

THE DEVILS OF BALLYCASTLE: BOYD'S 'INDIAN' SCULPTURE GROUP

NICHOLAS L WRIGHT

Nic.Wright@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

In 2008, eleven fragments of a sandstone sculpture group were donated to Ballycastle Museum. The group is said to have been brought to Ireland from India and, according to local legend, depicted either river gods or devils. A recent museum community engagement programme prompted a fuller examination of the extant pieces, which now appear to tell a very different story. This paper publishes the fragments for the first time and outlines the present state of our understanding. The figures, an armoured Hellenistic male and two female figures, are shown to be a joint legacy of the campaigns of Alexander the Great and the expansion of British control in India.

THE BALLYCASTLE CONTEXT

Until 1971, the sandstone statue group published here, consisting of three figures and other subsidiary decorations, stood above the archway leading into the yard of the Boyd manor house on Mary Street, Ballycastle, Co Antrim (Figs 1, 2). Immediately across the road are the Ballycastle tennis courts, built over the 18th-century private harbour of the Boyd family. Boyd's harbour appears to have been damaged during storms and, according to the Ordnance Survey (OS) memoir for the parish (Ramoan), was already obstructed by the 1830s (Day *et al* 1994, 88–9).

The statue group was established above the entrance into Boyd yard before the late 19th century,

when it was captured in the background of several early photographs. One of these, focusing on the neighbouring Gage manor house, shows the statues *in situ* and overgrown with ivy at a time when Boyd's harbour had completely filled in and was being used to graze ponies (Fig 3). This must predate the establishment of the Ballycastle Lawn Tennis Club in the same location which held its first championship in 1898. Two other early photographs by Robert J Welch (active 1859–1936), show a herd of cows in the Margy River with the statues on the archway visible in the distance (National Museums NI, BELUM.Y.W.01.10.1-2). In addition, the statues are also visible in the background of two photographs of the Marine Hotel dated to the period

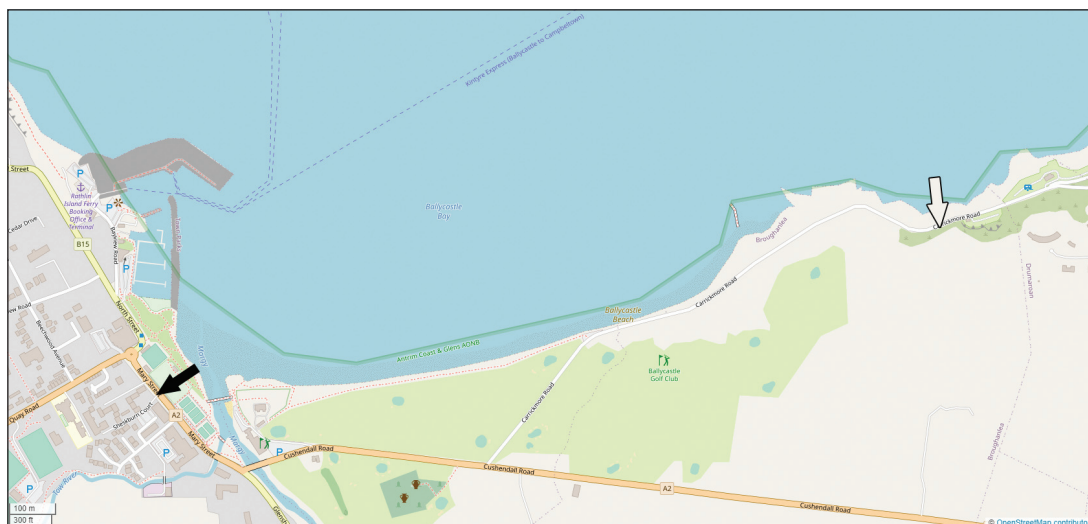


Fig 1 Map showing the location of the statues on Mary Street (indicated by black arrow), and the White Mine Colliery (indicated by white arrow), Ballycastle (courtesy OpenStreetMap ODbL).

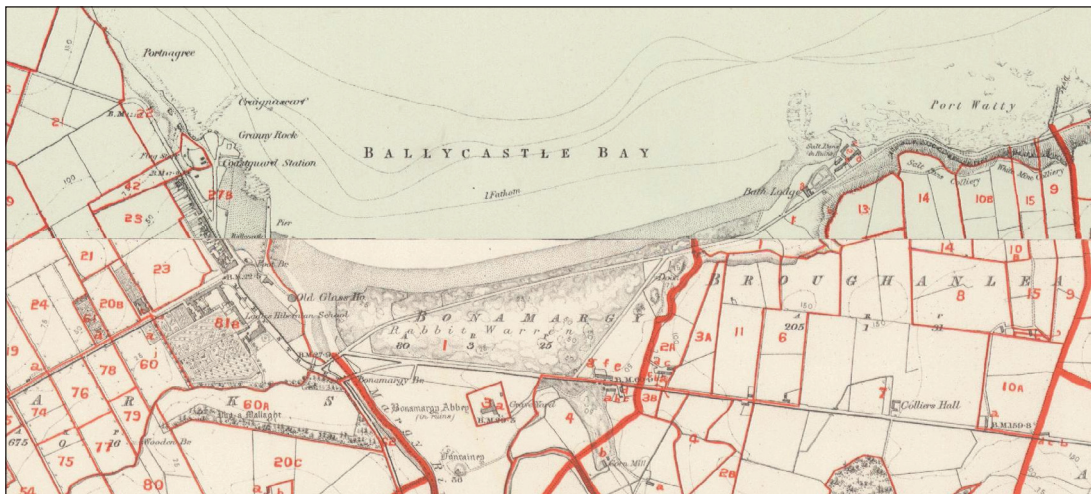


Fig 2 Ordnance Survey second-edition six-inch map of Mary Street, Ballycastle, used by Griffith's Valuation showing Boyd's silted-up harbour (now the tennis courts) opposite the entrance to the Boyd yard (courtesy www.askaboutireland.ie).

1865–1914, and one of Ballycastle Lower dating to 1880–1900 by Robert French, all currently in the Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland. A photograph from the Fergus O'Connor Collection, National Library of Ireland, shows the statue group behind an early tennis tournament which must postdate 1898 but, based on the clothing, cannot be

more than ten or fifteen years later (Fig 4). The clearest photographic image of the group *in situ* above the Boyd yard dates to c 1944 and shows the statues from the rear (Fig 5).

In 1947, the Boyd manor was turned into a Barnardo's children's home. The building continued to function in this capacity until 1984, after which it



Fig 3 The Mary Street entrance to the Boyd yard pre-1898 showing the statue group overgrown with ivy; the defunct harbour in the foreground is being used to graze ponies; the house visible beyond the gate belonged to the Gage family of Rathlin (photographer unknown, courtesy Danny Morgan).



Fig 4 The Mary Street entrance to the Boyd yard showing the statue group overlooking the tennis courts c 1900; from the Fergus O'Connor collection (courtesy National Library of Ireland).

became derelict. In 1971, the south-eastern outbuildings of the Manor, including the entrance to the yard, were demolished (Brett 1980, 51). The demolition was to make way for the construction of housing at Glenshesk Court and Rathmoyle Home and Resource Centre. The site of the original yard entry is now the driveway into Glenshesk Court.

