CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Two major early monasteries of Scottish Dalriata: Lismore and Eigg
Authors	MacDonald, Aidan D. S.
Publication date	1974-01-01
Original Citation	MacDonald, A. D. S. (1974) 'Two major early monasteries of Scottish Dalriata: Lismore and Eigg', Scottish Archaeological Forum, 5, p.47-70.
Type of publication	Book chapter
Rights	© 1974
Download date	2026-11-07 01:08:39
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15060

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

TWO MAJOR EARLY MONASTERIES OF SCOTTISH DALRIATA: LISMORE AND EIGG

Aidan Macdonald, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh.

Of the five more or less well attested Early Christian monasteries on the W coast of Scotland - Iona, Applecross, Kingarth, Lismore and Eigg (Fig. 1) - the two last have hitherto received practically no attention from either historians or archaeologists. On the face of it there is, admittedly, very little to go on. And much of what I have to say here is tentative or speculative, if not downright tendentious. But the very lack of concrete information at least emphasises how little we know at present about the origins and development of Irish monasticism in and adjacent to Scottish Dalriata. So my purpose in this paper is to present and discuss what material I have been able to collect about the early monastic occupation of these two sites; with especial reference to the rather limited field-work which I have done recently to try to establish whether any structural remains survive on the ground that might relate to their layouts, or (failing that), whether the natural configuration of the local terrains gives any indication of what their general groundplans might have been.

Lismore. The island of Lismore lies in the mouth of Loch Linnhe, where it opens into the Firth of Lorn. From the point of view of communications it is very strategically situated. Close at hand on either side lie the mainland territories of Kingairloch and Morvern (to the W) and Appin and Benderloch (to the E); while the main part of Lorn lies a few miles to the SE. Immediately to the S is Mull, with Iona just off its SW peninsula: thence the rest of the Argyllshire Hebrides - Coll and Tiree to the W; Islay, Jura and Colonsay to the S. Loch Linnhe itself is the SW end of the major land-sea route which links, via the Great Glen, Argyll and the southern Hebrides and the lowlands of the Moray and Cromarty Firths on the other side of Scotland.

Lismore is thus within the area that the available evidence suggests is that of primary Irish monastic activity in the second half of the 6th century. Equally significant, I think, it is in the cockpit of the territory of Lorn: at the crossroads where Loch Linnhe, the Firth of Lorn, the Sound of Mull and the long sea-loch of Etive meet. Within sight to the SE are the great medieval (and very likely Dark Age) strongholds of the lordship of Lorn: Dunollie, guarding the Firth, on the N outskirts of Oban; and Dunstaffnage,

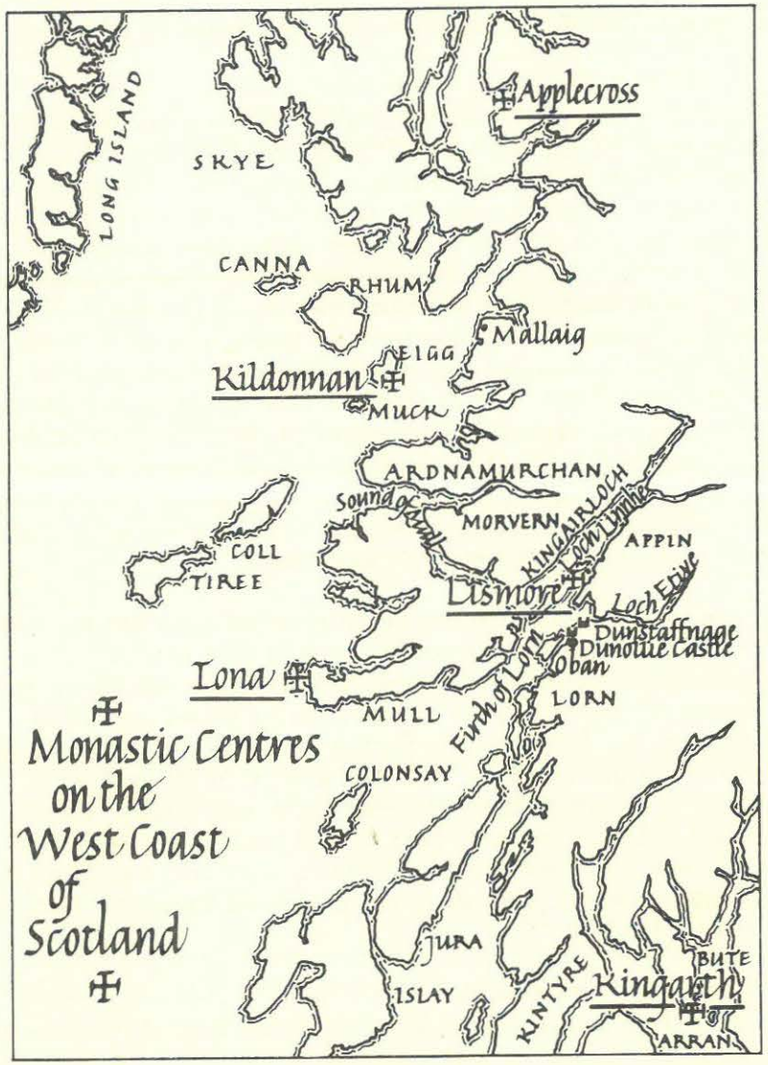


Figure 1.

just round the corner in the mouth of Loch Etive. The secular affiliations, if not actual sympathies, of the monastic community must surely have been with the Kindred of Loarn, one of the four major ruling family-groups of the Kingdom of Dalriata (1).

The basic geology of the island is principally metamorphic limestone, which outcrops everywhere, with a certain amount of intrusive igneous rocks - basalt or the like. Just as the monastically well-favoured island of Tiree, it has long been noted for its fertility and also for the quality and abundance of its water supply (2). Monro mentions the presence here of metal and lead ores and in this he is probably followed by Buchanan (3). Martin notices the statement to this effect by 'Buchanan and others,' but no subsequent writer, so far as I can find, mentions metalliferous deposits (4).

