



WHITE ISLAND AND INISHMACSAINT

Ulster-Scots Translation

WHITE ISLE

AN

INISHMACSAINT

Tha Coontie o Fermanagh

Tha Kirks o Lough Erne

Kirks an monastries wus gettin bigged in Fermanagh frae as far bak as tha 5 hunnèrs fur sure. The' wur maistlie fun on tha isles an alang tha shores o Lough Erne, an there's recaird o as monie as twal furst auld kirks near tae tha lough. These isles nicht seem oot o tha wye theday, but in tha days o tha Furst Christ-yins tha Erne wus a muckle gatewaye, giein a road frae tha sey near Ballyshannon deep inlann tae Leitrim an ayont. Tha islann monastries wurnae far-aff hidlin spots, but poarts o caa on this wattèrweye. In tha days o tha Normans parish kirks sut on a wheen o these isles an shores, an some carry't on tha wyes o giein hospitalitie tae travellers gien afore wi tha auld monastries. In tha middle ages tha Erne wus important as a road fur pilgrims NW. tae St. Patrick's Purgatorie in Dinnygal.

Maist important o aa tha monastries o tha isles wus Devenish (tha subjeck o anither guide-caird) an lake Devenish tha kirks on White Isle an Inishmacsaint bes sut on tha corner o an isle, an baith on tha SE. point, aiblins fur a bield frae tha wast wuns. White Isle is an isle o about 74 acre, near tae tha N. shore o Lower Lough Erne in Caissle Airchdale Bay. Inishmacsaint haes 66 acre in it, an sut near tha S. shore o tha Lower Lough, aff Ross Point.

White Isle

Quhitiver tha furst name gien tae White Isle nicht hae bin, it's no mindit noo. Its foondin saint isnae kent neither, an tha steidin cannae be tied in wi onie kirk made mention o in auld scrievit papers. But there's nae doot that White Isle wus tha site o an auld kirk, maist likelie a big monastrie. Tha corner o tha isle quhaur tha waa-heids o tha kirk is sut is cut aff wi a dyke an sheuch, noo near flet an no much tae leuk at but at tha furst it wus tha mearin o tha monastrie. Inside it wus tha monastrie 'toun': forbye tha kirk an buryin grunn there wud hae bin cells an warkshaps, barns an byres, gairdens, meadas an fiels, an aiblins a guest-hoose fur visitors near tae tha shore. Aa these biggins wus timmer, an naethin is left abane tha grunn noo apairt frae tha mearin dyke.

Tha kirk (inside o a stane waa that's no auld) is a wee fower-square ruin, plain apairt frae its braw S. dorr. There's no monie o these in tha noarth, jist this yin hale Romanesk dorr in Norlin Airlann. It haes weel wrocht coleums wi wrocht freestane heids an fits tae thaim in tha dorr jambs an a hauf roon airch abane wi sittin-oot drip-mouldins decoratit wi pellets. Tha wye it's wrocht wud warrant

a date o about 1200 fur tha dorr, an fur tha hale biggin. Tha dorr wus maistlie taen doon an biged up agane quhaniver tha kirk wus renyvate't in 19&28, quhan tha lang slat wundae E. wundae wus pairt bigged up agane forbye, bits o a seyconn wundae wus set up on tha S. waa, an a halie wat-tèr stoup set agane inside o tha dorr. Tha wee slab sut agin tha modren stane dyke (W. side), fun in 19&58, is a reuch heid-stane frae tha days o tha furst Christ-yins, wi a licht cut cross an twathie lettèrs, aiblins delmne tha mair tha furst an tha last lettèrs cannae be made oot in fu.

