



DEVILS OF BALLYCASTLE

Co-curated with
The Friends of
Ballycastle Museum





“The Devil and his angels. That’s what we were told it was ... I don’t know why but I always remember it as that. I must have been told when I was very young.”

Adeline Burley
(nee Anderson)
2019

◀ Ruby and Adeline Anderson standing below the archway c.1944, courtesy Elizabeth Fee.

“As a child in the 1960s I remember the sculptures up on the archway at the back of the Boyd Manor House. I was scared walking past them to school. Grown-ups told us it was the Devil. It was like a ritual. We lined up on the footpath and it was like: ready, steady, go!

“When the arch was demolished in 1971 the statues disappeared, both physically and mentally. New information has given me a different perspective.”

Brigene Mc Neilly, Chair of the Friends of Ballycastle Museum

“When on the beach [the glass island] we were told, don’t look at the statues, they’re the devil and two bad angels...”

Kathleen Bakewell, 2020

“Often we would be passing the sculpture on top of the arch. We always had this thing that it was the Devil and we’d get past it as quick as we possibly could ... Ye looked up at it occasionally, and ye didn’t look up at it too long, and ye just went on ...”

James McCurdy, 2019

▼ The Devils of Ballycastle watch over the tennis courts c.1900. From the Fergus O’Connor collection, courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



After the arches were demolished the broken statues were rescued by a local teacher, Matthew Scally, and passed to Cahal Dallat in 2006. After Cahal's death they were purchased by Peter Molloy for the nominal sum of £1 and donated to the museum.

Local legends suggest that the statues represented Indian River Gods (linked to Major General Boyd's military career in India) or a group of devils (being of heathen origin). Local historians Peter Molloy and Danny McGill originally suggested the sculptures might be Hellenistic (meaning 'Greek-ish', or heavily influenced by Greek culture). At that time the museum lacked the expertise to recognise the statues for what they were.

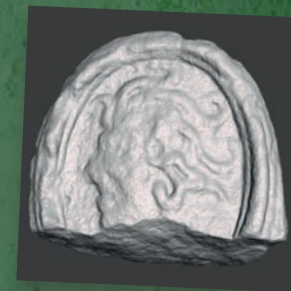
It was only after they were spotted by Museum Services' Dr Nic Wright, who's doctorate was in Hellenistic archaeology, that a new investigation began. With the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the pieces have now been laser scanned by John Meneely, a specialist from Queen's University Belfast.



◀ The statue fragments before Peter Molloy donated them to the museum in 2008.

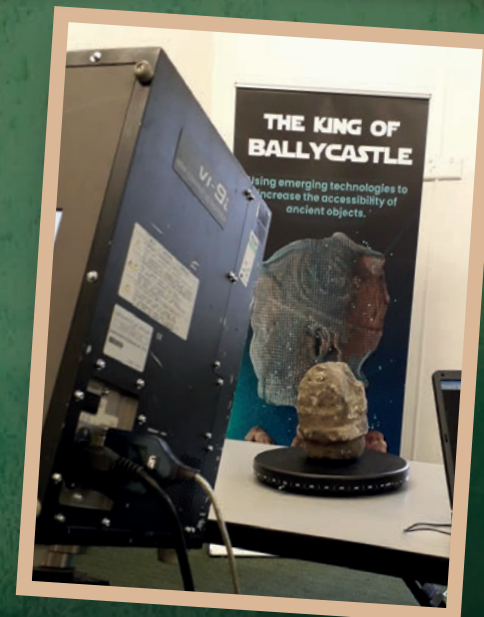
"I had a memory of the statues and heard a rumour that they were in Cahal's back garden. As soon as I saw the head sitting on top of the pile, I knew they had to be saved."

Peter Molloy, 2020



The laser scanning and 3D imaging project led by Nic revealed much detail now lost to the naked eye and allowed the broken fragments to be joined back together.

The statues depict a Hellenistic armoured king, or god, and two female figures; a legacy of the campaigns of Alexander the Great in modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, perhaps dating to between the 3rd century BC and the 1st century AD.





Between 336 and 323 BC, Alexander the Great created an empire stretching from Greece to India. Following his death, the empire collapsed into competing Hellenistic successor states – Greek kings ruled over parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India for another 350 years.



Throughout this period, local and Greek traditions mixed to create a unique, Indo-Greek, culture. Several Indo-Greek kings are known to have become Buddhists, Greek gods were shown making Buddhist gestures and Hindu gods were depicted in Greek form.

▲ Like all Indo-Greek coins, this issue of Menander I Soter (c.155-135 BC) mixes Greek and native styles and use both Greek and the local Kharoshti script.

Courtesy American Numismatic Society (1944.100.74561).



▲ Alexander's empire by 323 BC.

Courtesy Roger Perritt.



▲ The helmet on the Ballycastle statue reflects those worn by Athena, the Greek Goddess of Wisdom (left), and Skanda, the Indian God of War (right), shown on the coins of the Indian King Sophytes (c.323-281 BC). Coins courtesy Roma Numismatics.

The Boyd family inherited the stewardship of Ballycastle in 1690. Col. Hugh Boyd took over in 1711 and started the industrialisation of Ballycastle. However, following his death the Harbour silted up and the industries declined.

On coming of age in 1823, his great-great-grandson, also Hugh, joined the East India Company Army, where you didn't have to buy a commission to be an officer. Over his career, Hugh worked his way up through the ranks to become Major General, serving in what is now northwest India and Pakistan. He retired after the Indian Rebellion (1857-1858), following which the East India Company Army was incorporated into the British Army.



He returned to Ballycastle a rich man, mounting the statues he acquired on his travels above an arch at the Boyd family Manor House.

▲ To a large extent, Boyd's known movements in India overlapped with the extent of Indo-Greek kingdoms.

Courtesy Roger Perritt.

▼ Bengal troops on the line of march, by William Andrew Ludlow, c.1835, courtesy of the San Diego Museum of Art. Hugh Boyd served as an officer in the Bengal Native Infantry from 1823-1861.





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Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Museum Services would like to acknowledge the enthusiasm and hard work of the following people who helped bring this project to life: Brigene Mc Neilly, John Meneely, Brian Molloy, Peter Molloy, Patricia Perritt, Roger Perritt, Bryonie Reid and Gemma Reid.

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