The Irish annals enter the death of Lugaid, or Moluoc (the reduced, affectionate cult-form of Lugaid with mo, 'my'), the traditional founder of Lismore, at c.592 (5). His ecclesiastical antecedents are not stated (6). Further obits of abbots of Lismore are similarly entered at c.611 (Neman) and at c.637 (Eochaid) (7). Thereafter, the documentary record is apparently silent. The historiographical, rather than historical, reason for this is, as Anderson implied, the foundation of the Irish Lismore, in Co. Waterford, in c.638. It is most unlikely that the mere fact of the foundation of another monastery of the same name - at practically the opposite end of the Gaelic world - should have led to the subsequent total ignoring of the older Scottish foundation, particularly since what written information we have about the Scottish Lismore must have been transmitted through another northern house, perhaps Iona or Bangor. It seems to me probable, though I have not looked closely into the matter, that from this time on annalistic entries relating to both Lismores have become mixed up - possibly, though hopefully not, irretrievably.

The continued existence of a religious community here, possibly as late as the 12th century, may be inferred. When the diocese of Argyll or Lismore was created (by subdivision from Dunkeld), c.1189, the cathedral church was built in Lismore - not at a more convenient and accessible site on the mainland. That this apparent act of pietas was regretted early in the history of the see is indicated by a letter of 2 January 1249/50, in which the Pope empowered the bishops of Glasgow and Dunkeld to transfer the see of Argyll from the island of Lismore to a safer and more convenient place. This was not done, however (8).

Two additional points may be mentioned for consideration in this connection. Henry of Silgrave (c.1272), in his list of religious houses, shows Culdees under, amongst other places, the bishopric of Argyll. But it is doubtful how far his unsupported testimony may be relied on (9). The adjacent mainland territory of Appin is Apthane in the sheriffdom of Perth, 1388; Appin in the lordship of Lorn and sheriffdom of Perth, 1470 (10). The name is early Irish apdaine, abbacy, hence probably the lands belonging to an abbacy: abbey-lands. Appin probably belonged, as Watson pointed out, to the monastery of Lismore (11). As a modern placename, the term is not of frequent occurrence, but it occurs in medieval charters in connection with a number of places, many (but not all) of which can be shown on other grounds to have had Culdee or other communities of pre-12th century type, sometimes surviving into the 12th and 13th centuries (12). It is very doubtful whether the name would have survived, if indeed it had already arisen, if the early monastery here had become defunct in pre-Viking times.

In the absence of any more likely site or sites, it is reasonable to assume that St Moluoc's monastery was somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood of the later medieval cathedral church. The remains of the choir of the medieval church form the parish church of Lismore (13), situated at Clachan, a hamlet just under 3 miles from the north end of the island and pretty well centrally placed between the two coasts. The placename evidence is not conclusive, but supports this assumption. The cathedral church of St Moloak in Argyle is named in 1451; and St Moloc, patron of the cathedral church of Lismore, in 1507 (14). Kilmaluag seems to appear in the written record c.1600 and thenceforward (15).

A priori, the material remains of the Early Christian period at Clachan are minimal. There are no early incised or sculptured stones. No traces of buildings earlier than the medieval church were found during the excavations of 1950-53 in and near the foundations of the nave (16). The only tangible evidence of Early Christian occupation known to me at present consists of three bronze pins (Fig. 2), probably those found, amongst a quantity of other material now presumably dispersed or lost, 'in a piece of new trenched ground near the church' in 1841, and mentioned in the New Statistical Account. The fact that some of these finds, including the pins, are there said to be in the minister's possession, suggests that they were found on the glebe (17). The pins are now in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (Catalogue Nos. FC 141-3) and I am indebted to L. R. Laing for the following note. 'FC 142 and 143 are what I have called

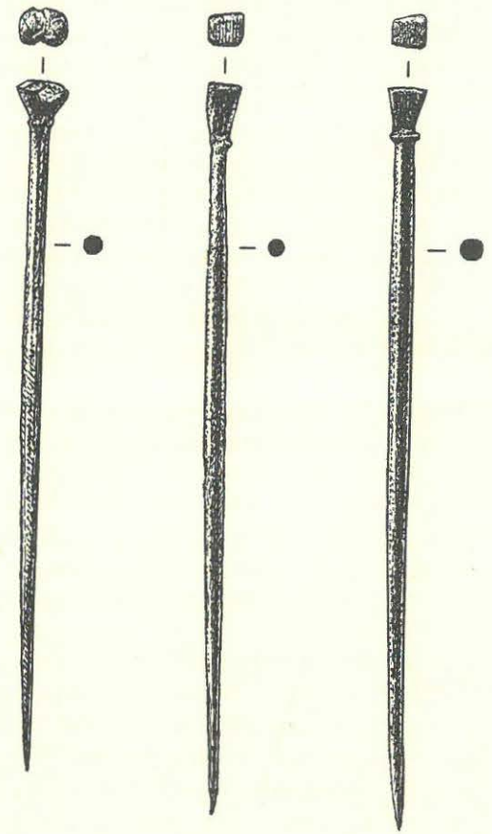


Figure 2. Bronze Pins, Lismore; NMA FC 141-3.

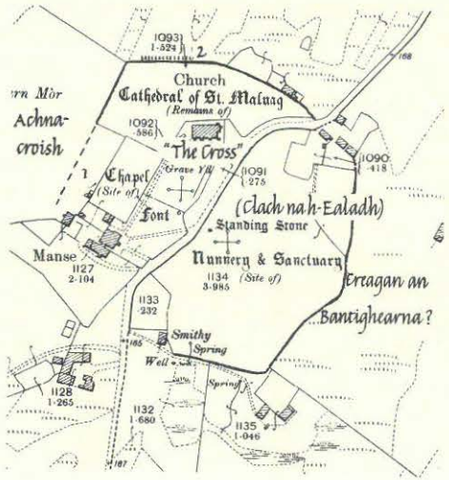


Figure 3. Clachan, Lismore.

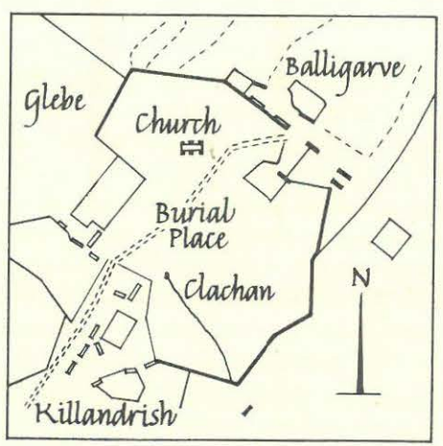


Figure 4. Clachan, Lismore; tracing of Langlands estate map 1778.