During the demolition process, the statue group was removed and subsequently broken by vandals; fragments were rescued by local teacher, Matthew Scally, who took them first to the grounds of St Mary Star of the Sea Secondary School and later, after the closure of the school in 1996, to his own garage. The fragments passed to Cahal Dallat after Scally's death (2006) and, after Dallat's death, they were purchased for a nominal amount in 2008 by one of the Friends of Ballycastle Museum, Peter Molloy, who donated them to Ballycastle Museum in that same year (accession no BC/2010/89).

The fragments in the collection include two heads, two torsos, and one set of hips and legs. One head and torso fit together neatly and depict a larger than life-sized armoured male in the form of a hip-herm. The second head and torso also appear to join and depict a smaller than life-sized female figure, naked to the waist. The other, bodiless hips and legs are draped, and appear to be part of a second smaller than life-sized female. In addition, there are two small fragmentary foreparts of beasts – possibly



Fig 5 Ruby and Adeline Anderson standing inside the Boyd yard with the statue group above the arched entry behind them c 1944 (courtesy Elizabeth Fee).

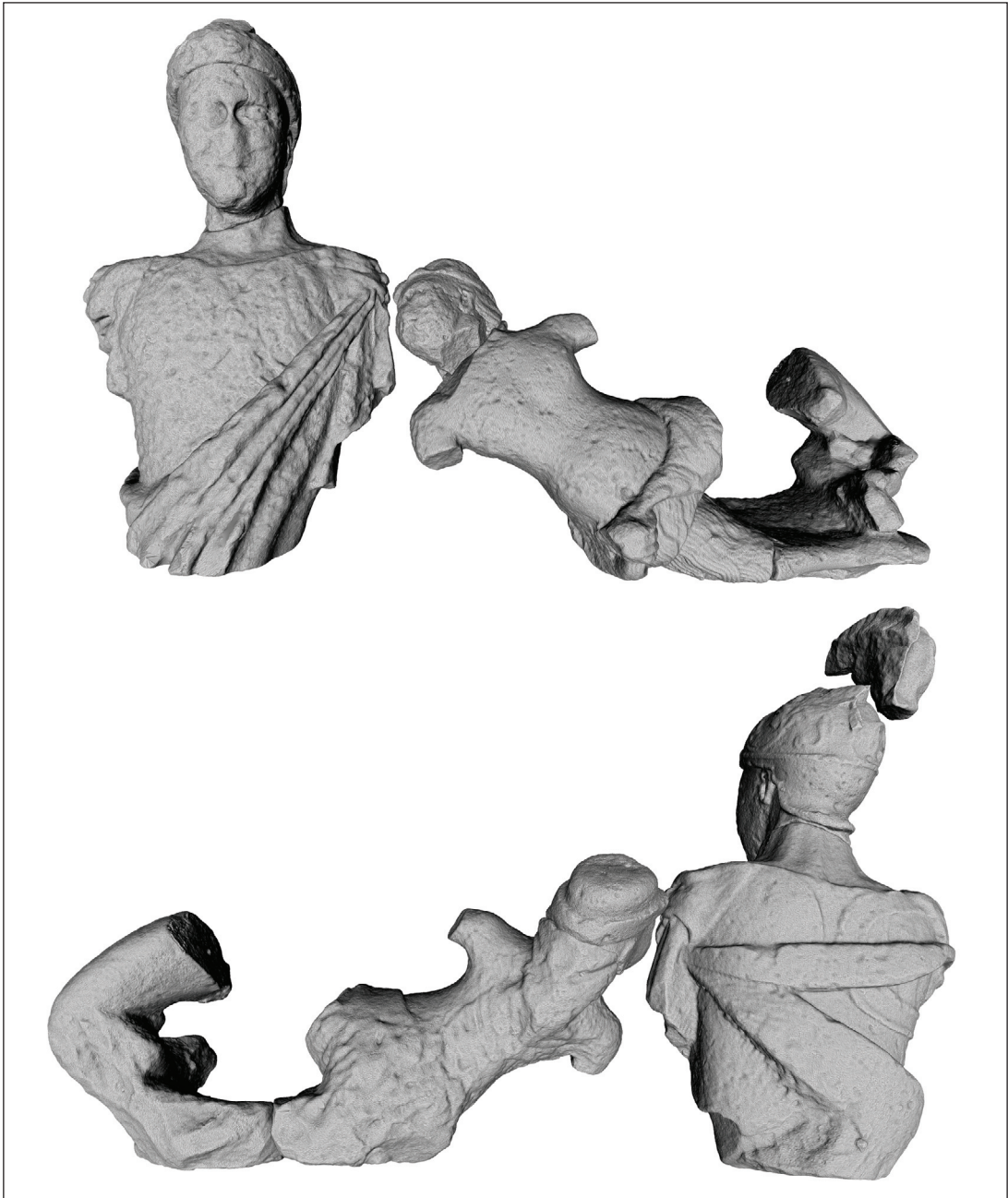


Fig 6 Digital reconstruction of fragments 1–6 showing the armoured male and one of the recumbent female figures, along with one of the beast foreparts, shown from the front (above) and rear (below).

horses – a disc-like feature decorated with a gorgon's head, and three further fragments (one crest for the armoured male, and two nondescript fragments).

Several of the fragments join, and countersunk holes drilled into the surface of the broken edges indicate where the statue group has previously been

repaired with pegs or dowels. All of the drilled holes are the same diameter, with a 12mm diameter countersink at the surface, narrowing in a shallow chamfer to a 7mm diameter.

Arranging the statue fragments according to the original group composition poses challenges, but is

much assisted by the c 1944 photograph which clearly shows a roughly triangular configuration. The crest of the larger armoured figure appears to form an apex, flanked by the smaller females, with the rearing beasts in the lower corners. According to Ballycastle resident Raymond Bakewell (14/02/2017), 'it was very big, very imposing. My memory of it is there was a central figure with two side figures leaning on it. It covered a very wide entrance, a very substantial structure' (Figs 5, 6). Many of the iconographic and stylistic elements appear to be Hellenistic – or heavily Hellenised – but, on the whole, seem without direct parallel in ancient, or indeed modern, sculpture.

The statue fragments were examined by Dr Alastair Ruffell (Queens University Belfast School of Natural and Built Environment) and Dr Mark Cooper (Chief Geologist of the Geological Survey Northern Ireland) who have confirmed (pers comm) that all pieces appear to have been carved from the same type of uniform, medium/coarse-grained, quartz arenite sandstone. Where weathered, the stone appears grey, but fresh breaks reveal the true colour to be almost white.

THE DEVILS OF BALLYCASTLE

Throughout the 20th century, the statues assumed a unique place in the communal beliefs of Ballycastle residents. The following accounts were recorded from people who grew up in Ballycastle between the 1920s and 1960s as part of two Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Services community engagement programmes. 'Big Houses' (2015–2017) explored the historical experiences of Causeway Coast and Glens residents growing up in and around the big houses owned by local landlords and minor gentry. It was during the course of this project that attention was first drawn to the Ballycastle statue fragments.¹

The devil and his angels. That's what we were told it was ... I don't know but I always remember it as that. I must have been told when I was very young
(Adeline Burley 18/10/2019).

