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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Cró-chloch na Ceiste:

Galláin, Leaca & Bolláin

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER:

PILLARS, SLABS & BOULDERS

John Sheehan, Department of Archaeology, UCC, explores the Kingdom's early medieval cross-inscribed stones



Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar) graveyard



Cross-inscribed pillar at Kilshannig

THE AIM OF THIS CHAPTER IS TO DRAW attention to cross-inscribed stones of early medieval date (*c.* AD 400-1200) that are located in graveyards under the control or ownership of Kerry Local Authorities (hereinafter referred to as KLA graveyards). The county of Kerry contains, by national standards, a very fine and important collection of early medieval cross-inscribed stones, many examples of which are well known to art historians and archaeologists. However, the scope of the present study is limited by three factors. First, only seven of Kerry's nine baronies have been subjected to modern archaeological survey: Corca Dhuibhne, which comprises most of the Dingle peninsula; Iveragh, Dunkerron North and Dunkerron South, which together comprise most of the Iveragh peninsula; Glanarought, which comprises Kerry's portion of the Beara peninsula and the area around Kilgarvan; and Iraghticonnor and Clanmaurice, comprising the north of the county. As a result, there is as yet no full record of the archaeological monuments of east and mid-Kerry, a significant proportion of the area of the county. Second, the great majority of the early cross-inscribed stones on record from Kerry are located in one single area, the ancient territory of Corca Dhuibhne, which largely comprised the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas. Thus, when considering the early cross sculpture of Kerry one is, in effect, almost exclusively focused on peninsular Kerry rather than the full extent of the modern county. Third, a very significant proportion of the 137 KLA graveyards, amounting to over 70% of the total, are located outside the bounds of Corca Dhuibhne, with many of them in mid-, east and north Kerry. Consequently, the part of the county which has the smallest proportion of

such graveyards, peninsular Kerry, is also the area which has the largest collection of the cross-inscribed stones that form the subject of this study.

There are two principal and unrelated reasons for this latter situation, which may initially appear as a disparity of evidence. The first relates to the process by which some burial grounds came under the ownership or control of county councils and their predecessors, the grand juries, which largely took place during the nineteenth century. While the role of the authorities was to manage, regulate and maintain these places in accordance with various Health Acts, the selection and location of the burial grounds was largely determined by contemporary demographic patterns. It is not surprising, therefore, that the areas with the largest populations and urban centres, namely mid-, east and north Kerry, were those in which graveyards were founded *ab initio* or where already existing burial grounds were taken over and established as local authority graveyards.

The second factor that must be taken into account in understanding why the part of Kerry that has the largest collection of early medieval cross-inscribed stones (Corca Dhuibhne, the peninsular region) is also that part of the county that has the smaller proportion of local authority-controlled graveyards relates to the nature of early medieval ecclesiastical sites there. The early medieval ecclesiastical sites of the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas are distinguished by a number of characteristics discussed elsewhere by Ó Carragáin *et al.* Due to various reasons, including geography and geology, their features are often well preserved. They tend to contain several early types of archaeological feature, including churches, *leachta* and related monuments, and, not least, they have a large corpus of stone features that are cross-inscribed, including slabs, pillars, ogham stones, sundials, boulders, shrine components and stone crosses. In total, there are around 200 cross-inscribed stones and related monuments recorded from Corca Dhuibhne. Most important, in the present context, the ecclesiastical sites of the Corca Dhuibhne polity are of particularly dense distribution, both by national and by many international standards. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when measured by this yardstick, much of the remainder of Kerry's early ecclesiastical sites pale somewhat into insignificance.

In total, there are around 200 cross-inscribed stones and related monuments recorded from Corca Dhuibhne

In the majority of cases the selection of sites as KLA graveyards was determined by their ongoing tradition and use as places of burial during the nineteenth century. Many of these sites clearly had a long tradition of burial, and were early in origin. This is occasionally suggested by their surviving place names, which contain early elements such as *cill, eaglais, teampall, díseart,* etc., while an early origin for some KLA graveyards is also indicated by their surviving archaeological remains. Aghadoe, for instance, on the outskirts of Killarney, with its ogham stone, round tower and Romanesque church, was clearly an early medieval establishment, while Killeentierna, near Castleisland, with its late medieval church remains, was most probably a medieval parish centre, though the *cill* element in its place name may also indicate an earlier origin. There are many other examples of sites of this type among the 137 KLA graveyards, and it is not surprising that 92 of these are included in the National Monuments Service's statutory list of known archaeological sites and monuments, the Record of Monuments and Places *(RMP: see www.archaeology.ie).*

Cross-inscribed stones

Inscribed crosses of various forms occur on a variety of early medieval monuments in County Kerry (FIG 1). The largest group, however, comprises cross-inscribed slabs. These may be described as stones, either standing or recumbent, inscribed with a cross, and they appear to have been generally used as grave markers or memorials. Examples of this type are on record from 17 KLA graveyards: Cummer (also known as Ahane), Ballynakilly, Coad (also known as Kilcrohane Church, in Behaghane), Curra, Shronahiree and Inis Úasal (Church Island), all on the Iveragh peninsula; Annagh, Cill Dromann (Kildrum), An Ráth Dhubh (Rathduff), Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar), An Eaglais (Aglish, also known as Minard Church), An Ghairfeanaigh (Garfinny), Dún Urlann (Dunurlin), Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh

(Raheenyhooig), Cinn Aird (Kinard), and Dún Chaoin (Dunquin), all on the Dingle peninsula; and Ratass, on the outskirts of Tralee. A number of these stones, such as those from Ballynakilly and Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh (Raheenyhooig), have only recently come to light as a welcome result of Kerry County Council's important Graveyard Survey Project.

Cross-inscribed slabs vary considerably in form and size, and it is occasionally difficult to differentiate some examples from cross-inscribed pillars. The latter usually take the form of slender, free-standing stones, usually over one metre high, on the surface of which a cross has been inscribed or carved in relief. There are at least ten examples in Kerry, all from Corca Dhuibhne, two of which, from Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar) and Kilshannig, occur in KLA graveyards. There is also a record of a now lost pillar stone, though without a cross, which stood immediately adjacent to the KLA graveyard at Kilmakilloge, on the Beara peninsula, and which was formerly the subject of popular devotion. At least 28 of Kerry's 130 ogham stones bear inscribed crosses, though it is frequently not possible to determine whether these crosses are earlier, later or contemporaneous with the inscriptions. Four of these stones are from KLA graveyards – Ratass, An Eaglais (Aglish), Cinn Aird (Kinard) and An Ráth Dhubh (also known as Ballinvoher Church). There is also a group of at least 15 stone crosses from peninsular Kerry, some of which are of large proportion, that are cross-inscribed; three of these are from Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar), a KLA graveyard, where an example of another category of cross-inscribed monuments of less frequent occurrence – a sundial – is also found.