'frustrum-headed' pins. They seem to be a Scottish type in the main, but have Irish relatives. They are fairly rare, and very difficult to date, but I think the 8th century quite likely; they do not seem to occur in later Viking contexts, nor do they belong to the 5th - 6th century series. The other pin (FC 141) could be earlier. It belongs to a class termed 'mushroom-headed' and they are characterized by having a small slightly globular head usually rising to a point and decorated with radial grooves from the centre. In origin the type may be related to the Romano-British penannular brooches of Type A2, and there are a few Romano-British examples. They are particularly common in Scotland, on the West coast, and may be regarded as a native type. There are a few Irish examples (e.g. from Garranes), and one from Whitby. The range of date is wide, most seem to be 6th - 7th century, but one from Ballinderry I implies continuity into the 10th century. Plain mushroom-headed pins are probably contemporary. The Lismore pin is a somewhat degenerate example of the class, and has features in common with a number of late pins (notably the incised hatching on the shank), which makes me think that it is late. If all three pins are contemporary, a date in the late 8th century would seem not unreasonable, but they could be slightly later.' The archaeological context of these finds, and their inter-relationships (bearing in mind that they were found during what was probably the digging of field-drains) is, of course, entirely unknown.

It is, however, possible to make some more hopeful suggestions with regard to the field archaeology of the site. On examination of the large-scale Ordnance Survey sheets (6 in and 25 in) the most striking feature of the late 19th century (and present) layout of Clachan is the system of field boundaries which together form most of a sub-rectangular enclosure of approximately 10.75 acres on either side of the road through the hamlet (Fig. 3). It can hardly be an accidental feature. Fairly centrally placed within this enclosure is the present graveyard - on a knoll of some 12 to 15 ft in maximum height above the general ground level and sloping down on the E across the road and well into the big field bordering the E side of the road, with the parish church rather uncomfortably situated at its N foot. Clachan lies in a slight natural hollow, defined by generally rising ground to N and S, a substantial ridge to W and a low rocky ridge to E. The enclosure has pretty clearly been designed to take in as much of this hollow as possible, for whatever reason: its W wall has been built well up the slope of the western ridge and the E wall runs a few yards in from the eastern rock-ridge (18).

Study of the available air photographs (19) and fieldwork on the ground failed to detect any signs of earlier building activity under or adjacent to the walls of the enclosure, except possibly just outside the N wall in its W half. The feature on the air photographs which continues the line of the W wall southwards (1. in Fig. 3) probably represents the foot of a slight rock slope: it appears to continue northwards along the foot of a rock outcrop enclosed by the NW corner of the enclosure, through the N wall at the NW corner and beyond. It appears to be natural, and does not form a very convincing line on the ground. But the W wall may well have continued southwards along this line at some stage. Both from the air and on the ground, the walls of the enclosure seem to be no more than 19th century dry-stone field-dykes - of quite ordinary height, width and construction. The only possible hint of earlier construction which I saw on my visits to the site was, as mentioned above, at the W half of the N wall. Here a slight swelling in the ground (rather than a bank or ridge) runs about 6 ft out from the N side of the wall and parallel to it (2 in Fig. 3). It is about 1 ft high at maximum and about 10 ft wide. At its W end, it merges with a rock outcrop about 12 yds from the NW corner of the enclosure. Eastwards, it is traceable certainly to 21 yds W of the line of the W wall of the graveyard (projected northwards), possibly just traceable to 12 yds W of the 'loaf-shaped' enclosure attached to the outside of the N wall: an overall length of just over 170 ft, computed from the 25' in map. Its character is not readily apparent, but it is probably artificial rather than natural; it runs at right angles to the normal axis of the rock outcrops here.

On the surface, then, there is apparently little or nothing to indicate the age or function of the enclosure - save that it has no obvious relevance to modern or recent agricultural activities or land ownership and probably pre-dates the road. Fortunately, however, it is possible to take the problem further. An estate map of Lismore estate (Fig. 4), surveyed by George Langlands in December 1778 (though surviving only in a tracing dated at Oban, June 1886: Scottish Record Office, Ref. RHP 8180) (20) shows the outline of the enclosure in more or less identical detail with that of the OS maps of the late 19th century. And 1778 was only a few years later than the final settlement of a very longstanding dispute about the minister's glebe (21). In 1760, it was decided to settle the dispute finally. To this end, the neighbourhood of the church was officially and thoroughly examined by the local presbytery. More important here, the presbytery left a written record of its findings. In a minute of the Presbytery of Kilmore, dated 27 February 1760, is the following statement: 'It was found that the precincts of the old Cathedral of Lismore as being greatly larger than parochial

churchyards served hitherto both for the kirkyard and grass to the minister and that there was one irregular spot without the precincts, which the ministers serving the cure for a long time possessed by way of glebe...' (22). Clearly, the precincts of the old Cathedral comprised an area which was readily visible and definable on the ground - obvious enough, in fact, not to require a detailed written description of its bounds. It was, therefore, enclosed. Further, the comparison with parochial churchyards generally suggests strongly that it was enclosed by a wall. It can only be the enclosure that I have been discussing. As to its period of origin, it is unlikely, I think, that the post-Reformation diocese of Argyll (i.e. the diocese of the episcopal ascendancy, 1560 - 1688) was ever in a flourishing enough condition to acquire and enclose, even require, a large precinct area. Too many secular interests would have been offended, and, in any case, the post-Reformation bishops seem to have resided elsewhere than Lismore in the main. The wording of the Kilmore Presbytery's statement, too, implies that the precincts were regarded as older than this. It seems likely, therefore, that the enclosure in question is at least medieval.

It is worth noting here that Roy's survey of 1747 - 54/5 (sheet 13:1) shows a rectangular enclosure, with an apsidal E side (cf. the 'salient' in the E wall of the enclosure in 1778 and on the OS large-scale sheets), round the church of Lismore. This is likely to be schematic, I think, as much as representational: it is too small in area, in proportion to the outline of the church; and the church is centrally placed within it. But that it is at least partly representational is suggested by the shape of its E side and by the showing of buttresses on the church (23). In which case, it is interesting to observe that Roy's enclosure is intact, including the SW angle. And it cannot be the graveyard.