We used to refer to it as the devils, you know, as children. We were scared to go past it at night on our own because we were always told 'that's the devil!' from a very early age. A way of scaring us off from places we shouldn't have been in
(Peter Molloy 25/02/2016).

As a wee boy growing up, we always thought that was the devil. Nobody ever told

me, everybody just regarded them as something to do with the devil
(Raymond Bakewell 14/02/2017).

It was never drawn attention to, that's what I would state. It was ignored, or else it was to do with evil or something like that. Sinister
(John Holbrook 14/02/2017).

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. And I think that, locally, a lot of people thought of it as an evil spirit, an evil devil ... Ye looked up at it occasionally, and ye didn't look up at it too long, and ye just went on then, you know
(James McCurdy 23/11/2019).

When we were going to school and coming from school, we would get to just before it and then we would have just run past it because we were so scared
(Brigene McNeilly 13/12/2019).

The statue group's sinister connection may have derived from the curious cloven hooves visible on fragment 6. However, local beliefs may have derived from the presumed association between the statues and India, explored below. In 19th- and early 20th-century Ulster, it was not uncommon for exotic objects, especially those of a religious nature, to be treated with suspicion. As a case in point, Coleraine Museum's Sam Henry collection holds two accounts of a (now lost) statue of the Buddha that had been brought back to the city of Derry from India by a Major Hezlett (CM/2014/604/7 and CM/2016/326). According to the accounts, multiple owners of the statue are reported to have fallen sick, died, had their cattle die mysteriously, suffered broken bones, or had a horse die. The statue was ultimately taken to the local museum in Derry, after which time the caretaker's wife was said to have never known good health.

THE BOYDS OF BALLYCASTLE AND THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

How the Ballycastle statues came, in the 19th century, to sit above the entrance to the Boyd yard remains in question. Local belief, first recorded by Brett (1980) firmly links them to Major General Hugh Boyd's lengthy career in Bengal (1823–1859) in the East India Company army. While we have no independent documentation to verify the local story, Boyd's career is worth exploring to assess the plausibility of the assertion.

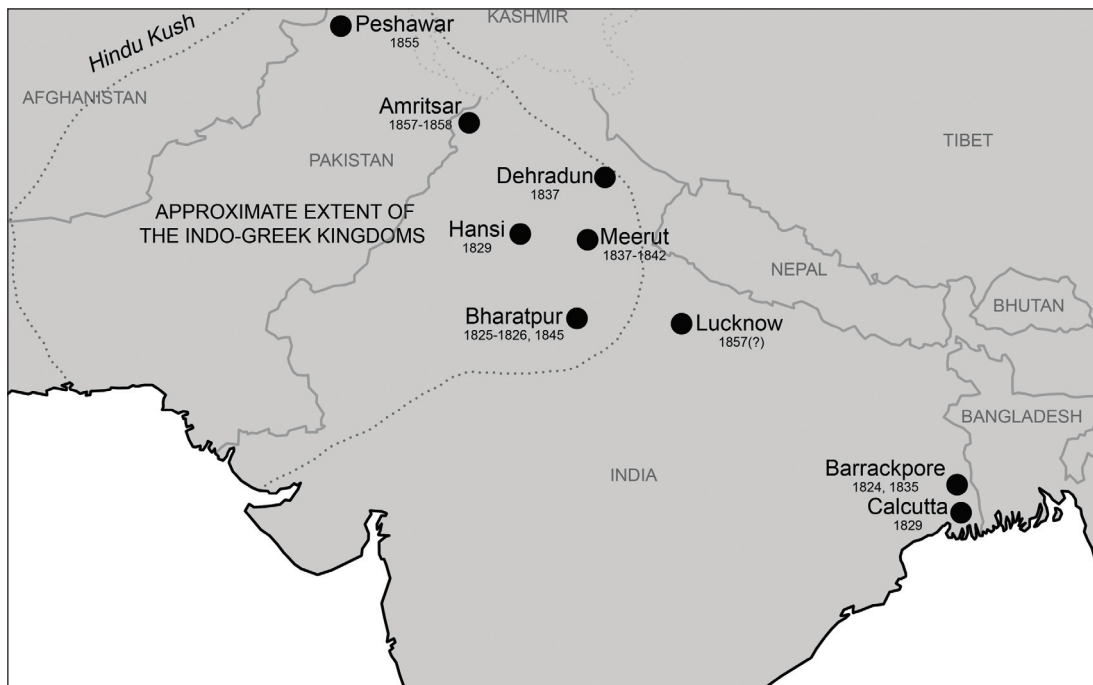


Fig 7 Map showing the known deployments of Hugh Boyd based on *Alphabetical List of the Officers of the Bengal Army; The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australasia; The East-India Register and Directory; The Calcutta Monthly Journal and General Register of Occurrences Throughout the British Dominions in the East Forming an Epitome of the Indian Press; East-India Register and Army List; The Quarterly Army List Of Her Majesty's British And Indian Forces, On Their Bengal Establishment 1859; the Naval and Military Gazette; and the National Archives of India records PR_000002428105, PR_000002427064, and PR_000002428010.*

The Boyd family had been responsible for developing Ballycastle in the 18th century. Under the guidance of Colonel Hugh Boyd (1690–1765), Ballycastle expanded from a small fishing port and cattle market on the north coast of Ireland, to become a prosperous industrial centre exporting the produce of local collieries, saltworks and a glass factory (McGill 2007).

Like many of their peers among the Irish gentry, generations of the Boyd family sought service in the military and civic administration of the British Empire. In 1823, Col Boyd's namesake and great-great-grandson, embarked on a military career in north-western India, rising to eventually command a brigade during the Indian Mutiny (1857–58). Following the Mutiny, he retired to Ballycastle as a major general. According to Brett's *Historic Buildings* (originally published in 1971), it was 'probably' Major General Hugh Boyd who brought the statue group (identified as river gods) back from India in 1856 or 1858 (Brett 1980, 51). *Burke's Guide to Country Houses*, also ascribes the statues to Major General Boyd, stating the group was

brought back from India 'at the time of the Mutiny' (Bence-Jones 1978, 19–20; see also Barczewski 2014, 214). It is unfortunate that neither Brett nor Bence-Jones cite their sources of information.

Although the OS memoir states that the Boyd manor was roomy and spacious with extensive gardens and offices (outbuildings), by the 1830s, when the memoir was written, it was 'almost ruinous' and 'inhabited by nearly 20 poor families. 3 of the rooms are used as schoolrooms'. The proprietor, yet another Hugh Boyd, is noted as a lunatic and the estate is listed as being in chancery (Day *et al* 1994, 89, 94–5). Slightly later newspaper accounts note the depressing effect on Ballycastle of the Boyd estates being held in the 'hands of a formal and uninterested government' (Anon 1874a). The *Belfast Weekly News* (Anon 1874b) reported that

The estate has, owing to various circumstances, been in Chancery for some fifty or sixty years, and in consequence the prosperity of the town and district has been somewhat comparably retarded.

Among the OS memoir's detailed accounts of antiquities in the area, there is no mention of the statue group. The installation of the statues by, or for, Major General Boyd in the generation after the recording of the OS memoir may have been part of an attempt to restore the estate to its former prominence.