In summary, therefore, 19 of the 137 KLA graveyards are known to contain cross-inscribed stones of early medieval date. Two of these sites, however, stand out as exceptional, for both the numbers and the quality of cross-inscribed stones they feature. These are Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar) and Inis Úasal (Church Island), Iveragh, which are two of the regionally important ecclesiastical establishments of ancient Corca Dhuibhne, another being Sceilg Mhichíl. Inis Úasal, an island on Lough Currane, was the principal foundation of St Fíonán Cam (*fl.* late sixth/early seventh century). The estate of this important foundation has been recognised, through a combination of documentary, toponymic and archaeological

(FIG 1) The distribution of Kerry Local Authority graveyards containing early medieval stone sculpture



1 *An Eaglais (Aglish)*
2 *An Ghairfeanaigh (Garfinny)*
3 *An Ráth Dhubh (Rathduff)*
4 *Annagh*
5 *Ballynakilly*
6 *Cill Dromann (Kildrum)*
7 *Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar)*
8 *Cinn Aird (Kinard)*
9 *Coad*
10 *Cummer*
11 *Curra*
12 *Dún Chaoin (Dunquin)*
13 *Dún Urlann (Dunurlin)*
14 *Killahan Tonaknock*
15 *Killiney*
16 *Kilmakilloge*
17 *Inis Úasal (Church Island)*
18 *Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh (Raheenyhooig)*
19 *Ratass*
20 *Shronahiree*

evidence, as encompassing most of the land around the lake, and the size and quality of its ten cross-inscribed stones are outstanding. The Cill Maoilchéadair ecclesiastical estate, though traditionally associated with St Brendan, was founded by St Maolcethair in the late sixth/early seventh century. It contains a cross-inscribed pillar, known as the 'alphabet stone', two cross-inscribed slabs, the finer of which is now lost, three cross-inscribed stone crosses and a sundial. The exceptional status of these two key sites at the end of the Early Medieval period in Corca Dhuibhne is indicated by the fact that they each contain a Romanesque style church. Not surprisingly, if these two sites were omitted from the picture the quality of the corpus of early medieval cross-inscribed stones from KLA graveyards would be greatly diminished.

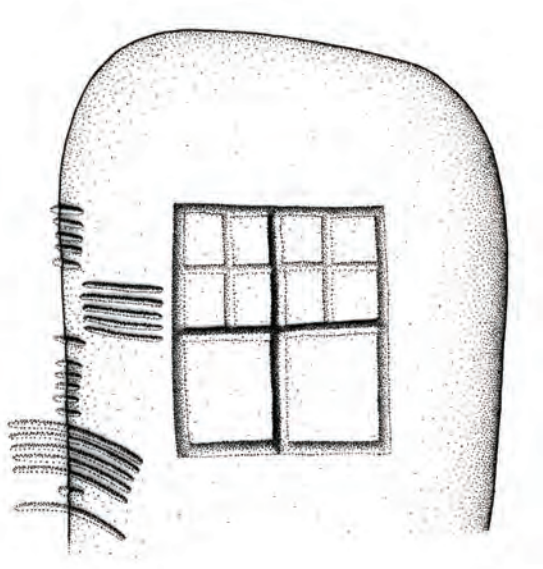
Five categories of cross-inscribed monuments are represented in the relevant KLA graveyards, namely slabs, pillars, ogham stones, stone crosses and a sundial. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the cross-forms that occur on these distinctive monuments, will briefly discuss stone crosses, and will place them in a broader context beyond the confines of KLA graveyards. It will, however, prioritise the cross-forms rather than the monuments themselves on the basis that it was the presence on them of this Christian symbol that was perceived as being of special meaning and significance.



Linear crosses

Single-line linear crosses constitute the first main grouping of cross-inscribed slabs and related monuments in early medieval Britain and Ireland and comprise the most basic cross-form. A significant number are on record from KLA graveyards. These may occur in equal-armed or Latin form, are occasionally encircled, and may exhibit plain or elaborate terminals. Crosses of these simple types, perhaps because of their ubiquity, have frequently been assigned only broad early medieval dates. Lionard, for instance, advanced a seventh-century date for the introduction of the type and suggested that it continued in sporadic use down





(FIG 2) Large equal-armed linear cross, enclosed in a square and with subsidiary crosslets, on the ogham-inscribed boulder at Cinn Aird (Kinard)

to the twelfth century, though Edwards has proposed that the majority of linear cross-forms in Wales date from a narrower period encompassing the seventh to the ninth centuries. In the case of the Kerry examples, specifically those from Corca Dhuibhne, it is possible to suggest dates or date ranges for a limited number of examples.

Plain linear crosses

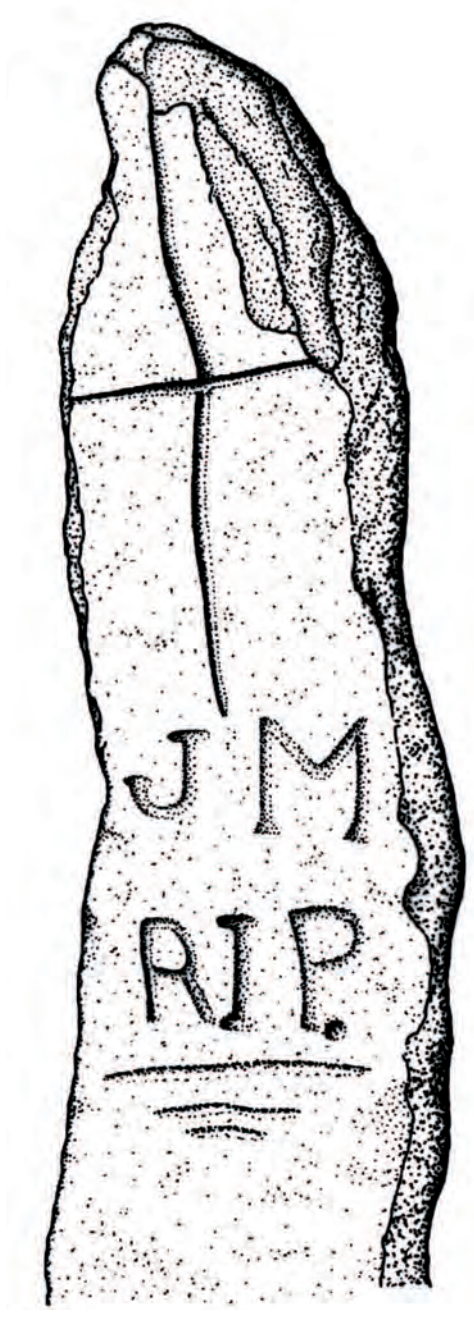
Very simple Latin or equal-armed linear crosses, without elaboration to the terminals, occur on 12 ogham stones in Corca Dhuibhne, including that from Cinn Aird, a KLA graveyard east of Daingean Uí Chúis (Dingle). This is a rounded boulder, with a flat face, the upper portion of which bears a large equal-armed linear cross enclosed in a square, with a small equal-armed cross in each of the upper quadrants (FIG 2). Linear crosses in angular frames are of rare occurrence generally, and square or rectangular frames occur on only a very small number of inscribed stones in Corca Dhuibhne. One of these, however, the example from Ardmoneel, near Killorglin, has been dated to the seventh century. The overall arrangement of the three crosses on the