The graveyard in 1760 was of considerable extent - and unenclosed. In the same minute of Kilmore Presbytery it is defined thus (22): 'A line drawn from the east end of the church, two yards from the present high road to the end of the rock called Creagan an Bantighearna and of another line drawn on the inside of the said Creagan an Bantighearna to the minister's garden to the north side of the great door of the west end of the Church, that the above spot so bounded together with Airds' burial place at the west end and Invernahyle burial place at the back of the Church was considered as the Churchyard of the Parish.' I have not been able to identify Creagan an Bantighearna for certain, but think that it must be the most conspicuous part of the rock-ridge bounding the E side of the enclosure: the N end of it is in a line ESE of the E end of the church and the S end in the same

position relative to Clach na h-Ealadh (Fig. 3). Carmichael seems to have known it and estimates the area of the graveyard as some 3 to 4 acres. He further mentions a tradition that 'many years ago', when stone drains were laid in the lower field (i.e. the big field bordering the E side of the road), some of the material used was gravestones from this part of the old burial ground (24). By 1778 the graveyard seems to have shrunk (see Langlands' survey, Fig. 4), though it still straddled the road and was still unenclosed. By 1841, it apparently occupied merely its present position on the knoll south of the church (25).

The point of all this is that it affords additional grounds for thinking that the area, or part of the area, within the enclosure had for long been regarded as, in some measure at least, consecrated ground. The fact that the burial area was not enclosed suggests to me that the whole of it was potentially so regarded. Byond here, at the present juncture, the line of inference becomes exceedingly tenuous. But I suggest - and it can be no more than a suggestion - that the enclosure I have been discussing also represents, more or less, the outline of the vallum which seems normally to have surrounded early monasteries of Irish type. Remains of such valla may still be seen, on the west coast, at Iona, Applecross and Kingarth. That they should be postulated, even where no physical evidence for them actually survives on the surface, is indicated by the fact that they seem to have been legal as much as symbolic boundaries (26). The enclosure at Clachan is of reasonable, if large, size and position. Indeed if the modern or medieval outline follows the line of the earlier vallum at all closely, Lismore seems to fall within the category of early monasteries with rectilinear rather than curvilinear valla recently isolated and discussed by Thomas. The complete disappearance of the vallum here is, in this case, problematical (unless the feature outside the N wall in its W half is relevant here). But we do not know that these monastic valla were always substantial earthworks or stone walls; and the lack of definite signs of earlier constructional activity is equally odd if the enclosure is medieval (27).

In view of the attested Irish practice of decorating the monastic enclosure, both inside and outside, with free-standing crosses (28), it is interesting to note that the present burial ground used to be called the Cross, from a cross which stood at one time on the summit of the knoll (29). The stone cross-socket is, in fact, still there. The Croft of Achnacroish, 'field of the cross', is on record, apparently, in 1679 (30). It lay W of the present manse, and the name and site are still known locally (Fig. 3) Clach na

h-Ealadh, 'stone of the tomb', (31) a granite monolith shaped into a rudimentary cross, stands on the lower slopes of the graveyard knoll, to E of the road. There is a tradition which associates it with the right of sanctuary, but it does not seem to have been, as Watson thought, a girth cross (32). Near the church, there may have been a stone 'with the rude figure of a cross' known to the local people as the 'black cross', a chrois dubh. It was extant in the late 18th century and seems to have been situated N, E, or W - but not S - of the church (33).

I have not been able to find, either from the air photographs or on the ground, any other features of potential significance in the present context, within or in the close neighbourhood of the enclosure. Of the small enclosures visible on the air photographs in the field immediately to N of the church, the two directly N of the church look like part of an old steading complex. The larger is now largely occupied by the modern extension to the burial ground. The small, irregularly shaped one to NW of the church is the best preserved. It is defined by a turf-covered stony bank, 2 - 3 ft high on average and 4 - 6 ft wide at the base. It might be an old burial enclosure. The chapel site on the graveyard knoll seems to be entirely traditional, though building stone, among other things, has apparently been found on the knoll in the past (34). The nunnery site appears to be a figment of 19th century imagination. The big field to E of the road, the only sizeable expanse of cultivable ground within the enclosure, has not, I was told, been ploughed for upwards of two generations; nor has anything been found, apparently, in the modern extension to the burial ground. There are no other relevant field-names in the operative area that I could learn (35).

Eigg. The island of Eigg lies in the Inner Hebrides, seven miles SW of the Point of Sleat in Skye and twelve miles WSW of the mainland coast at Mallaig. It forms, together with the adjacent islands of Rhum, Canna and Muck, the modern parish of the Small Isles. Its strategic importance, geographically speaking, at this period is very difficult to assess, since we have but the haziest picture of political and social conditions in the area in the early 7th century - the period traditionally assigned to St Donnan. It was probably a convenient harbour and source of supplies for vessels coming from the S Hebrides to Skye and beyond, or proceeding S along the same route - after or before rounding the Point of Ardnamurchan; possibly also for vessels sailing between the mainland (what is now Knoydart, Morar and Moidart) and the Long Island (Fig. 1). Adamnan's 'Egea insula', where Baithene was detained by contrary winds on one occasion, is usually taken to be Eigg (36). Baithene may have been coming from Skye. But it must have

been marginal to the territories of both the Picts and the Dalriatic Scots at this time. Its subsequent importance, considering its small size and relative isolation, must have been due to its qualities as outlined above in relation to the internal lines of communication of a polity which had basic control of both the islands and the adjacent mainland west coast (37). The Kildonnan area has been regarded as fertile and as having a good water supply (38). There is not, however, any early mention of operative mineral resources in Eigg (39).

The martyrdom of St Donnan and his community is entered by the Irish annals at ?618 (40). At c.725, the obit of Eogan, abbot of Eigg, is similarly entered and, at 752, that of Cummine, Bec's grandson, the religious of Eigg (41). That is the sum of the more or less historical documentary record relating to the Early Christian ecclesiastical occupation of Eigg. Kildonnan, presumably, became the medieval parish church of Eigg and Rhum (42). As with Kilmaluag, the name Kildonnan, referring to the church, seems to appear in the written record c.1600 and thenceforward; but the lands of 'Kildonene in Eg' are on record in 1498, and again in 1534 (43).