In 19&59 a wee achaeologie dig in tha SE. corner o tha kirk showed that afore tha stane kirk wus a timmer biggin, itsel pit up at differin times, an left fur a guid quhile afore tha kirk. Ye micht weel jalouse that this wus an aulder, timmer kirk, burnt doon in some disastèr, aiblins a Viking attek, but anither dig wud be needit tae lairn mair. Quhan tha stane kirk wus bigged in about 1200 it michtnae hae bin pairt o a monastrie onie mair, but uised fur tha parish church (tha parish o Magheraculmoney). Tha dig brocht up forbye burnt roof timmers on tha kirk flair an tha inside waas o tha S. door is rid turn't an burnt. It isnae knowed fur sure quhan tha kirk wus left lyin empie, but it wus in ruins by about 1600, an yin heid-stane kythes that tha buryin-grunn wus uised up tae tha 17 hunnèrs.

Tha statues haes bin fun yin by yin frae tha stairt o tha 18 hunnèrs an hae bin taak't about a hale lot an monies a picthur made o thaim. Maist, near thaim aa, wus uised fur biggin stanes in tha waas o tha kirk. Yin statue (3) wusnae fun tae 19&58, an mair cud be about yit. Tha statues ir aa brave an big, weel wrocht, an tha mair the' hae aa tha yin leuk about thaim, ilka face is a yin-aff. They aa gawk fair forrits. Thair een ir near aa roon wi big broos, tha mooths is wee, hauns an feet gye an wee. Maist hae a lang cloak on thaim wi a edgein along tha bottom an up tha front, lake ye wud fin in auld draa'ins an carvins o men o tha kirk. Tha statues is nummer't an a wee accoont gien frae left tae richt, as showed.

1 Yin boadie, cross-leggit, maist likelie a wumman, wi a cloak, scowlin bake an puffed oot chol-lers, aiblins tae gie tha notion o bein temptit or tha sin o lust. 2 Yin boadie leukin lake he's sut doon, tha statue is houlin somethin o tha shape o a bax (buik or shrine?); tha tap o tha face is damaged. 3 A man o tha kirk is stuid houlin a bell an a cruik, signs o an abbot or a bischop, aiblins a real man o tha kirk, or Christ as 'Abbot o tha Warl'. 4 A boadie houlin a staff in tha yin haun, wi tha ither pointin tae tha mooth an a thaing lake a wee pooch hingin frae tha hanches; aiblins staunin fur David tha sheep-herd an psalmist. 5 Wi oot-staunin curlie hair, tha statue houls tha necks o twa pairt-burd, pairt-beese craitors; these micht be gryphons, staunin fur tha twa-side't nature o Christ, pairt man, pairt God. A bax o braid-ribbon wab on tha richt haun side o this stane gies it tha leuk o a decoratit sait. 6 A curly-heidit sodger, wearin a hingin brooch an houlin a wee roon shield owre a shoart sword; it cud be taen either fur Christ at war or David tha fechter. 7 A reuch hewed an niver finish't yin, important fur showin that tha statues wur wrocht on site. 8 (cover picthur) Yin heid wi a froon an pointit slantit een, an a flet kep wi ribs or fringe, aiblins eftèr in date frae tha tither yins.

Tha style o carvin micht gae bak til pagan days, but there's nae dotin that tha statues wur wrocht wi Christ-yins an carried a Bible message. Sockets in tha heids an reuch pegs unnèr tha feet wud mak ye think tha stanes wur bigged intae somethin, an held up somethin abane thair heids. Tha problem is warkin oot quhit-wye the' wur uised, either thair lane or in twas. Aiblins the' had bin houlin somethin up in a kirk, in a big pulpit, or in a big shrine, or in tha inside plenishins o a kirk. The' wud hairdlie be aulder nor tha big carved heich crosses, an tha 8 an 9 hunnèrs is likelie, afore tha timmer kirk wus gien up. Tha biggers o tha Romanesk kirk had nae intèrest ava in tha statues, fur the' jist uised thaim fur biggin stanes.