The proposition that a statue might have been brought back to Ireland from South Asia is by no means unreasonable. The early 19th century saw the neoclassical movement still at its height, with many landed gentry taking part in Grand Tours across Europe, the Mediterranean, and further afield. A prime example from the north of Ireland, can be seen in the collection of Roman antiquities brought back to Downhill House by Frederick Augustus Hervey (1730–1803), the fourth earl of Bristol and bishop of Derry. Bishop Hervey's wealth enabled him to acquire 'statues, busts, and marbles without end' on his travels (Figgis 1990, 80). A synopsis of the surviving Roman material recovered from Downhill is given in an unpublished report on the Downhill Marbles compiled for the National Trust by J Lenaghan in 2006.

The expansion of the British colonial empire, especially in the 19th century, saw the import of curios and exotica from around the world. The Indian subcontinent in particular loomed large in the psyche of the Irish gentry, some of whom exhibited an undeniable sense of duty to serve the empire and no doubt felt the lure of adventure and the possibilities of personal advancement. As well as Boyd's own older brother (Francis Turnley Boyd), their neighbours and contemporaries, Ezekiel Gage (son of the manor house on Rathlin), and Sir William Hay Macnaghten of Dundarave, also found career paths in the East India Company.

East India Company officers applied for their posts and did not purchase their commissions like their peers in the regular army. Advancement could therefore be slow and they were looked down upon by officers of the regular army. However, the financial potential of an East India Company commission was an attractive lure. At the turn of the 19th century, it was estimated that a new officer cadet for the East India Company required £300 for fitting out and transport to India, plus an annual subsidy of £50 for the first five years of service – a total of £550. However, after 20–25 years' service, the officer could expect to have amassed around £30,000 (Barczewski 2014, 91) – a fine return on a family's investment and a welcome proposition for the declining fortunes of the Boyds of Ballycastle.

Hugh Boyd's career saw him deployed the length of Bengal (Fig 7), with postings with the 62nd, 16th, 15th and 59th Bengal Native Infantry as

well as administrative positions at headquarters. His final active commission was the independent command of the moveable column (a mobile brigade intended to support other forces under pressure) stationed at Umritsir/Amritsar in 1857–1858. There can be no doubt that his career provided him ample opportunity to acquire antiquities, giving credence to the assertions of Brett and Bence-Jones.

Emblematic of the capacity of East India Company officers to acquire exotica is the Hebridean, Colonel Colin Mackenzie (1754–1821), of the Madras Engineers, who amassed an extraordinary collection of more than 2,000 South Asian documents and objects which are now housed in numerous museums and archives across Britain, India and Sri Lanka (Blake 1991). In the wake of the Indian Rebellion (1857–1859), the transfer of cultural heritage from the Indian subcontinent back to Britain and Ireland became part and parcel of the commemoration of British imperialism and the discourse of conquest (Barczewski 2014, 212–15). Speaking of the outcome of the Indian Rebellion, Cohn (1996, 105) writes that 'loot poured into England to be treasured as memorabilia of families, symbolizing the privation and the sense of triumph generated by the war'. Throughout Ireland, as in Britain, Indian objects became part of the private and public display of family power and influence, as well as service to the empire and victory over foreign forces.

Major General Boyd can be viewed as a plausible conduit to bring the statue group to Ireland from India. However, the question of provenance still presents a significant issue. Large gaps remain in our knowledge of Boyd's movements, although he clearly spent a large part of his career within the part of north-western India (Amritsar, Peshawar, Meerut and Bharatpur) that had, from the 2nd century BC until the 1st century AD, been ruled by Hellenistic and Hellenised kings – an element that becomes relevant when examining the iconography of the fragments. These kings descended from the Greco-Macedonian ruling class left in Central Asia following the campaigns of Alexander the Great (334–323 BC). In the early second century BC, they established independent kingdoms south of the Hindu Kush, through Gandhara, the Punjab and across much of modern Pakistan and northern India (for an overview of the Indo-Greek world, see Mairs 2021).

Without documentary evidence, it is difficult to ascertain whether Boyd came across the statues in his role as an officer in the East India Company or on one of his private travels while on furlough, or were bought by him on the open antiquities market, or indeed were commissioned by him on his return to Ballycastle.



Fig 8 Fragment 1, left side.



Fig 9 Fragment 1, right side.



Fig 10 Fragment 1, three-quarter view from the left.

THE FRAGMENTS

Considering the local context and credible South Asian provenance of the statue group, we can now turn to examine the fragments themselves, noting comparanda where possible. Laser scanning of the fragments was made possible as part of a project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (SH-18-05761) in 2019–2021. This enabled the creation of weightless 3D assets that could be manipulated and reconstructed without any risk of damage to the statue elements themselves (Fig 6). Fragments 1, 2 and 3 belong to the central male figure. Fragments 4, 5 and 6 join to form the right-hand flanking female figure. While some of the other fragments are identifiable, they are not contiguous pieces and are thus more difficult to integrate into any reconstruction of the original group. Several of the fragments clearly show evidence of repair, but other than that the breakages predate the statue group's final destruction in 1971 the date of the earlier repairs is unknown.

Fragments 1, 2 and 3 – the armoured male

1. Large head wearing open-faced helmet measuring 373 x 297 x 216mm (Figs 8–10).

This fragment depicts a beardless head wearing a crested Attic helmet without cheek pieces. The crest of the helmet (fragment 2) was carved from the same piece of stone. It was still attached in the 1940s (Fig 5) and the fresh break appears to have occurred during or after the demolition of the Boyd manor outbuildings in 1971. There is a clear break across the neck of the figure, running diagonally from rear left down to front right. There is a countersunk hole drilled into the centre of the neck, designed to take a dowel or peg in order to re-join the piece to fragment 3.

Overall, the right side of the head is rather badly weathered, while more detail is visible on the figure's left side. The helmet conforms to an Attic type (popular across the Greco-Roman world in different forms from the 4th century BC–3rd century AD), with a visor and close-fitting neck guard but without cheek pieces. The visor is decorated with some form of central disc motif; unfortunately, the high level of wear has made it difficult to define the nature of the disc.

The bowl of the helmet is worn, although enough detailing remains to show that it was once elaborately decorated with a floral motif, perhaps depicting a curving vine in low relief on either side. As with all the detailing, the helmet decoration is clearest on the left-hand side where a vine emerges above the visor, rising up over the bowl and falling back to the lower rim above the exposed ear, before opening up into several curling leaves.

The helmet is comparable to that worn by Athena on Attic tetradrachms which circulated across the eastern Mediterranean and were imitated in Iran and Central Asia, as well as elsewhere, in the 4th century BC (see Bopearachchi 2000, nos 61–4 for examples). Comparisons can also be made with the helmet worn by the heroic head on the obverse of Seleukos I's so-called victory coinage from Susa and Drangiana dating c 305/4–281 BC (Houghton & Lorber 2002, nos 173.14, 174.5, 175.2, 196, 197, 199.2, 226, 227, 228.2). An Attic helmet is also worn by Athena, and by another heroic male, possibly the Hindu war god Skanda, on the coins of the Punjabi ruler Sophytes, c 323–281 BC (Jansari 2013). Of these, it is perhaps Athena's helmet shown on both the Attic imitations and Sophytes' coins which are the most similar, lacking – as they do – cheek pieces, and bearing floral decorative motifs on the helmet bowl.