Before going on to consider the archaeological problems, however, a suggestion may be made regarding the nature of the early monastic settlement in Eigg, which, if at all valid, may have a direct bearing on those problems. This suggestion is based partly on the politico-geographical considerations which I discussed above and partly on certain aspects of the traditional literary material. Apart from the sparse notices given above, the Irish martyrologies give the feast-days of a number of saints said to be of Eigg, but who do not appear in the strictly historical record. Thus 'Berchan of Eigg' is commemorated on April 10; 'Enan of Eigg' on April 29; 'Congalach of Eigg' on Dec 22; and 'Conan of Eigg' on Jan 12 (44). None of these saints, apparently, has any dedications in Scotland (45). Another somewhat unusual circumstance, with regard to a traditional monastic founder, is that no genealogy of Donnan seems to have survived (46). If the monastery were indeed founded in the late 6th or early 7th century, its situation has no obvious strategic importance in the context of what we know of the political and social conditions of the time - in the way that those of Iona, Lismore and, in the late 7th century, Applecross have (47). This fact, and the absence of a pedigree of the founder, the wealth of 'saga' material on St Donnan notwithstanding, lead me to think that it was perhaps not regarded as an 'establishment' foundation in the sense that Iona, certainly, and Lismore and Applecross, probably, were. Further, the proportionately large number of shadowy 'floating' saints and the specific

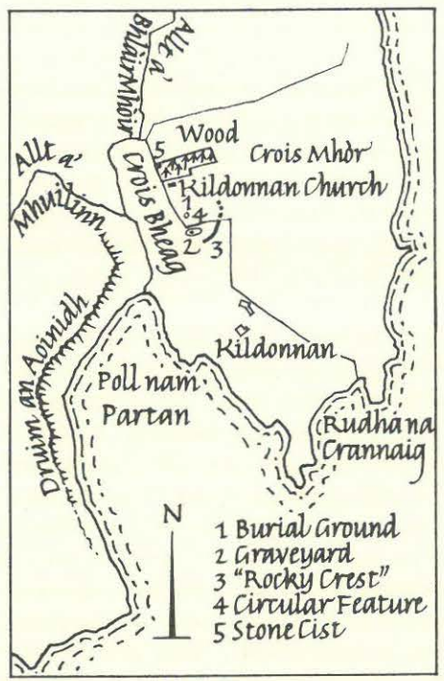


Figure 5. Kildonnan, Eigg.

mention of the religiosus Cummine in 752 at least suggest a community with a greater emphasis on the eremitic than the fully cenobitic way of monastic life. It may be significant in this respect that there is evidence of the existence of other eremitic groups, certainly in Rhum and probably in Canna, at one time or another within this period. Cummine Fota's letter De Controversia Paschali, written after the synod of Mag-lene (Co. Offaly), held in ?630, was addressed to Segine, fifth abbot of Iona (ruled c.623/4 - †652) and to Cummine's brother, the anchorite Beccan, with his followers (sapientes) (48). Beccan of Rhum's obit is entered by the Irish annals at c.677 (49).

It is reasonable to assume, as with Lismore (and as I have implicitly done here up till this point), that, in the absence of any more likely site on the island, the early monastery was at or near the existing ruin of Kildonnan church and its attendant burial-grounds. In fact, there is a group of early cross - slabs from here (50). Kildonnan (Fig. 5) is situated at the SE corner of Eigg and at the SE end of the valley which runs NW through the middle of the island to Bay of Laig (the 'notch' which gives the name Eigg, according to Watson: 51). The church, a post-medieval building said to have been built by John of Moidart, Captain of Clanranald in the second half of the 16th century (52), stands at the N end of a rise overlooking Poll nam Partan to the SW (53). To N the ground slopes away in the wood immediately N of the church for some 40 - 50 yds. And there is a slight slope away to E to the general level of Crois Mhor - a large and pretty level expanse of fertile ground. This slope is roughly coterminous with the longer arm of the wood. To W the ground falls unevenly, in places steeply and even precipitously, to the burn and the flat land bordering on the bay; and rises more steeply on the far side of the burn. To S the ground falls unevenly from the S wall of the Grave Yard (54) to the line of the southern extremity of the 'rocky crest', then more gently down to Kildonnan farmhouse. The site is a difficult one to evaluate. The natural rock of the rise outcrops frequently, or forms linear ridges, or bumps and knolls below the turf - all of which are natural, so far as I could ascertain.

Examination, prior to fieldwork, of the available air photographs (55), led me to think that some of these features might be structural - in particular the 'rocky crest'. Other short linear features were thus noted too, again to be rejected as natural in the field. There were also indications of what I then thought might be small rectangular buildings to W, SW, S and SE of the Grave Yard, suggestive of medieval or post-medieval occupation. In the field, however, most of these appeared to be old diggings, probably

to obtain surfacing material for the farm roads or, in one case, a modern structure of some kind. For these reasons, therefore, only the 'rocky crest' is shown in Fig. 5. Otherwise, there was apparently nothing of potential significance visible from the air.

A careful combing of the surface of the rise and its slopes over three days produced no conclusive results. There is no trace, that I could detect, of anything likely to be the vestiges of an enclosing vallum and no hint of earlier building activity round the church (the interior of which is about 3 ft higher than what was probably the original floor level, because of graves). I did pick up, on the third day, a roughly circular feature (the approximate position of which has been sketch-plotted onto Fig. 5) defined by a low, ragged turf ridge, about 1 ft high and of about 20 ft diameter to the outside of the bank (measured approximately NS, since the E sector is missing). The ridge or bank spreads from 4 ft to 5.5 ft at base. It may also be natural, but was the only possibly structural feature that I saw.

If the community here was indeed an individualist, eremitic one, there may have been no formal enclosure and the layout generally may have been much more scattered and haphazard even than usually in a monastery of Irish type. Assuming, however, that there was a nucleus of settlement around the church, the rough limits of the main monastic area can probably be outlined from the topographical data given above (56). To N, the foot of the slope in the wood; to E, the uneven slope to the level of Crois Mhor, with rock outcrops in places; to SE and S the prominent 'rocky crest', provide theoretical boundaries of a sort. The 'rocky crest', the most definite of these boundaries, could indeed have been incorporated into an enclosure. On the W, settlement could have spread irregularly, but would not have been able to go as far as the burn in most places, because of the lie of the land, and certainly not across it; to SW, it could have spread raggedly some way towards the bay; to NW a low ridge, rising to N, roughly continues the line of the foot of the slope in the wood (57).