Cinn Aird stone appears to represent Calvary, with the Crosses of the Thieves represented by the crosslets.

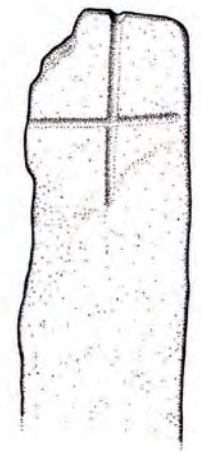
Simple equal-armed linear crosses occur on four of the ogham stones from Baile An tSagairt (Ballintaggart), near Daingean Uí Chúis. Swift has argued that the disposition of the crosses in relation to the inscriptions on these stones suggest contemporaneity. The inscriptions on two of them feature the KOI element, on the basis of which, combined with their pre-apocope character, McManus has suggested they may be assigned to the fifth or possibly early sixth century, the earliest phase detectable in ogham, suggesting a similarly early date for the linear crosses. A fifth to mid-sixth century date for the plain linear cross-form is also indicated by the nature of the inscription on the Cinn Aird ogham stone, assuming the cross-forms and the inscription to be contemporary, which seems probable. A small pillar-like stone from An Riasc (Reask), near Baile an Fheirtéaraigh (Ballyferriter), features a linear Latin cross and two abbreviated nomen sacrum inscriptions, *DNO (Domino:* 'to/from the Lord') and *DNS (Dominus:* 'Lord'). On the basis of the inscriptions, Fanning dated the stone to the late sixth or early seventh century.

It appears, therefore, that some of the Corca Dhuibhne examples of this type of cross-form – simple Latin and equal-armed linear crosses, without elaboration to the terminals – may be dated to the fifth and sixth centuries, extending, possibly, to the seventh century. On this basis it appears that this cross-form may be generally dated to the opening centuries of the early medieval period. It should be noted, however, that simple cross-forms may easily have a degree of longevity, and in the case of plain linear crosses this is suggested by the occurrences of this type alongside other cross-forms in peninsular Kerry. These include one of the cross-inscribed slabs from Inis Úasal, a KLA graveyard on an island in Lough Currane, near Waterville, which features an outline Latin cross with two lesser crosses, possibly representing the Crosses of the Thieves, one of which is of plain linear type. Other examples of plain linear crosses are associated with other forms of ecclesiastical monument, such as the pillar stone that stands deeply buried in the *leacht* at Aghatubrid, between Cahersiveen and Waterville, which appears to have formed part of a focus that included a gable-shrine of

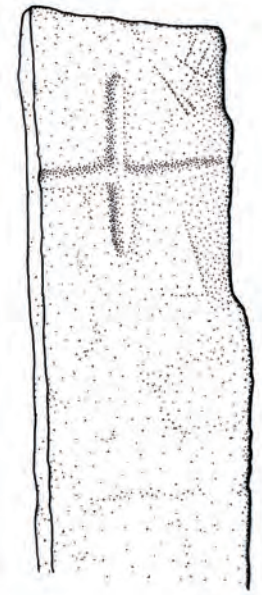
(FIG 3) *Cross-inscribed slab, of probable early date, at An Ghairfeanaigh (Garfinny), with an early modern inscription*