Although distinguishable, the facial features are heavily weathered. The clearest details are visible in the carefully worked recesses around the ears and the deep-set eyes. The eyelids are clearly present, but there is no evidence of sculpted pupils. Where these features are visible, it appears that the sculptor was following an established Hellenistic tradition with sympathetic attention paid to anatomical detail. Viewed in profile, the head is a believable Hellenistic portrait with a cleanly shaven face, short hair and realistic physiognomy. Viewed frontally, however, the head differs from classical proportions, being too narrow for its height and breadth.

2. Helmet crest measuring 194 x 179 x 88mm (Figs 11, 12).

The helmet crest is formed in an irregular kidney shape, with a shallow trough running the length of its upper surface. Both broad sides are decorated with lines radiating outwards from the point where the crest joined with the helmet, giving the impression of thick bristles or, more likely, feathers, akin to the helmets worn by the Praetorian Guard on the triumphal arch of Claudius dated to the mid-1st century AD, now in the Louvre (inventory no LL 398).

Fragments 1 and 2 are badly abraded and no longer meet in a continuous joint.

3. Armoured torso with no arms measuring 597 x 539 x 302mm (Figs 13–15).

The neck shows a clear diagonal break, with the highest point to the figure's rear left and the lowest point nearing the front of the right shoulder. The neck break conforms perfectly with the neck of fragment 1. It is clear that the two pieces were originally joined with the head turned slightly to the



Fig 11 Fragment 2, right side.



Fig 12 Fragment 2, left side.



Fig 13 Fragment 3, front.



Fig 14 Fragment 3, rear.



Fig 15 Fragment 3, left side showing lion-mask holding drapery in jaws.

left. The break between fragments 1 and 3 pre-dates the damage of the 1970s. There is a countersunk hole drilled into the centre of the neck to take a dowel or peg, matching the hole drilled into fragment 1.

Uniquely, in place of arms, the torso is adorned with two detailed lion masks. The lions may have alluded to the strength of the wearer through natural or divine comparison, or were perhaps apotropaic. Among the Greeks, the Nemean Lion carried connotations of Herakles' euergetism, strength, protection and ultimately his apotheosis. Herakles continued to be popular as a patron of kings in Greek-ruled Bactria and India from the late 4th century BC through to at least the early 1st century AD. In later Gandharan and Indian art, Herakles (complete with lion skin) was identifiable as either Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa or as Vajrapāṇi, the bodyguard of Buddha (see for example Puskás 1990, 39–47; Stančo 2012, 139; Kubica 2023, 176–83).

The lion on the left shoulder bares its canine teeth and holds in place the folds of a piece of textile drapery which falls diagonally across the back of the figure from the left shoulder to right hip, and then across the front from the right hip back to the left shoulder. The draped textile then continues across the back from left to right, partially covering the previous drape, to terminate in a stylised lion's tail grasped firmly in the jaws of the lion mask on the right shoulder.

The folds of the garment are executed with care and fall naturally across the sculpture. The piece may be intended as a variant form of Greek himation, although showing the himation draped over an armoured body appears without precedent. Within a South Asian context the drapery could be an *uttariya*. It is perhaps even possible to view the drapery as a form of *saṃghāti* – a Buddhist cloth overgarment, worn above other clothes or armour – as depicted on numerous Gandharan sculptural pieces including the 2nd- to 4th-century Gandharan schist bodhisattvas now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (inv no IM.4-1911), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv no 1991.75), Cleveland Museum of Art (inv no 1965.476), and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (inv nos I 131 and I 517).

Below the drapery and lion-masks, the torso is covered by a scaled cuirass. The small overlapping scales appear to be rhomboid, with the clearest examples (on the left-hand side of the figure) measuring between 24 and 33mm high, and 32 and 39mm wide. The cuirass has shoulder pieces (*epomydes*) which wrap around the shoulders, underneath the lion masks in such a way as to suggest that, should the sculpture have been modelled on a real piece of armour, the lion masks were intended to sit above the shoulders rather than

in place of arms. The shoulder pieces have curved ends and a clear broad border around their entire edge. In the centre of the cuirass, partially overlaid by the drapery, is the worn remnant of a sculpted buckle.

Body armour protected by scales of metal, leather, ivory or horn were known to the Greek world from the Iron Age, but was more typically associated with armour further east, among the Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians and Skythians (De Baker 2012; Agre 2011, 72–84). Gandharan depictions from the Kushan period showing a warrior wearing a scaled cuirass and bearing a spear and round shield, have been interpreted as the god Skanda in costume influenced by Hellenised equipment (Skupniewicz 2016).

The head (fragment 1) joins the body with a slight tilt to the left, and the right shoulder is set marginally lower than the left, forming a slight curve to the spine, typical of a figure in contrapposto. The tilting of the head to the left was typical of Hellenistic and Roman depictions of Alexander the Great as an ‘outward sign of the young ruler’s energetic and dynamic temperament’ and was said to be imitated by some of his successors (Kiilerich 2017). The torso ends at the waist which is cut clean across. An iron bar, 44mm square in section, evidences the manner in which the statue was fixed in place on the Boyd gateway.

The arrangement of the armoured figure as a hip-herm with no limbs is curious. Other hip-herms are known from the Greco-Roman world (Fokeeva 2019), including Hellenistic contexts in Central and South Asia. Among the latter are a limestone hermaic pillar of a bearded man from the gymnasium at Ai Khanoum, usually identified as Straton the Gymnasiarch, last documented in the National Museum of Afghanistan (Veuve 1987, 91–3, pls 52, 53) and a 1st-century bronze satyr from southern Bactria, now in the Ashmolean Museum (inv no EA1994.47). However, like their western counterparts, both of these examples were produced with the arms as an integral part of the figure.

Fragments 4, 5 and 6 – the female figure

4. Small head measuring 233 x 194 x 147mm (Figs 16–18).

The smaller head is as badly weathered as fragment 1 but, lacking the same depth of sculpting, it presents fewer obvious Hellenised characteristics. The face is unbearded with well-spaced features and wide, almond-shaped eyes. As on fragment 1, the eyes are lidded without engraved pupils. Viewed frontally, it is quite rectangular in section, with parallel sides to the face and ears carved in such shallow relief as to be easily missed.



Fig 16 Fragment 4, front.



Fig 17 Fragment 4, three-quarter view from the left.



Fig 18 Fragment 4, showing the countersunk holes in the neck and base of the back of the head.



Fig 19 Fragment 5, front – one of the countersunk holes is visible at the base of the neck.



Fig 20 Fragment 5, detail of the right hand grasping the fur-like drapery covering across the figure's waist.

It is only when viewed side-on that the attention given to the ears and hair can be observed. The treatment of the hair is careful but unsophisticated. It is pulled back from the brow line, behind the ears and into a thick plait or club which continues on fragment 5. Particular care was taken to depict one curl of hair falling over the top of the left ear, ending within the helix. The jawline is indicated by a shallow, bevelled line running diagonally down and towards the chin from the ear.

