

The exact source of the pinks and purples in the Book of Kells evaded Trinity College's Conservation team for some time, as they proved challenging to analyse.

However, the team obtained some results that, when compared with other scientific investigations in collaboration with the **University of Perugia**, revealed the source to be from **lichen**.

Lichens are one of the **longest living organisms** on the planet and **Ireland is rich in them**, with over **1,100 species**.

A dye called **orcein** can be produced from lichen, which gives a wide range of rich **pinks and purples**.



In the image of the **Virgin and Child** ( *folio 7v* ), the Virgin's mantle is coloured with a **deep reddish purple**, which is similar to the **imperial purple** used in **Roman times**.



Her gown is a **pink colour** and a range of pink tones run through the **angels and snakes** that frame her.