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### Research Query: Pilgrims' Footbaths?

Mark Hall

*Perth Museum & Art Gallery*

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**Research Query: Pilgrims' Footbaths?**  
By Mark Hall, Perth Museum, Scotland

Recently a rare object associated with pilgrimage has been discovered, a footbath. Does anyone know of other such footbaths that have been identified? If so, please respond to the author or to the editors of Peregrinations, who would be interested in publishing another such find.





Mark Hall ([mahall@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:mahall@pkc.gov.uk)) has supplied the above images (photographed by Nigel Ruckley) of an unusual item of pilgrimage to be found at Iona Abbey, Argyll, Scotland. It has been fully recorded by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland in its magisterial Iona volume of the Argyll Inventory (RCAHMS 1982), where it was classified as an Early Christian (so circa 6<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century) carved stone. The entry (p.106, no. 6) is brief enough to justify a full quote here:

*'Outside the w door of the abbey church there is a massive block of granite, 1.32m in length by 0.55m in maximum width and at least 0.4m in height, bearing on one end a linear incised Greek cross with barred terminals. A shallow depression, measuring 0.93m by 0.34m and only 45mm in depth, has been carved out of the surface, and the stone has been described as a trough in which pilgrims washed their feet. In local tradition it was known as "the cradle of the north wind" and was credited with the property of attracting a favourable wind.'*

An enduring fascination with this object and with the generally taken-for-granted importance of feet for pilgrimage prompts Mark to ask if anyone knows of other examples of pilgrims' footbaths (or indeed any other furniture for pilgrims' feet)?

RCAHMS 1982 *Argyll An Inventory of the Monuments Volume 4 Iona*, Edinburgh.