Inishmacsaint

Tha name, Inis-maige-samh, stauns fur tha 'isle o tha soor-leek holm'. Tha foondin saint, Ninnid, leaved in tha 5 hunnèrs an ownin til scievins a lang quhile eftèr he wus a scholar wi Finnian o

Clonard an leaved at tha yin time wi Ciaran o Clonmacnois, Molaise o Devenish an Aiden o Ferns, but these screevins wud be owre lang eftèr his day fur tae gie accoont o ocht mair nor auld stories. Yin thaing that pits ye in mind o tha saint's locyal staunin is steid-names, lake Knockninny, tha heich hill forenent Upper Lough Erne, an Tober Ninny, tha halie wal wi owresicht o tha Lower Lough. An abbot o Inishmacsaint, Fiannamail, wus kilt in 718, an maist likelie tha monastrie wus hut wi tha Vikin raids o tha 8 an 9 hunnèrs. Cum tha date o tha 1306 tex leets, Inishmacsaint wus a parish kirk, sut on tha steidin o tha auld monastrie. Rectors o tha kirk mak an appearance in annal accoonts o tha 14 an 15 hunnèrs: tha O'Flanagan familie wus tae tha fore, an in 14&26 Nicholas O'Flanagan held tha rectorie alang wi Devenish. A kirk wi nae roof is mairk't on a plan o 1609-10, an maist likelie it wus in ruins yit in 16&22, quhaniver the' wur a complaint that tha auld kirk 'standeth in an inconvenient place'. It leuks lake tha Protystann fowks worship't in Sur Jhone Dunbar's kirk at Derrygonlie tae a new kirk wus bigged at Church Hill in 16&88, an then yit anither yin wus pit in its place in 18&31 quhan theday's Inishmacsaint parish church wus bigged at Benmore.

Tha kirk shows thrie differin times o biggin. Furst is tha wast pairt, that micht a bin a wee kirk afore tha Romansesk yin, aiblins o tha 9 or 10 hunnèrs. In a big re-warkin tha wast dorr wus blocked up an a new S. dorr apen't, an an extension wus pit on tha kirk on tha aist tae mak it tha big it is theday. This micht a happen't at tha stairt o tha 12 hunnèrs, quhaniver it wus a parish church. The'r twa cupboards near tha E. enn, quhaur tha altar yinst stuid. At tha bak enn o tha middle ages tha S. wundae wus chang't. Nae ither wundaes haes lastit, but bits an pieces o tha biggin dae.

Tha cross is stuid jist SW. o tha kirk. It is lang an skinny an a bit lake boords, wi its twa stanes join't at tha heid wi a mortice-an-tenon joint, seen in tha apenin on tha E. side. Tha heid is an unco shape, athoot a raing an wi tha airms hallae't oot in wee shalla curves. A thurd stane is missin fur tha tap pairt: there's a mortice hole thonner tae houli it. In guid licht ye'll can see wee outlines o bax panels on tha enns o tha airms an unnèr tha airms, but owreaa tha cross is gyelie plain. Tha cross is haird tae mak comparison wi an tae pit a date on: aqween tha 9 an 11 hunnèrs leuk maist likelie, but it cud be eftèr.

St. Ninnid's bell, thocht tae hae bin made by Senach tha blaksmith o Derrybrusk, wus kep in tha parish in tha 16 hunnèrs. By tha 18 hunneès it wus at Caissle Caldwell, an it is noo in tha National Museum, Edinburgh.

Mair Buiks White Island: D. Lowry-Corry an ithers, *Ulster J. Archaeol.* 22 (1959), 59-66; H. Hickey, *Images of Stone* (Belfast, 1976). Inishmacsaint: W. K. Parke, *The Parish of Inishmacsaint* (1982).

Ither sites in an near Lower Lough Erne tak in Devenish, Killadeas buryin-grunn wi carved stanes, yin wi a kirk bell an cruik, an Caldragh buryin-grunn on Boa Isle wi an Airn Age figure-carve't stane.

Quhit-wye tae fin it White Isle (grid ref. H 175600) is got at wi boat frae Caissle Airchdale Kintra-side Pairk. Inishmacsaint (grid ref. H 165541) key is jist E. o tha kirk. There's nae regular ferry.

