

IONA CELTIC ART

By E. Mairi MacArthur

In the summer of 1899, on a celebrated Hebridean island, a new shop set out its wares: IONA CELTIC ART. Over the next forty seasons, Alexander and Euphemia Ritchie designed and sold a huge range of finely wrought silver jewellery, plus decorative items in brass, copper, enamel, wood, leather and linen. Much of their inspiration was drawn from the rich patterns of interlace, foliage and knotwork on Iona's carved stones and crosses.

Alexander was also official guide to the historic monuments. The couple had trained at the Glasgow School of Art during the decade of the Glasgow Style and the Celtic Revival. Their own style thus evolved and thrived during the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

More than sixty years after the shop closed, the Ritchies' craftwork is still widely admired. Theirs was a pioneering artistic venture, renowned in its day, which has influenced succeeding generations of silversmiths. This book tells its story. Around 200 individual items are illustrated, some from hitherto unpublished archive photographs. Also included are drawings of Iona Celtic Art designs by Iain MacCormick who, as a boy on Iona, first learned the skills of the metalworker from Alexander Ritchie.



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