Plain linear crosses from around the county



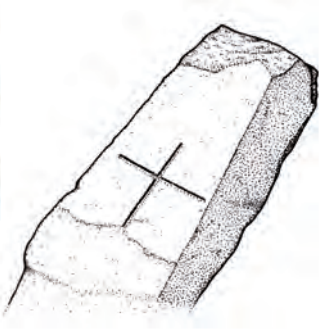
(FIG 4) *An Eaglais (Aglish)*



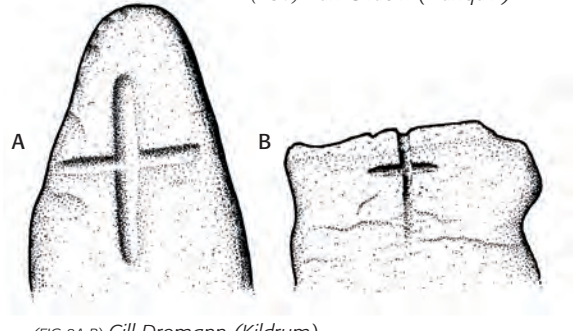
(FIG 5) *Coad*



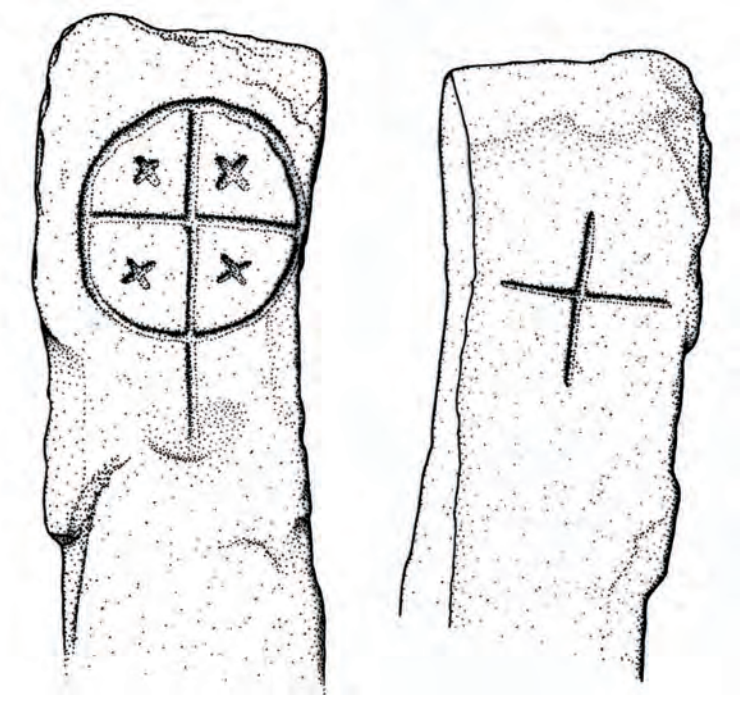
(FIG 6) *Curra*



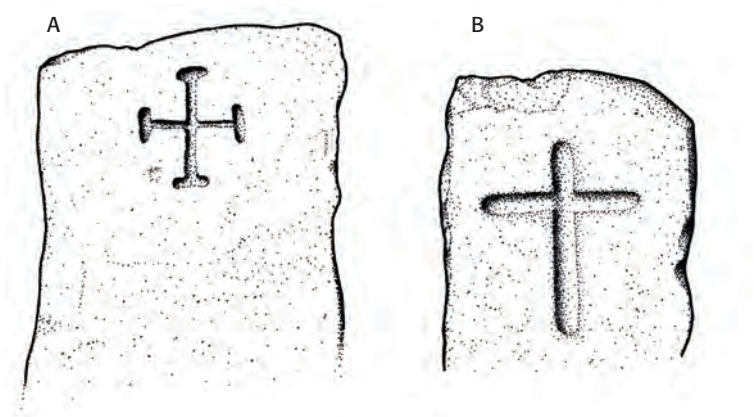
(FIG 7) *Dún Chaoin (Dunquin)*



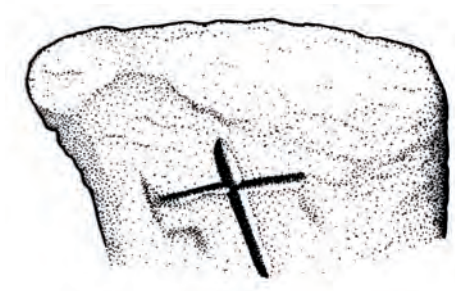
(FIG 8A-B) *Cill Dromann (Kildrum)*



(FIG 9) Encircled linear Latin cross, with a faintly preserved pelta at the foot of the shaft, at An Ráth Dhubh (Rathduff). On the other face of the stone is a plain, equal-armed, linear cross



(FIG 10A-B) Plain linear crosses, and a linear cross with T-bar terminals, from An Ghairfeanaigh (Garfinny)



(FIG 11) Plain linear cross from Dún Urlann (Dunurlin)

probable eighth-century date. Two slabs with linear crosses stand close to the corners of the *leacht* at An Lóthar (Loher), close to Waterville, and may perhaps have marked it along with the well-known sixth/seventh-century *alpha*-and-*omega* slab. Taken together, although not all individually dateable, this group of associated monuments most likely range in date from the sixth to the tenth/eleventh centuries.

Given the overall dating evidence it is unwise, in the absence of any associated evidence, to propose specific dates for most examples of the plain linear cross-form in KLA graveyards. Unless, however, they are clearly executed using early modern tools or techniques, such as, for instance, an example in the KLA graveyard at Brosna, east Kerry, it is reasonable to suppose that they are likely to be of early medieval date. In some cases, however, cross-inscribed slabs of probable early date have been added to in early modern times, which seems to have been the case at An Ghairfeanaigh (FIG 3), for instance, where a rough, tall slab featuring a plain linear cross had 'JM RIP' added.

Bearing in mind problems of identification, it currently appears that there are 18 examples of plain linear crosses that may be broadly dated to the early medieval period inscribed on stone monuments in KLA graveyards (including the cross-inscribed ogham stone from Cinn Aird, which may be more closely dated). These comprise an ogham stone, two stone crosses and 15 slabs, from the following 12 sites:

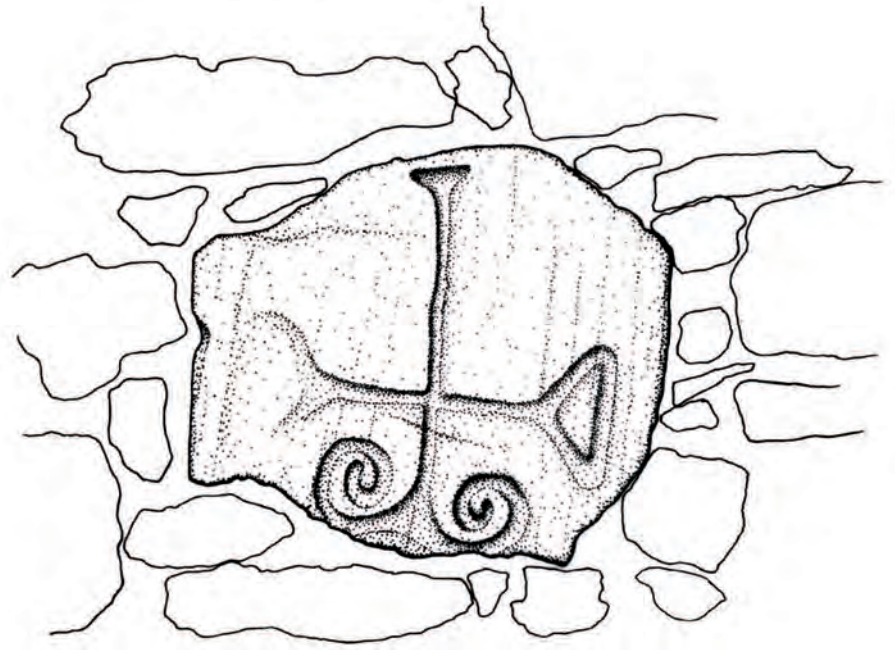
- An Eaglais (Aglish) – FIG 4
- Coad – FIG 5
- An Ráth Dhubh (Rathduff) – FIG 9
- Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar)
- Cinn Aird (Kinard) – FIG 2
- Curra – FIG 6
- Shronahiree
- Dún Chaoin (Dunquin) – FIG 7
- An Ghairfeanaigh (Garfinny) – FIG 10A-B
- Cill Dromann (Kildrum) – FIG 8A-B
- Dún Urlann (Dunurlin) – FIG 11
- Inis Úasal (Church Island).