Fragment 4 wears a headdress consisting of a thick band encircling the head, across the brow and above the ears. The band is topped by a poorly preserved cylindrical feature the same width as the face below which resembles something like a fez in shape. Given the worn nature of the carving, it is unclear if the headdress should be viewed as a garland around hair, something akin to the cylindrical polos worn by various Greco-Roman goddesses, or the headdresses worn by the maenads accompanying Silenos on a Gandharan schist relief now in Tokyo (Stančo 2012, 104, no 143).

The rear of fragment 4 is quite badly damaged with several breaks at different angles. However, two countersunk drill holes indicate where fragments 4 and 5 were once dowelled together. Despite the damage and weathering, the aligned dowel holes confirm the correct angle at which the two fragments were originally joined – the head turned up and to the right.

5. Naked torso measuring 679 x 392 x 202mm (Figs 19, 20).

Fragment 5 is the torso of the smaller than life-sized female figure visible to the left of the central armoured male in the photographs. Her torso is bare, with small breasts and a delicate waist broadening out at the hips wrapped in curiously worked 'drapery'. In general, the front of the fragment is finely executed, while the rear is more roughly shaped. The only well-defined detailing on the rear of the sculpture is the continuation of the thick hair plait descending from the back of fragment 4.

There is an irregular break where the head (fragment 4) should be attached. Two drilled countersunk holes are clearly visible, showing where the two fragments have previously been repaired and dowelled together.

Both arms are broken below the shoulder and are now lost. The c 1944 photograph (Fig 3) shows that the left arm was already missing by that stage, although the right arm was in a more complete state than it is now. The right hand is still attached to the torso at the right hip where it grasps the figure's drapery (Fig 20).

The drapery itself clings to the shape of the body after the Hellenistic tradition. However, it has been clearly textured with an irregular but stylised, wavy pattern to give the appearance of fur or hair. The texturing is most obvious to the front of the piece, and much less apparent at the rear which is, in general, less well finished. Trace remains of the same stylised texture are visible on fragment 6 which joins this piece to the lower right.

While the statue's drapery element with the wavy design appears to be arranged over the figure's hips – preserving her modesty – the nature of the element is less clear further down the body where it appears to almost become an integral feature of her right leg.

There is a clear break across the upper thigh of the left leg which shows irregular scars. The rest of the left leg is missing and there is no evidence of previous repairs in the form of drilled holes to accommodate a peg or dowel. In the c 1944 photograph, the figure's left leg appears more complete, rising up and bending down again towards fragment 6.

In contrast, the right leg appears to be complete, extending to the area of the knee on fragment 5 and continuing on fragment 6. There is a single countersunk hole within the section of the break indicative of previous repair work. The front and inside surface of the right leg is covered by the wavy incisions creating the fur-like texture, but the right side of her hip is flat and unworked allowing the figure to recline on that side. Her right hip was clearly flattened for stability and never meant to be seen. The angle of the neck and the join with fragment 4 indicates that the recumbent female gazed up towards her right. In the context of the statue group, she looked up towards the central armoured figure.

6. Leg and animal forepart measuring 415 x 305 x 227mm (Figs 21, 22).

Fragment 6 consists of two joined elements: the legs of the female figure and the protome or foreparts of a rearing animal or beast.

The lower part of the female figure's right leg continues from the break of fragment 5; there is a matching countersunk hole for the dowel joint showing past repairs. However, the modelling of the leg below the knee is lost below the fur-like drapery which resolves itself into a narrow leg with shaggy hock and cloven hoof. The hock and hoof are damaged, with only the upper half (left side) of the hoof extant. The drapery is thus confirmed as an animal hide, perhaps deriving from a deer, goat or similar creature.



Fig 21 Fragment 6, front.



Fig 22 Fragment 6, rear.



Fig 23 Fragment 7, front.



Fig 24 Fragment 8, front – the countersunk hole is visible on the right.



Fig 25 Fragment 8, three-quarter view from the left.

A second, complete, cloven hoof rests upon the hock of the first but the part of the sculpture that joined it to fragment 5 is lost. There are no indications of attempted repair work to the second hoof/hock, just as there were no indications of relevant repairs to the left leg on fragment 5. The c 1944 photograph appears to show more of the hide/animal leg still attached to the figure, so it is apparent that the current damage is more recent.

The second element of fragment 6 – the forepart of the animal – emerges from behind and below the hooves of the animal skin drapery. The extant remains show a gracefully curving neck joining the curve of a jaw. Most of the head is lost although a countersunk drilled hole indicates that the break is not recent and has undergone repairs. The musculature of the beast's chest or sternum was clearly worked, as were the rearing forelegs which exhibit significant wear. The animal is shown only in forepart, stopping sharply behind the shoulder. The beast could conceivably be a horse, but due to the damage it could equally be a bull or something else entirely. The rear of the beast shows further irregular, thin, chisel marks.

7. Draped legs measuring 612 x 315 x 242mm (Fig 23).

Fragment 7 does not join with any of the other extant fragments. It takes the form of heavily draped legs, flattened but otherwise unworked on the right-hand side where it appears it would have rested on the statue base, mirroring the reclining attitude of the more complete recumbent female figure. Comparable in size to the more complete female's fur-covered legs, fragment 7 appears to be from the third figure of the statue group who originally reclined to the left of the central armoured male. Her torso is now lost, but from the emerging bare waist present above the drapery on fragment 7, the figure would appear to be naked above the visible drapery.

8. Animal forepart measuring 179 x 153 x 240mm (Figs 24, 25).

This fragment is very badly damaged – even more fragmentary than the animal forepart on fragment 6. Only one foreleg, with the hoof or paw to the left, is clearly discernible, next to a sculpted mass which might be part of a torso or neck. The right end of the fragment has a sharp vertical break bearing a countersunk hole for a dowel joint showing where the fragment was at one point broken and re-joined to a (lost) contiguous piece. The left end of the fragment is damaged but bears no evidence of repair.

9. Disc with gorgoneion(?) measuring 221 x 256 x 110mm (Figs 26–28).

Fragment 9 takes the form of a vertical disc- or medallion-like ellipsoid, slightly elongated from top to bottom and broken across the base. The rear of the fragment is only roughly worked with numerous irregular thin chisel marks and was clearly not intended to be seen.

The principal surface of the fragment has been finely carved in shallow relief and depicts a left-facing head – the break in the fragment coming across or just above the chin and jawline. The head sits within a slight recess formed by a solid line border running around the entire outer edge of the fragment, down to the break.

Although badly worn, the head is clearly unbearded. Wild, flowing ‘hair’ extends from the brow, and continues round to the nape of the neck. The shape, and thickness, of the hair is snake-like and probably identifies the image as a gorgoneion, the head of one of the gorgons, probably Medusa. Presuming this identification is accepted, the fragment is unusual (but not unprecedented) in showing the head in profile as gorgoneia are customarily shown frontally, serving an apotropaic function. However, a gorgoneion shown in profile, facing right with thick flowing hair and a winged brow was widely used as an obverse type on the coinage of Seleukos I Nikator in the late 280s BC (see for examples Houghton & Lorber 2002, nos 6, 7 Sardes, 8 Magnesia on the Meander, 21–4 Antioch on the Orontes, 151–53 Seleukeia on the Tigris, 191–93 Susa, and 290 Aī Khanoum).

