

## **Medieval bell stolen from Scottish burial isle. SPREAD THE WORD ...**



St Finan's Isle - the Green Isle or Eilean Fhianain, in Loch Shiel, Moidart has been a Christian burial ground since the days of St Finan, a Columban-trained monk who died in 661 AD. It's probable that island was used for burials long before Christianity. The whole island is covered in graves and is still used for burials.

For centuries, the altar stone in the roofless chapel has held an early-medieval hand bell of great religious and cultural value, of a particular type found in Scotland and Ireland, perhaps brought here by St Finan himself more than a thousand years ago.

The local Moidart History Group was horrified to hear that the bell has been stolen, the theft probably happening in late June or early July 2019. The island is remote, on a loch which until four or five years ago was only visited by a handful of people each year, but the popularity of kayaking increased this to an estimated 2,000 in 2016. The thief would have needed heavy bolt cutters, since the flimsy chain that attached the bell to the altar was replaced by a hand-forged bronze chain in 2017, so the theft was likely to have been a planned affair.

There is a curse on whoever takes the bell off the island. It was stolen by a British soldier in the 1740s but returned after a chase along the seventeen-mile long Loch Shiel. The thief was flogged severely, and the bell returned by his officers.

A similar bell was stolen from Fortingall Church in Perthshire in 2017 – so was St.Finan's bell stolen to order? It has no monetary value but is of great religious and historical value and has huge significance for the local population. It is immensely sad that someone has no regard or respect for the feelings of local people and has seen fit to steal the bell for his or her own profit or perverted pleasure.

Please contact us ([ariel@moidart.org.uk](mailto:ariel@moidart.org.uk)) or your local Police if you have any information.

## Links

Scotsman article - <https://tinyurl.com/finan-01>

Historic Environment Scotland - <https://tinyurl.com/finan-02>

CANMORE - <https://tinyurl.com/finan-03>

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