Linear crosses with expanded terminals

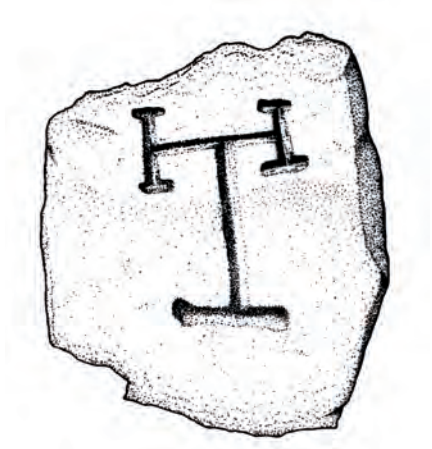
Some simple linear crosses are furnished with a variety of terminal forms, most of which are expansions of some type. These include rounded/bulbous, bifid and trifid, triangular/sub-triangular, square/rectangular and T-bar forms. These different types of terminal, most of which are represented in the Kerry cross-inscribed stones, are occasionally found in combination with each other, as at Annagh (FIG 12), Dún Urlann (FIG 11) and Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh (FIG 14).

A distinctive linear cross type with expanded terminals of rounded, often bulbous, form is on record from eight locations in Kerry, all in Corca Dhuibhne, only one of which, on Inis Úasal, is in a KLA graveyard. Another example occurs on an ogham stone from Imleach Dhún Sián (Emlagh East), on the Dingle peninsula, where one of the scores of the inscription is abbreviated to avoid the arm of the cross, indicating that the cross is either primary to the inscription or contemporary with it. This inscription, according to McManus, is pre-apocope, dating from the fifth century, thus suggesting an early date for the cross. At Cool East, on Valentia Island, there is the opposite relationship between the cross and the ogham inscription, with the addition of the cross abbreviating the final scores of the inscription. This need not necessarily imply, however, that there was a long time gap involved, and both cross and inscription may well be contemporary. While the Imleach Dhún Sián stone demonstrates the currency of this cross-form from as early as the fifth century, the occurrence of another example on a slab at the excavated site at Church Island, Valentia Harbour, suggests that it continued in use until the seventh to ninth century, the main period of use of this site. The rather few dated Corca Dhuibhne examples of this linear cross-form, therefore, range in date from the fifth to the eighth/ninth century.

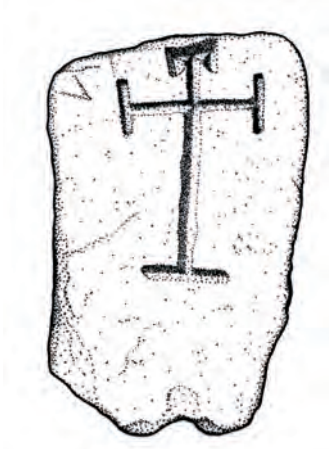
Cross-forms with bifid and trifid terminals are on record from 11 individual pieces of early medieval sculpture from Corca Dhuibhne, occurring at nine locations. Only one example, a cross-inscribed slab with bifid terminals, occurs in a KLA graveyard, at Shronahiree More, Glencar. One of the ogham stones from Baile An tSagairt bears a small, elongated Latin cross with terminals of trifid form, and Swift has argued that the cross and inscription, which McManus dates to the fifth century, may be



(FIG 12) The cross-inscribed stone in the wall of the nave at Annagh church



(FIG 13) Plain linear cross with H-shaped tereminals on stone from Dún Urlann (Dunurlin)



(FIG 14) Linear crosses with expanded terminals from Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh (Raheenyhooig).

contemporary. The ogham-inscribed boulder from Mám an Óraigh (Maumanorig), near Fionntrá (Ventry), has a subsidiary crosslet of this form that features both sub-triangular and bifid terminals. McManus notes that the inscription belongs to a post-apocope phase of Primitive Irish and consequently dates to the period encompassing the sixth and early seventh centuries. Finally, one of the corner-posts of the excavated eighth-century shrine at Caherlehillan, near Kells, bears a linear Latin cross with bifid terminals. Dateable cross-forms with bifid/trifid terminals in Corca Dhuibhne appear to focus, in the main, on the seventh and eighth centuries, though it is possible that earlier and later examples also occur. The focus of the date range may be in keeping with the Cill Buaine (Killabuoina slab), from the Baile an Sceilg (Ballinskelligs) area – the only Corca Dhuibhne cross-inscribed stone to feature both bifid and trifid terminals – which stands beside a gable-shrine of probable eighth-century date.

Cross-forms with bifid and trifid terminals appear related to those with triangular/sub-triangular ones, with the latter type most probably being derived from the former. Such crosses form a large group in Corca Dhuibhne, with 24 examples occurring at 18 locations, where they occur on ogham stones, cross-inscribed slabs, pillars and stone crosses. Two examples occur in KLA graveyards, one on a stone cross at Cill Maolchéadair and the other on the Kilshannig pillar (FIG 16, PHOTO PAGE 80).

