotland, said:- "*Each of the artefacts in Creative*

*Spirit played an important role in Scotland's early communities and our work with contemporary artists and craftspeople has really brought these rare objects back to life. Piecing them together lets us reinterpret the evidence surrounding these objects, how they were made and how they could have been used, telling us more than ever before about Early Medieval Scotland."*

The exhibition presents the latest findings of the  Glenmorangie Research Project. Since 2008 this award-winning partnership between The Glenmorangie Company and National Museums Scotland has been generating exciting new research into this period in history and furthering our understanding of Scotland's Early Medieval people.

In *Creative Spirit: Revealing Early Medieval Scotland*, digital technology reveals some of the lost intricacy and beauty of many objects. The missing elements of the delicate eighth-century Monymusk Reliquary have been digitally recreated, allowing visitors to see inside this bronze, copper and silver casket for the first time. Following laser scanning and digital reconstruction of surviving pieces, the Traprain Law Dish is shown to be one of the largest ever silver dishes from the Roman Empire. The dish is part of a silver hoard buried at Traprain Law more than 1,500 years ago.

Craft methods and technologies from the Early Medieval period, lost over time, are rediscovered through the creations by contemporary craftspeople and artists. The recreation of a large iron and bronze hand-bell, inspired by Scotland's largest example, the Birnie Bell, reveals how the arts of bronze casting and blacksmithing were brought together in this ancient form of bell. While an imposing Pictish drinking horn

demonstrates how Early Historic makers may have worked with cattle horn to produce beautiful glassy translucent finishes.

✘ The recreation of an early Christian leather satchel from Loch Glashan, Argyll, the type of which would have been used by monks to carry and protect the Bible, has challenged previous interpretations of the surviving fragments. Meanwhile research into Norrie's Law Hoard, the largest collection of Pictish silver ever to have been found in Scotland, has uncovered a Victorian mystery surrounding the origins of almost identical pairs of objects.

Hamish Torrie, Head of Communications, The Glenmorangie Company, said: -*"As a company, we are very proud of our Scottish roots, which is why our brand emblem is inspired by the eighth-century Pictish Hilton of Cadboll Stone, originally discovered just along from the Distillery in Tain. It is also why we support the important research of this period of Scottish history at National Museums Scotland. This exhibition shows what extraordinary objects of beauty and luxury existed at that time."*

The exhibition will be supported by a programme of events, ✘ including:

*Spotlight On: Creative Spirit*

Thursday 31 October, 2pm, (free)

Curator, Martin Goldberg, and Glenmorangie Research Officer, Mhairi Maxwell, introduce highlights of the exhibition.

### *Meet the Makers*

Saturday 7 December, 12pm-4pm, (free)

Makers involved in this exhibition discuss their creative processes.

A mixture of drop-in and bookable sessions, see [www.nms.ac.uk/adults](http://www.nms.ac.uk/adults) for details.

### *Creative Spirit: Jewellery Workshop*

Saturday 7 December, 1.30pm-4.30pm, (£25, £22 Members and Concessions)

Artist-jeweller Dorothy Hogg, inspired by the silver pieces in *Creative Spirit*, leads a jewellery workshop.

### *Saturday Showcase: Making Stones Speak*

Saturday 18 January, 2pm, (£10, £8 Members and Concessions)

What can we learn from re-examining replicas, the responses of contemporary artists to the magnificent stone sculptures of Early Medieval Scotland, and from recreating these ancient monuments using innovative digital technology?

*Includes a complimentary glass of Glenmorangie Original.*

For more information on *Creative Spirit: Revealing Early Medieval Scotland* and The Glenmorangie Research Project: [www.nms.ac.uk/our\\_museums/national\\_museum/exhibitions/creative\\_spirit.aspx](http://www.nms.ac.uk/our_museums/national_museum/exhibitions/creative_spirit.aspx)

Images courtesy of National Museums Scotland.

**Creative Spirit: Revealing Early Medieval Scotland**

**Friday 25 October 2013 – Sunday 23 February 2014**

**National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh**

**Free**