As with the 'cross' names at Clachan in Lismore, it is interesting to note here Crois Mhor, 'Big Cross', and Crois Bheag, 'Little Cross'. The tradition recorded in the OS Name Book is that there was a cross somewhere at the NW end of Crois Mhor, the site of which could not then be identified. The Name Book implies, however, that Crois Bheag was merely named in contradistinction to Crois Mhor, not as reflecting the former existence and position of another cross (58).

As far as I have been able to find, there is no potentially significant information in early maps; there was nothing, in the way of field boundaries,worth following up from the OS 6 in sheets. I did not come across any other relevant material in the other documentary sources that I consulted. I have not learnt that any further finds of Early Christian artefacts have been made, or that there are any more possibly significant placenames, in the Kildonnan area.

'St Donnan's Grave'. (Stone Cist on OS 6 in sheet, Fig. 5). This tradition seems to stem from Martin, 303-4: 'About 30 yards from the church [St Donnan's] there is a sepulchral urn under ground; it is a big stone hewn to the bottom, about four feet deep, and the diameter of it is about the same breadth; I caused them to dig the ground above it, and we found a flat thin stone covering the urn: it was almost full of human bones, but no head among them, and they were fair and dry. I inquired of the natives what was become of the heads, and they could not tell; but one of them said, perhaps their heads had been cut off with a two-handed sword, and taken away by the enemy.' It will be noticed, however, that Martin does not associate the feature with St Donnan's burial-place and, more significant, that the local people clearly knew of no such tradition with regard to this particular site. He does not even say that the 'sepulchral urn' was to N of the church. The 'urn' may have been a font; and the bones, with no skulls among them and 'fair and dry' (washed?), perhaps gathered together from disturbed burials and reinterred. The graveyard may, at an earlier date, have extended into what in Martin's time had become arable land, or at least secularized.

The Statistical Account (XVII, 286-7) develops the story and ascribes the remains to St Donnan for the first time. Again, the 'urn' is not specifically said to lie to N of the church, but clearly, it lay in fairly level ground, though perhaps on a slight natural rise. The Ordnance Name Book (Inverness (Skye etc.), 13,p.31) provides the direction of the site from the church for the first time (it is to the NW), but differs from both the two preceding accounts. It cannot be certain that this 'grave' is the same as that described in the two preceding accounts, but there may be a connection.

Norman Macpherson (PSAS, XII, (1876-8), 584-6), referring to Martin's 'sepulchral urn', says: 'About 60 yards north of the chapel there is now a stone basin, rather than urn, covered, as that mentioned by Martin, with a flat thin stone of a different description from that out of which the

basin is hollowed. The measurements given by Martin are quite inaccurate, if he is speaking of that now alluded to.' He then describes a 'basin' 6 in - 7.5 in deep inside, with an overall width at the top of about 3 ft. 'It contained both earth and bones when I saw it last. This basin is now popularly reputed to contain the bones of St Donnan, yet that belief could hardly have existed in Martin's day without being noticed by him;...' The site is examined by Macpherson and Joseph Anderson. 'It lies so near the surface of the ground that it, or at least the flat thin stone that covers it, had been quite recently struck by the plough. Its site was pointed out by the ploughman, and we immediately had it dug round and measured. On removing the thin red slab which covered it, we found a large basin of whitish sandstone, roughly chiselled into a circular form, and hollowed out also somewhat roughly into a circular form...it has been perforated by an opening two inches wide at the inside and three at the outside. In digging round it we found some charcoal, a few small shells, and sea-rolled pebbles. It was full to the brim of ordinary earth, and contained a few fragments of human bones, say ten or a dozen...It by no means answered the description of Martin, 170 years ago, of being full of bones. The fragments were all replaced, and the vessel with its covering stone restored to the earth as deep as the nature of the subsoil would permit, marking the site by placing over it a long sea-rolled stone elliptical in form, about 22 inches in length and 10 in breadth. This, too, had been turned up by the plough on the same spot, and recalled the stone known as St Columba's pillow. The conclusion we arrived at was that the stone had probably been a font at one time, or possibly a piscina, however it came to have had these bones deposited in it.' Macpherson was told by the local innkeeper, then about eighty, that he remembered that this stone and 'another made of the stone of Scuir, which contained many more bones', both turned up by the plough, had been dug up and removed to the edge of the field, a few yards away, where they remained on the surface for some time. This seems to have been soon after 1818. 'In these circumstances, it can hardly be considered as certain that the place where we now found it was the place of its original deposit'. Macpherson's final comment here makes it clear that he was in no doubt that the bones in the 'basin' had been gathered from disturbed graves and thus reburied. His 'basin' and the 'urn' of Statistical Account could be the same object; 'no skulls' in the Stat Acct agrees with Martin; but no dimensions are given; all have covering slabs; in which case, it was not in situ even before being struck by the plough. The innkeeper's second stone comes nearer to Martin's 'urn' in bone content, and its (former) existence may be relevant to the fact of conflicting accounts. The two stones need not have been found in the same

place. But it is quite likely that it is wrong to try to relate the different accounts to one, or possibly two finds; that, in fact, we are dealing here with the uncovering of different disturbances of an extended graveyard, possibly in different places to N and E of the church, involving the re-use of various débris from the furnishings of the medieval church(es). Whatever the truth of the matter, it can be said confidently that there is no reliable post-medieval witness to a tradition of the existence of a tomb of St Donnan at Kildonnan - and, of course, no medieval one at all.

There is a stone, probably that described by Macpherson and used by him to mark the position of his reburied 'font', situated about 10 yds S of the N boundary of the wood and about 10 yds E of the wall bounding the W side of the wood - i.e. in much the position indicated by the OS 6 in sheet (NGR NM 48808542). A few small stones show through the turf immediately round it, but I could not make out any definite pattern. Nothing more constructive can be said without re-excavation.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey, Rose Street, Edinburgh, for permission to consult and quote from their records. Once again, their help has been invaluable.