A significant number of linear crosses with these triangular types of

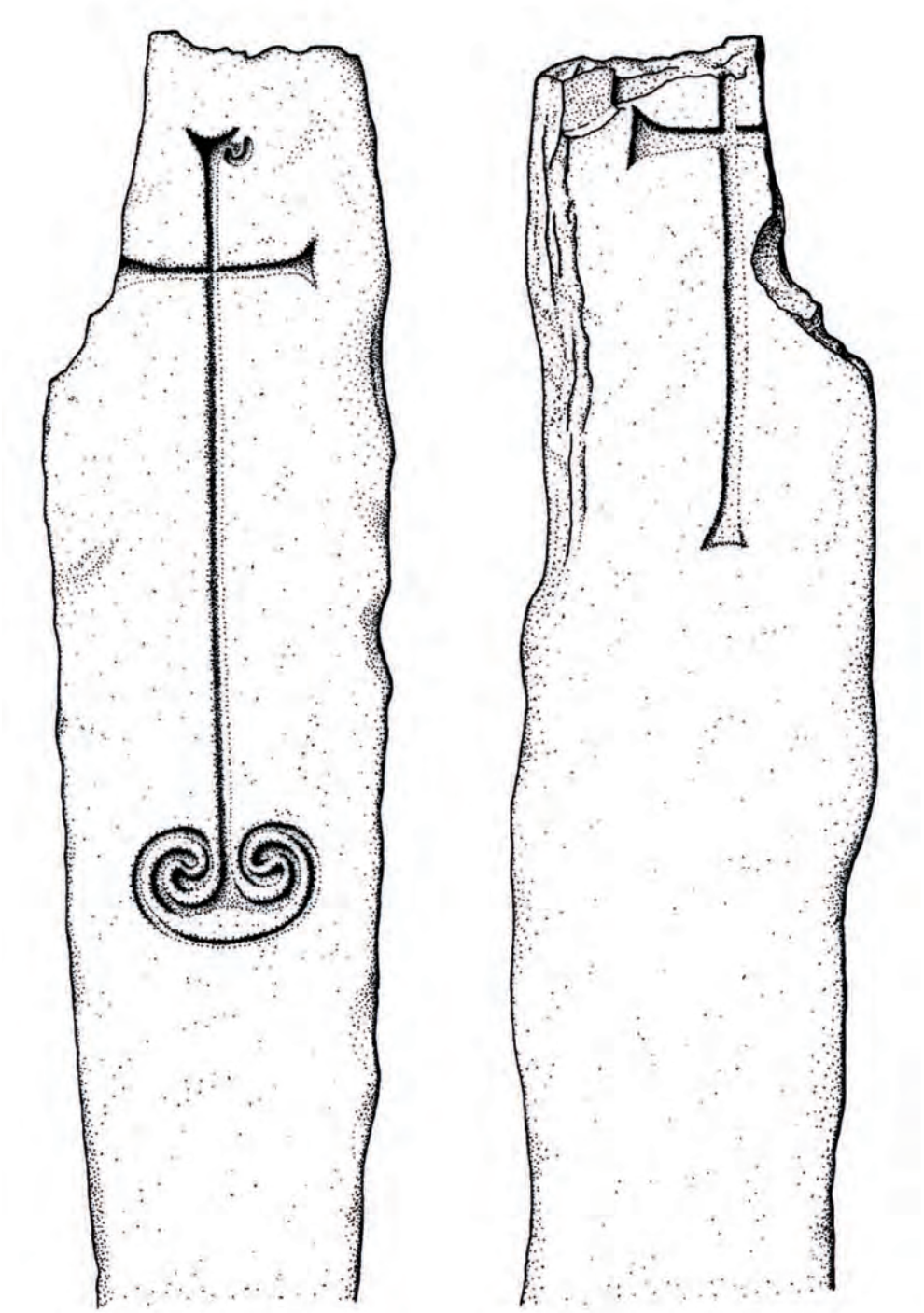
terminal occur on dateable monuments in Corca Dhuibhne. On one face of the ogham-inscribed stone from An Baile Riabhach (Ballymorereagh), for instance, is a simple cross with an expanded, sub-triangular head; the inscription has been dated by McManus, on the basis of its post-apocope elements, to the first half of the sixth century. Another ogham-inscribed stone, from Inis Mhic Uileáin (Inishvickillane), bears a linear Latin cross with triangular terminals to its head and shaft. The inscription is inverted with respect to the crosses, however, and it is difficult to decide which is the primary element. The presence of a linear swastika motif on one face nonetheless indicates a likelihood that the cross carvings date to the sixth or seventh century. Several stones that feature sub-triangular terminals occur in the corpus of cross-slabs from the excavated ecclesiastical site at An Riasc (Reask), and a seventh-century date was proposed for two of these, partly on the basis of the presence on them of designs with a C-scroll/palmette terminals (see page 100). Both of the pillars from Cloon West (FIG 15A-B), Glencar, have linear Latin crosses with triangular and sub-triangular terminals incorporated into the designs of their main faces, where they form the dominant motifs. This pair of pillars is remarkable for the range of other motifs they display, which includes swastikas, roundels and fret-patterns. The longevity of some of the motifs represented on them, however, does not enable their dating with any degree of precision, though it would seem not unlikely that they are of sixth- to eighth-century workmanship. In summary, therefore, dateable cross-forms with triangular/sub-triangular terminals in peninsular Kerry appear to date, in the main, from the sixth to eighth centuries, with a particular focus on the seventh century. The most remarkable of the three examples of cross-inscribed stones of this type from a KLA graveyard is the well-known cross-inscribed pillar at Kilshannig (see page 80 and 98).

Linear crosses with T-bar terminals, and variations of the same, occur on a number of cross-inscribed slabs and boulders from Corca Dhuibhne. The KLA graveyards that feature examples are Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh (FIG 14), An Ghairfeanaigh (FIG 10A) and Dún Urlann (FIG 17). While none of these sculptures may be independently dated, T-bar terminals are a feature of crosses on the Cloon West pillars, for which a date in the sixth to eighth

(FIG 15A-B) Cross-inscribed pillars from Cloon West. The swastika motif occurs on the side of one pillar while the same motif and an elaborate roundel are inscribed on the face of the second pillar

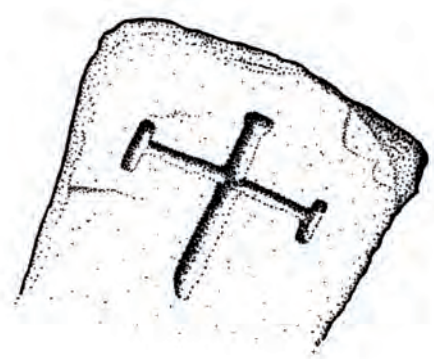






(FIG 16) The cross-inscribed pillar at Kilshannig, both faces. (See photo on page 80)

century has been proposed, and also occur on the seventh-century, triple-armed, linear Latin cross inscribed on the Ardmoneel boulder. It has been suggested by Okasha & Forsyth that a small encircled example from Innisfallen, on Lough Leane, which bears part of an inscription, may also be of seventh-century date. The unusual H-shaped terminals on the slab from Dún Urlann (FIG 13) are closely paralleled on one face of the large slab at Gortacurraun, near Annascaul. It seems plausible that the KLA graveyard examples of crosses with these types of simply elaborated terminal are generally of early medieval date.