10. Uncertain fragment measuring 75 x 103 x 78cm (Figs 29, 30).

Fragment 10 is a badly worn asymmetrical piece that is not contiguous with any of the other extant fragments. One surface shows evidence of an irregular break with no sign of repair; there is also evidence of carved striations running across one surface towards the break, but the original shape of the fragment and how it related to the statue group as a whole is unclear.

11. Uncertain fragment measuring 82 x 58 x 53mm (Figs 31, 32).

Fragment 11 appears to be a damaged corner piece of a quadrilateral plinth, basis or other surface. The fragment’s only discernible feature is a shallow groove which runs along one corner where three surface planes intersect at almost 90-degree angles (suggesting the block was once rectilinear, at least at this end). All other surfaces are irregular and provide no sense of how fragment 11 related to the other elements of the group.



Fig 26 Fragment 9, front.



Fig 27 Fragment 9, right side.



Fig 28 Fragment 9, rear.



Fig 29 Fragment 10, showing striations across the uneven surface towards the irregular break.



Fig 30 Fragment 10.



Fig 31 Fragment 11.



Fig 32 Fragment 11.

INTERPRETING THE STATUE GROUP

Based on the photographic evidence, we can establish, with confidence, that the statue group was in place above the entrance to the Boyd yard before the end of the 19th century. However, its fragmentary nature, together with the absence of a secure origin, makes it difficult to provide interpretation with great confidence. Nonetheless, many of the extant fragments retain sufficient detail to determine their original form and style, and the iconography allows for a tentative discussion of the pieces.

The statue group is without direct parallel, ancient or modern. The figures appear to draw iconographic elements from the Hellenistic world and from South Asia but adhere strictly to neither of these traditions. This suggests that they were produced in a cultural milieu which was influenced by the Greco-Roman world, but did not seek to mimic it. An origin in Hellenistic India is certainly plausible within this framework.

The numismatic corpus of the Indo-Greek, Indo-Skythian and Kushan rulers of north-west India parallels this fusion of Hellenistic, Central and South Asian cultures. The coins of all these rulers were bilingual (generally Greek on the obverse and Kharoṣṭhī on the reverse) and feature a complex mix of Greek and Indian deities and iconography including chakra wheels and Buddhist gestures (see for example BGR Menander II 7). The Buddhist reliquary, found in Shinkot, Bajaur, on the Pakistan-Afghan border also exemplifies this Hellenistic fusion, bearing a Kharoṣṭhī inscription from the 1st century BC/AD, honouring a Greek king, Menander (I or II) and his indigenous vassal ruler/s Viyakamitra/Vijayamitra, as well as the royal counsellor, Viśpila, who was probably Iranian (Kubica 2022, 133–36). Direct contact between the Kushan and Roman empires continued into the 3rd century AD with the result that both the title *Kaisar* and the tutelary goddess, Roma, appear on Kushan coinage (Thorely 1979).

In Major General Hugh Boyd, we can identify a plausible agent, with both the means and the motive, to bring the statue fragments from north-west India or Pakistan to Ballycastle as recorded in the communal memories of Ballycastle residents and published by Brett and Bence-Jones. Such a provenance would account for the syncretic fusion of elements visible in the iconography. However, it needs to be acknowledged that there are no known examples of a stone sculptural tradition from the Indo-Greek heartland before the development of Gandharan Buddhist art in the 1st century AD (Olivieri 2022, 34), and if the Ballycastle statues were a product of that environment, they would be entirely unique.

The early photographic evidence makes it clear that the identifiable elements of the statue fragments formed a balanced sculptural group: the central armoured male (fragments 1–3), flanked by a reclining semi-nude female with fabric drapery on the left (fragment 8), and another reclining semi-nude female draped with a fawn or goat skin on the right (fragments 4–6) bracketed by bestial foreparts (fragments 6 and 8). This composition fits into a Greco-Roman pedimental sculptural tradition writ small. The pose and angle of the two reclining female figures is certainly reminiscent of recumbent divine figures from pedimental sculptures found elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world; perhaps the most famous examples being seen on the east pediment of the Athenian Parthenon (British Museum 1816,0610.97). The pose of the more complete Ballycastle recumbent female figure appears especially close to the bronze statuette of a reclining Dionysos from around Ghazni, Afghanistan (Stančo 2012, 101 no 132). On the Ghazni statuette, even the hard angle of the head is

similar to that seen on our figures.

However, the possibility that these are 19th-century pieces needs to be given due consideration. Neoclassical sculptures tend, by their nature, to mimic the perfection and symmetry perceived in their Greek and Roman prototypes. Where they are not close copies of ancient pieces, they conform to a visual language where the subject matter is seldom in doubt – ancient heroes and divinities, contemporary notables depicted as Roman statesmen or generals, arcadian pastoral shepherdesses and the like. The very enigmatic nature of the Ballycastle figures, with attributes that appear to derive from more than just the Greco-Roman tradition, is strongly suggestive of their originality. However, in this context, ‘originality’ need not require the statues to be ancient – it is here considered likely that the statues were made locally, but were inspired by the Hellenisation of India.

There is a source of very similar sandstone in the townland of Broughanlea, exposed on the Carrickmore Road, only 1.9km along the coast from



Fig 33 The carved face on the rock stack off the Pans Rocks (Ballycastle Museum coll BC/1994/272/02).

the Boyd manor house. Mark Cooper (Geological Survey Northern Ireland) has identified a multi-metre scale, fluvial sandstone massive present just to the east of the Pans Rocks, overlain by bedded sandstone, mudstone, and siltstone. The first- and second-edition Ordnance Survey maps show this area as the White Mine Colliery (IHR 03749:000:00) and Griffith's Valuation indicates that it was still owned by the Boyd family in 1861. The land above the mines was leased by Charles Darragh, the local stone mason responsible for St Patrick and St Brigid's Roman Catholic church in Ballycastle (HB05/13/001) and who is sometimes said to be responsible for carving the enigmatic face on the rock stack at Pans Rocks (Fig 33) (Wright 2019, 156). The white, medium-grained, quartz arenite from White Mine Colliery is an almost perfect match for the Ballycastle statue fragments. The principal differentiation is between grain size, although grain size is known to differ within fluvial channels. On the balance of probability, it seems likely that the Ballycastle statues were carved from stone sourced from the near vicinity (Mark Cooper, pers comm). How then, can this be squared with the assertions of Brett and Bence-Jones that Major General Boyd returned with the statues from India?

It is possible that, over time, local traditions confused the return of Major General Hugh Boyd and the appearance of the statues in Ballycastle and conflated the events. After all, more than a century separated Boyd's return and Brett's first edition of *Historic Buildings, Groups of Buildings. Areas of Architectural Importance in the Glens of Antrim* in 1971. The statues may have been carved to celebrate the return of Boyd, commissioned by or for him, and potentially inspired by material he had seen, or by more portable exotica he may have returned with.