Bibliography and Short Titles

Anderson, A.O., 1922. Early Sources of Scottish History, A.D. 500-1286.
Carmichael: Carmichael, I., no date. Lismore in Alba.
Cowan, I.B., 1967. The Parishes of Medieval Scotland (Scottish Record Society: 1967).
Easson, D.E., 1957. Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland.
Macfarlane: Macfarlane, W., Geographical Collections relating to Scotland (Scottish History Society: 1906-8).
Martin: Martin, M., A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, c. 1695 (Macleod, D.J. ed: 1934).
Monro: Monro's Western Isles of Scotland and Genealogies of the Clans, 1549 (Munro, R.W. ed: 1961).
Pennant: Pennant, T., A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides;

1772 (new edition 1790).
Pococke: Tours in Scotland 1747, 1750, 1760 by Richard Pococke, Bishop of Meath (Scottish History Society: 1887).
Thomas, C., 1971. The Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain.
Watson, W.J., 1926. The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland.
OPS: Origines Parochiales Scotiae (Bannatyne Club, Innes, C. ed; 1851-5).

Notes

1. The sympathies, at least, of the earlier abbots of Iona seem to have lain with the Kindred of Gabran, another of the four, and that which provided most of the kings of Dalriata until the late 7th century: Adamnan, Life of Columba, III, 5.
2. Monro, 54; Macfarlane, II, 155, 516-17; Pococke, 90-1; Pennant, 414; Stat Acct, I, 483, 485; NSA, VII (Argyll), 224-5, 231-2.
3. Monro, 54.
4. Martin, 351; but cf Pococke, 90-1.
5. Anderson, 1922, I, 95.
6. Watson, 1926, 292. Moluoc was apparently of the Dal nAraide, the chief Irish Cruithni, who occupied the S half of Co Antrim and the greater part of Co Down; and of whom Fiacha Araide was the eponymous ancestor. Comgall, founder and first abbot of Bangor in the N of Co Down, was also of the Dal nAraide: Reeves's edition of Adamnan's Vita Sancti Columbae (1857), 93-4. Reeves says that Comgall was ninth in descent from Fiacha Araide, according to his pedigree; but he says 'fourteenth' on p.220: I have not seen a definitive genealogy of Comgall. MSS containing pedigrees of Comgall are cited by Plummer, Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae (1910), I, lviii, 3. Cf also the statement in the Life of St Comgall here quoted. Adamnan calls him 'mocu-Aridi' (III, 17; cf I, 49 of the Andersons' edition). Comgall is said to have died in 602, at the age of 80 or 90. I do not find that Moluoc's age at his death is given anywhere, but it looks, from their respective obits and genealogies (if either or both are at all accurate), as though Moluoc was an older contemporary of Comgall. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Plummer is uneasy about the identity of the bishop Lugaid who ordained Comgall and that he mentions Lugaid of Lismore in passing. But Moluoc is not called a bishop (pace Plummer) in any reliable source: Plummer, op cit, I, lix. Adamnan does not say that Comgall visited Moluoc, but then Adamnan mentions neither

Moluoc nor Lismore.

7. Anderson, 1922, I, 126, 159-60.
8. For the medieval ecclesiastical history of Lismore generally: Easson, 1957, 171; Cowan, 'Corrections to Easson', typescript p.21; Cowan, 1967, 134.
9. Easson, 1957, 193, referring to the lists given by Gervase of Canterbury (-1216): A.O. Anderson, Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers, A.D. 500-1286 (1908), 327-8, and Henry of Silgrave: Anderson, 1922, II, 697-700. Easson is misleading here. The former list does not mention Culdees in connection with the bishopric of Argyll. The bishopric of Argyll and the abbey of Iona, both having Culdees, are the last two names in the latter list. Easson, 1957, 191; Cowan, 'Corrections to Easson', p.28.
10. OPS, II, part i, 166-7.
11. Watson, 1926, 124; Anderson, 1922, I, 576-7.
12. W.F. Skene's edition of Fordun's Chronicle, II, 413-14 (Historians of Scotland, IV, 1872). Appin of Dull, Strathtay (Perthshire), Appin, Tynron (Dumfriesshire) and Abden, Kinghorn (Fife) are certain or probable examples of the term's survival as a place-name known to me. It is relevant to point out here that Lismore and Appin were apparently always one parish historically: OPS, II, part i, 159-69.
13. MacGibbon and Ross, Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland (1896), II, 263-5.
14. OPS, II, part i, 160.
15. ibid, 159.
16. Trans Scot Eccles Soc, XV (1957), 41-55.
17. NSA, VII (Argyll), 242-4.
18. Carmichael, 46.
19. Principally 106G/Scot/UK34, 3107-8.
20. I am indebted to Ian Fisher, RCAMS, for drawing my attention to the existence of this map, which I did not find listed in the published catalogue of the SRO.
21. Carmichael, 142-7.
22. Carmichael, 145.
23. See note 13.
24. Carmichael, 109, 144.
25. See note 17.
26. Thomas, 1971, 29-33.
27. The name Lismore itself, i.e. lios mor, great enclosure, may actually refer to the area enclosed by the vallum of St Moluoc's

monastery. There is no other likely lios mor known to me in the island.