(FIG 17) Plain linear cross with T-shaped terminals from Dún Urlann (Dunurlin)

Linear crosses with scrolled terminals

Six examples of linear Latin crosses with terminals ornamented with the scrolled palmette motif, or its C-scroll derivatives, are on record from Corca Dhuibhne. Related to these is a group of other types of cross that also feature these devices: these are often equal-armed and frequently encircled, including some examples of Maltese crosses/crosses of arcs (see below), while some examples also occur on encircled linear Latin crosses. The motif under consideration may be subdivided into two main types, the scrolled palmette and the simpler C-scroll. The former type occurs on the cross-inscribed pillar at Kilshannig (FIG 16), a KLA graveyard at the northernmost point of the Dingle peninsula, while the latter occurs at the KLA graveyards at Cill Maoilchéadair, on the pillar known as the 'alphabet stone', and on a cross-inscribed stone in the wall of the church at Annagh, just west of Blennerville (FIG 12). On present evidence, however, both types of this cross-form appear to be broadly contemporary and it seems likely that one derives from the other.

The Kilshannig pillar features Latin crosses, with terminals of triangular form, on both faces. The larger of the two rises from a basal bifurcation, the strands of which scroll inwards and interlock with the terminals of a pelta; the resulting motif has been termed the scrolled palmette by Kilbride-Jones. This is a decorative feature, perhaps ultimately of early British Celtic origin,

that is particularly strongly associated with the carved stonework of the Dingle peninsula, where it is usually found as cross-shaft terminals. Different versions of it, for instance, are found on pillars and slabs at An Riasc and Cill Fhionntain (Kilfountain), Okasha & Forsyth suggest that both of these may be assigned to the later sixth or seventh century on a number of grounds, including the inscriptions they carry. The unusual loop on the head of the cross on the Kilshannig pillar may be identified as a version of the *rho* element of the *chi-rho* symbol, in which only the loop of the *rho* is depicted. This is an early symbol, sixth- to eighth-century in date, and is a debased Christogram – a monogram that forms an abbreviation of the Greek version of the name Christ, *Χριστός* (Khristos), formed by superimposing its initial two letters, *chi* (X) and *rho* (P). About 15 *chi-rhos* are now on record from stone carvings in Ireland, with a very significant proportion of these occurring on the Dingle peninsula. On the basis of the presence of both the scrolled palmette and the *chi-rho* motif, therefore, the pillar stone from Kilshannig may confidently be assigned to the seventh, if not the later sixth, century.

the pillar stone from Kilshannig may confidently be assigned to the seventh, if not the later sixth, century

The C-scroll motif, which is clearly related to the scrolled palmette, is found on a number of Corca Dhuibhne linear Latin crosses, including the 'alphabet stone' at Cill Maoilchéadair, where it occurs a number of times. One face bears an elongated linear Latin cross with inwardly disposed C-scrolls, above which survives part of a roundel that appears to have featured an equal-armed cross with similarly disposed C-scrolls. A rather similar roundel appears on a cross-inscribed pillar at Caherlehillan, near Kells. The second face features the stem of a linear Latin cross which terminates in another inwardly disposed C-scroll terminal. The side of the pillar is inscribed, in half-uncial script, with the invocation of the *nomen sacrum DNI,* an abbreviation of *Domini,* and a secondary inscription consisting of the Latin alphabet. On the basis of the epigraphy, a seventh-century date has been proposed for the latter by Okasha & Forsyth, which provides a useful *terminus ante quem* for the motifs on the stone.

The Annagh stone is built into the internal wall face of this fifteenth-century church. Clearly, however, it is much earlier in date and it may be a cross-inscribed slab that was re-used here as a consecration stone. It is probably inverted, as most cross-forms that have only a single scrolled palmette or C-scroll motif feature this on the base of the cross-shaft. Like the two examples noted above, it appears assignable to the seventh century.

Encircled linear crosses

This type comprises crosses of linear type enclosed within circles, though in some cases the cross-shaft extends outside the circle. Thus it may be subdivided into two categories: encircled linear equal-armed crosses; and encircled linear Latin crosses. As suggested by Edwards, the circle that distinguishes these crosses from the other linear types may ultimately be a derivative of the classic Mediterranean representations of the *chi-rho* monogram, the so-called 'Constantinian' *chi-rho,* and, possibly, the cross enclosed in the victory wreath. The type is commonly found in southwest Wales, where the only firmly dated example occurs on the late fifth-/early sixth-century bilingual memorial stone of Voteporix, at Castell Dwyran. It is not of widespread occurrence in Ireland, though it does form a significant element of the Corca Dhuibhne corpus, in which four examples occur in three KLA graveyards, those at Cill Maoilchéadair, An Ráth Dhubh and Cummer.

There are just over 20 examples of the first type – encircled, linear, equal-armed cross motifs – in Corca Dhuibhne, including those which occur on the pillar stone and a lost cross-slab from Cill Maoilchéadair. A number of the Corca Dhuibhne examples feature terminals with the scrolled palmette motif and its C-scroll derivatives, linking these crosses with the linear Latin examples discussed above. The Cill Fhionntain pillar, for instance, features an encircled equal-armed cross with expanded terminals. Surmounting the circle is a groove terminating in a poorly preserved C-scroll, while beneath it is an elaborate design which ends in a large scrolled palmette; beneath this is an inscription in half-uncials, and on the adjacent angle of the stone is an ogham inscription. Okasha & Forsyth have proposed that the cross motifs and half-uncial inscription may have been added to an existing ogham stone and, on the basis of the post-syncope form *Finten*, they have dated the half-uncial inscription to the seventh century. In overall terms, the Cill Fhionntain

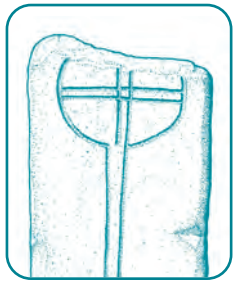
pillar has frequently been compared with Stone A at An Riasc, which also features a scrolled palmette and which Fanning has dated to the sixth or seventh century. The Cill Maoilchéadair example of an encircled linear equal-armed cross, on the 'alphabet stone', is a partially preserved one. It survives as portion of a roundel which appears to have featured a cross with inwardly disposed C-scrolls. This forms part of a larger design, considered above, and Okasha & Forsyth note that the pillar stone carries two seventh-century inscriptions.