The armoured male figure is larger than his flankers and is clearly intended to be the most important figure within the sculptural group. His attributes allow for a number of potential identities. The figure's martial nature is beyond doubt, wearing both a crested Attic helmet and scale cuirass. The helmet has a clear link to the Greco-Roman world where it was a popular form for several centuries. The scale body armour, while known in the Mediterranean, has perhaps a stronger connection with the cultures of Asia, especially the peoples of Iran and Central Asia where the flexibility of scale armour lent itself to operations in both rough terrain and in mounted combat. The armoured figure is cleanshaven, an attribute used sometimes to depict youth, but which could also be seen as a cultural indicator – all Indo-Greek rulers with the exception of Straton I (BIGR Strato I 11) are depicted cleanly shaven on their coins, while the figures on Indo-

Skythian and Kushan coins tend to have pointed beards. The outer drapery, whether seen as a himation, or *uttariya* mark the figure as a philosopher more than just a brute warrior.

Many Indo-Greek rulers chose to depict themselves as armoured warriors on their coinage and it is not unreasonable to posit that the Ballycastle armoured male was made in homage to them as symbols of European colonial expansion into India. Nonetheless, it is hard to match the statue's profile to any specific known royal portrait. Over forty Indo-Greek kings are identifiable in the numismatic corpus, not to mention the rulers of neighbouring Bactria or the later Indo-Skythian or Kushan rulers. Fleischer (1996) and Jakobsson (2010, 43–9) have both outlined some of the issues around the realism of numismatic portraits and attempts to identify a sculptured likeness from coin portraits alone can be problematic. In the case of the Ballycastle sculptures, the high level of wear on the frontal features of fragment 1 have flattened his profile and further hampered any potential identification.

Regarding the philosophical nature of the figure, several Indo-Greek kings associated themselves with Buddhist titles or iconography on their coinage. The 1st-century BC Indo-Greek ruler Menander II Dikaios (the Just), for example, made use of Buddhist iconography, including the eight-spoked wheel on his coinage, and the king's epithet was translated into the Kharoṣṭhī, Dharmika (follower of the Dharma) on the reverse (BIGR Menander II). Other 2nd- and 1st-century BC Indo-Greek dynasts depicted themselves on their coins performing a gesture that appears to be the *vitarka mudra*, the Buddhist gesture of explanation (see for example, BIGR Strato I and Agathocleia 2, Nicias 3, Menander II 7). The Buddhist text, *Milinda-panha* is believed to relate the conversion of a Greek king, Menander I or II, to Buddhism (Khettry 2007; Halkias 2014, 90–8). Menander I is one of the few Indo-Greek kings known from Classical written sources (Strabo, *Geography* 11.11.1: Jones 1928) and after his death, his cremated remains were buried below monuments in parallel to the erection of stūpas over Buddhist relics (Plutarch, *Moralia* 821 D–E: Fowler 1936; see also Kubica 2023, 132).

Therefore, while a positive identification is impossible, it is plausible to suggest that the armoured male represented an Indo-Greek dynast, displaying both his martial prowess, as well as his enlightenment as a philosopher-king as a manifestation of European imperialism. Without comparable portraiture it is hard to ascertain, but it might not be too far a stretch to suggest that the armoured male represented Boyd himself in the guise of a Hellenistic general. In this it would ape

other sculpted works such as Peter Scheemakers' 1764 statue of Robert Clive (Clive of India) in Roman military costume, now in Britain's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

An alternative interpretation, that he is a divine figure, is less satisfactory. If the armoured male represented a deity, his armour would most obviously mark him as an Ares-Mars figure in a Mediterranean context. That god, however, was never known for his thoughtfulness and other male Classical deities, though often violent, were never martial.

The flanking female figures continue to be enigmatic. Both are naked above the waist and their partial nudity makes it most unlikely that the figures should be considered as mortal women whose key attribute in Greco-Roman art was modesty. Likewise, among the principal Greek goddesses, only Aphrodite, as the goddess of desire, is depicted undraped. Further east, the Hellenistic depictions of indigenous goddesses tend only to show divine female nudity in cases where the goddess was syncretised with Aphrodite, as in the case of Isis and Anat. The semi-nudity of the recumbent females makes them more likely to be immortal nature spirits such as Greek nymphs or Indian yakshis, or perhaps mortal followers of ecstatic rites such as the maenads of Dionysos. The whole composition has echoes of the Dionysiac scenes known from toilet trays from the Swat Valley, Sirkap and Charsada showing a male figure (Dionysos or Silenos) flanked by female figures (see Stančo 2012, 100, nos 127–29).

Focusing on the more complete female figure (fragments 4–6), her identification is hampered by the poor preservation of many elements. She is clearly semi-naked with her hair pulled back into a single long plait under a headdress of some form. From the waist down she is draped in an animal-skin (deer or goat?), grasped and pulled up by her right hand, which completely obscures her legs beneath. The legs and hooves of the animal skin extend down to where her legs ought to be, visually taking their place even if they do not physically do so. Understanding the skin to be that of a fawn strengthens the possibility that she be viewed as a nymph but also allows for her interpretation as a maenad, one of the wild female attendants of Dionysos who dressed in fawn-skins, ate raw flesh and danced in manic ecstasy (Euripides, *Bacchae* 695–701).

While it may have been the visibility of the cloven hooves which led Ballycastle locals to dub the statues 'devils' in the 20th century, it is here considered unlikely that the legs with cloven hooves were ever intended to be seen as the limbs of the female figure herself. Within a Greek visual corpus,

it is the male god Pan and his sons, the panes, who appear with animal legs and cloven hooves. The panes do have an association with India, having taken part in Dionysos' Indian War (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 3.13: Jones 2005; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 14.67, 17.136, 27.25, 29.313: Rouse 1940a; 1940b), but they are exclusively male.

Brett's (1971, 51) identification of the figures as river gods should not be dismissed – at least when considering the recumbent female figures. Numerous river gods in Greek mythology were depicted with bestial elements and it is certainly possible that the recumbent female figures could be viewed as the vernacular anthropomorphisation of rivers, gazing up at the heroic general. Which rivers they potentially represent is open to debate. The Punjab, where Boyd spent much of his time in India, is famously the land of five rivers, all flowing into the Indus. If we accept that the statues were carved locally, however, might these figures represent the Margy and the Tow, the two local rivers who merge just before spilling into the Sea of Moyle in front of the Boyd manor house?

While so many factors remain unknowable we can posit, on balance, that the Ballycastle statues were erected in the third quarter of the 19th century – after the compilation of the OS memoir, but before the opening of the Ballycastle tennis courts – connected in some way with Major General Hugh Boyd. The presence of a matching stone source by the Pans Rocks, so close to Ballycastle, makes it most likely that the sculptures were carved locally and were not brought back from India as asserted by Brett and Bence-Jones.

Stylistically, the sculptures fuse Greco-Roman elements with those of South (or even Central) Asia, lending credence to the suggestion that inspiration for the pieces was drawn from the rich cultural milieu of the Indo-Greek kingdoms or their immediate successors from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD. Sculpted in 19th-century Ballycastle, the statues manifested contemporary European imperialism and Major General Boyd's own role as an important agent of empire, as well as the restoration of the declining Boyd fortunes in Ballycastle itself.

The statue group's afterlife as a legacy of the Boyd family in Ballycastle carried the cultural memory of Major General Boyd's imperial service in India and its exotic associations. Divorced from the family after the death of the last of the Ballycastle Boyds in the mid-20th century, the meaning of the statues changed from one of cultural fusion and colonialism, to become something more supernatural, a marker in the Ballycastle landscape to be avoided by the local population.

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