

Timely addition to the National Museums Scotland collection

National Museums Scotland has announced the acquisition of an ornate early 18th-century sundial of exceptional precision and design, and once owned by the 3rd Duke of Argyll.

The Ilay Glynne dial, which is now on display at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, is a masterpiece of both art and science.

The Ilay Glynne dial, made around 1715, was used to measure local time from the Sun, providing the most accurate means of setting clocks available at the time. It could be used at any latitude, and its form models the celestial sphere, showing the Sun's apparent motion around the Earth.

The acquisition of the dial, which has important connections to post-Union Scotland, has been supported by the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Art Fund.

The dial was commissioned by and belonged to Archibald Campbell, Earl of Ilay and later 3rd Duke of Argyll (1682-1761). Ilay was a hugely influential figure in post-Union Scotland. He had control over royal patronage in Scotland, and managed Scottish affairs, making him the most politically powerful figure in the first half of the 18th century. He was a founder and the first governor of the Royal Bank of Scotland. His likeness used to appear on all RBS banknotes, and still appears on the £100 note today. Through his patronage, including at Scottish universities, he became an important sponsor and promoter of the culture of the Scottish Enlightenment

It is signed by Richard Glynne (1681-1755), a successful and well-regarded maker of mathematical instruments and a member of the Clockmakers' Company. In his business, skills and innovations, Glynne was closely integrated with a growing community of British instrument makers and produced instruments of outstanding quality, of which this dial is the most important surviving example.



PHOTO Stewart Attwood



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