28. Cf plan of monastery in Book of Mulling, illustrated in F. Henry, Irish Art in the Early Christian Period (to 800 A.D.) (1965), 135, fig. 17.
29. See note 17.
30. Carmichael, 144, 107.
31. Watson, 1926, 260; NSA, VII (Argyll), 242-4. The NSA account is not clear, but the stone was apparently within the sanctuary, which might, from the description, have been a building - or at least an area of limited extent. Rev D. McNicol, the parochial contributor to Stat Acct, in a letter quoted in OPS, II, part i, 163, records the belief that the precincts (?) of the cathedral were a sanctuary area, wherein were 'a number of buildings into which in troublous times the proprietors of the parish transferred their valuable effects'. (At least, I take this to be based on McNicol, as it does not fit the NSA account.) But the tradition is vague and somewhat confused: cf OSNB, Argyll, no. 22, p.89.
32. Watson, 1926, 260.
33. McNicol's letter cited in OPS, see note 31; but this and the one on the churchyard knoll may be the same, and the two accounts misinterpreted in OPS.
34. CBA, 7th Report, Scottish Regional Group, 1952, 6; see note 17.
35. These last items of information are from Mr Macgregor, Clachan, the Registrar of Lismore, to whom I am indebted for putting Achnacroish on the map.
36. A.O. and M.O. Anderson (eds), Adomnan's Life of Columba (1961), p.505, 1196; Watson, 192b, 85 and A.O. and M.O. Anderson op cit, 152-3.
37. Vikings in Eigg: H. Shetelig (ed), Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, II (1940), 63-70, 167-8, 179-80; Kildonnan was a residence of the Macdonalds of Clanranald (Macfarlane, II, 175-6, 528) and possibly, earlier, of the Lords of the Isles, OPS, II, part i, 338.
38. Stat Acct, XVII, 273, 282; Martin, 302; Macfarlane, II, 175-6, 528; Monro, 67; the earlier accounts have the higher opinions. With Monro's account, compare the 'Description of the Isles of Scotland', in Skene, Celtic Scotland, III, 433 (Appendix III).
39. Stat Acct, XVII, 282.
40. Anderson, 1922, I, 142-5. This is not the place to discuss the literary antecedents and relations, and possibly dubious historicity,

of the annalistic entries; and, in any case, I am not competent to do so. A description of the Donnan literature is to be found in the reference here quoted. The existence of a monastic community of some kind in Eigg, though possibly not in the 7th century, is sufficiently attested by the annal entry of c.725 and, probably, by that of 752. I have, however, based certain suggestions, which seem to me to be reasonable on the currently available evidence, on material - or the absence of it- contained in some of the parahistorical literature.

41. Anderson, 1922, I, 221-2, 240-1; Watson, 1926, 85.
42. Monro, 67.
43. OPS, II, part i, 334, 336.
44. Anderson, 1922, I, 144-5; Watson, 1926, 85. None of these names appears in the list of Donnan's fellow-martyrs contained in the Martyrology of Tallaght, Book of Leinster version, under April 17: R.I. Best and H.J. Lawlor (eds), The Martyrology of Tallaght (1931), 33. A version of this list, from the Acta Sanctorum, is given in Reeves's Adamnan, 306. It has Conanus as one of the names, but the corresponding name in the LL Mart. Tall. is Cronani. These saints were, therefore, apparently not associated with Donnan himself in Irish hagiographical tradition.
45. Watson, 1926, 282 (explicitly of Conan), 85, 194 (implicitly of Berchan) and 85 (implicitly of Enan and Congalach).
46. Watson, 1926, 283; Reeves's Adamnan, 304.
47. I incline to the Andersons' view that the siting of Applecross (founded 673) is evidence for Dalriatic expansion up the west coast at least as far north as Wester Ross by that date: Andersons' Adamnan, 107. The region was probably fairly recently acquired in 673. The connections of Applecross seem to have been with Bangor: Anderson, 1922, I, 258. (But Maelrubha, founder of Applecross, was not previously abbot of Bangor: Andersons' Adamnan, 107; Anderson, 1922, I, 183, 219-20. It seems to be later sources that call him abbot of Bangor: the mistake may have arisen because of the obit of Macc-oigi of Applecross, abbot of Bangor, at 802: ibid, 258.) The monastery may have been founded under the aegis of the Kindred of Loarn, which rose to prominence in Dalriata shortly afterwards: ibid, 43, 181, 183. Compare my observations on Lismore. But Maelrubha was of Cenel Eogain, one branch of the northern Ui Neill: Columba and Adamnan were of Cenel Conaill Gulban, the other branch: ibid, 219-20. In any case, the monastery and its founder were of Irish origin: this also makes me think that it was probably founded in Irish territory; i.e. it was not an attempt to break Bede's Pictish

monopoly of Iona.

48. Anderson, 1922, I, 147, 171; Andersons' Adamnan, 90. Cummine Fota died in 669: Anderson, 1922, I, 184.
49. ibid, 184. The names Cummine and Beccan in the 7th century, and Cummine and Bec in the 8th, make one wonder whether all these individuals in fact belonged to the same family.
50. PSAS, LXVII (1932-3), 65-6. Another probably early cross-slab still stands within the church: illustrated in T.S. Muir, Ecclesiological Notes on Some of the Islands of Scotland (1885), Pl.2, bottom left (opp. p.32). I have seen no authoritative statement as to the chronology of the group as a whole, but the fragment shown in PSAS, LXVII (1932-3), 66, fig. 4 is mentioned by C.L. Curle in the context of the 7th cent.: PSAS, LXXIV (1939-40), 74.
51. Watson, 1926, 85; Martin, 303-4.
52. RCAMS Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles (1928), 220, no. 688.
53. NGR NM 48848538. Poll nam Partan was probably a good harbour in historical times. Dr Maclean, the doctor for the Small Isles, told me that he thinks it may have been the 'heavin for hieland Galayis' mentioned by Monro (p.67), as being suitable for the kind of vessel then in use in the West Highlands. The present harbour of Eigg, and also Clanranald's harbour (18th or early 19th century ?), are a little further round the S coast westwards.
54. The presence of both 'Grave Yard' and 'Burial Ground' on the 6 in OS map is explained by the OSNB, Inverness (Skye etc.), no. 13, p.31: 'Grave Yard' was the Protestant burial place; 'Burial Ground' was the Catholic one.
55. Principally RAF 106G/Scot/UK53, 4078-9.
56. It is relevant to point out here that the OS has recently (1972) identified the remains of a small fort on the promontory, Rudha na Crannaig (NGR NM 49108476), to S of Kildonnan farmhouse. The constructions within the fort apparently suggest a secondary occupation and the OS suggests that this might have been monastic, though admitting that there is no conclusive evidence. It is not impossible that St Donnan's original settlement was made here, and later transferred northwards for convenience, need to expand, or other reasons: only excavation would provide a definite answer. But for present purposes I have assumed, as a working hypothesis, that the original settlement was, and continued to be, in the area of (later) Early Christian, medieval and modern ritual and burial activity. Continuity of use of (the same) ritual site is the usual, though not invariable, rule. I did not have time to make a proper examination of the fort myself.

57. On N and E, beyond the limits described, the land is cultivable.
58. OSNB, Inverness (Skye etc.), no. 13, p.2.