The Cill Maoilchéadair cross-slab fragment, which is now lost, was illustrated and published by Romilly Allen. One face bore a circle, within which was a linear, equal-armed cross with slightly expanded terminals to the lower and side arms; its upper end appears to have terminated with a horizontally disposed B-shaped device, though it seems more likely that this was a C-scroll motif. Part of a smaller cross survived below this, alongside an abbreviated text, in half-uncial script, reading *DNE*. On the basis of parallels between this text and the stones bearing the *nomen sacrum* from An Riasc and the Cill Maoilchéadair pillar, Okasha & Forsyth date this fragment to the seventh century.

There are about 17 examples of the encircled linear Latin cross motif in Corca Dhuibhne, including the slabs from the KLA graveyards at An Ráth Dhubh and Cummer, Ahane, near Killorglin (FIG 9 AND 18). The latter is a simple example of this type, while the former features a small diagonal cross in each quadrant, the stem of the cross extending downwards beyond the circle and terminating in a faint pelta or C-scroll motif. In general terms, diagonal linear crosses may potentially be dated throughout the early medieval period, though some Corca Dhuibhne examples are dateable to the seventh and eighth centuries. The An Ráth Dhubh design, with its crosslet in each quadrant of the cross, finds a parallel in the cross-inscribed slab from Baile Uí Bhaoithín (Ballywiheen). Together, these five symbols may represent the wounds of Christ, and beneath the main cross on the Baile Uí Bhaoithín slab are two motifs which have been interpreted as possibly representing the Crosses of the Thieves, but which could alternatively be interpreted as very debased *alpha* and *omega* symbols, as found in a more Classical form on the cross-slab at An Lóthar (Loher), near Waterville.



(FIG 18) Encircled linear Latin cross from Cummer, Ahane, near Killorglin



Outline Latin crosses

Outline crosses constitute the second main grouping of cross-inscribed slabs and related monuments in early medieval Britain and Ireland. Compared with the first type – the linear crosses – these sometimes feature more complex ornament and are occasionally carved in relief or false relief, a type of carving that involves more skill and greater competence. These outline crosses therefore mirror the contemporary development of more complex sculpture elsewhere in Ireland. Edwards has proposed that outline cross-forms in Wales, with and without rings, may be assigned to the period encompassing the ninth to eleventh centuries, though Ó Floinn has argued for a later eighth-century date for some examples of this type in Clonmacnoise.

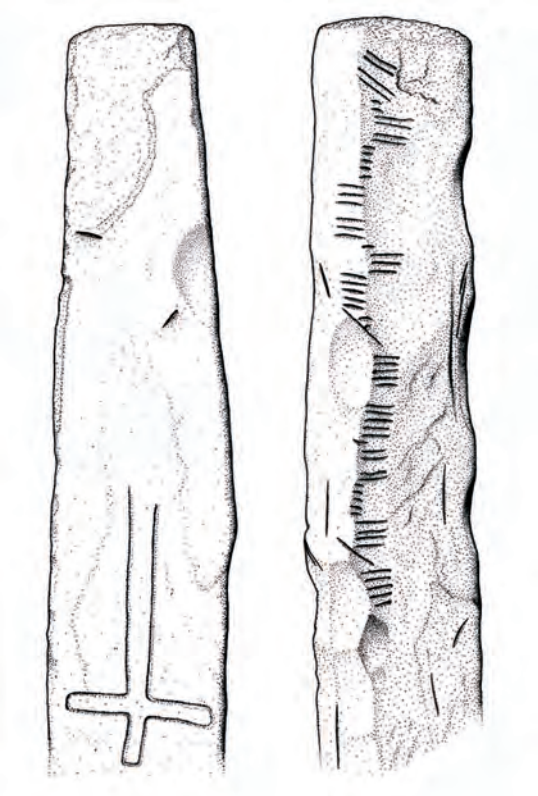
Outline Latin crosses may occur with or without rings. Thus this group can be subdivided into two types: plain outline crosses, the larger group; and ringed outline crosses. The angles of the crosses are usually squared, but some are rounded. Usually the cross-arms and shaft are of equal width, but some expand in width towards the terminals. There are 19 stones with outline Latin crosses on record from Corca Dhuibhne, about half of which derive from the KLA graveyard on Inis Úasal, Lough Currane. Among the remainder, however, is a recently discovered stone from Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh, near Daingean Uí Chúis (see below). The other examples from KLA graveyards are from Ballynakilly, Shronahiree and Ratass, Tralee. It is interesting to note that, to date, only one example has been recorded on the Dingle peninsula, which is so rich in other cross-form types.

Plain outline Latin crosses

Eleven examples of this cross-form are on record from County Kerry, occurring on: three ogham stones, including one from Ratass; six cross-slabs, including examples from Ballynakilly, Shronahiree and four from Inis Úasal; and on two large stone crosses on Sceilg Mhichíl. The latter presently stand incorporated into a *leacht* that appears to be overlain, in part, by the north wall and northeast angle of a drystone church, known as the Large Oratory,

which is probably of eighth–eleventh-century date, and it may seem, consequently, that this provides a *terminus ante quem* date for the crosses. However, it is known that this *leacht* was rebuilt, at least partially, by lighthouse personnel during the nineteenth century and, as a result, the relationship between the crosses and the church might be considered doubtful to some degree.

The Dromkeare ogham stone, from an ecclesiastical site on the edge of Lough Currane, features an outline Latin cross which rises from a large square base; the head and arms also feature square terminals. The inscription is post-syncope and has been dated to the late sixth/early seventh century. Ó Carragáin, however, has proposed an eighth-/ninth-century date for the cross-form, and it therefore appears that the cross is a subsequent addition to the ogham stone. The Baile Na hÚnta (Ballynahunt) ogham stone, from near Anascaul on the Dingle peninsula, features a large outline Latin cross rising from a broad triangular base. The continuous grooves of the arms and shaft form a square at the crossing, while short inserted grooves at the terminals of the head and arms result in similar square forms. The cross is inverted with respect to the inscription, indicating that, like the Dromkeare example, it may well be an addition. The outline cross on the Ratass stone is likewise inverted to the stone's inscription, which Moore dates to the late sixth century. It is a plain cross, with an open-ended lower terminal on the shaft (FIG 19), and it is likely that this stone, like the two noted above, had a secondary function as a cross-inscribed pillar, as a result of which the ogham inscriptions would have been turned upside down and partly buried. It



(FIG 19) Plain outline Latin cross on the Ratass ogham stone, inverted to the inscription

seems unlikely, in summary, that any of these outline Latin crosses could be earlier than the seventh century, but they may well be of eighth- or ninth-century date.

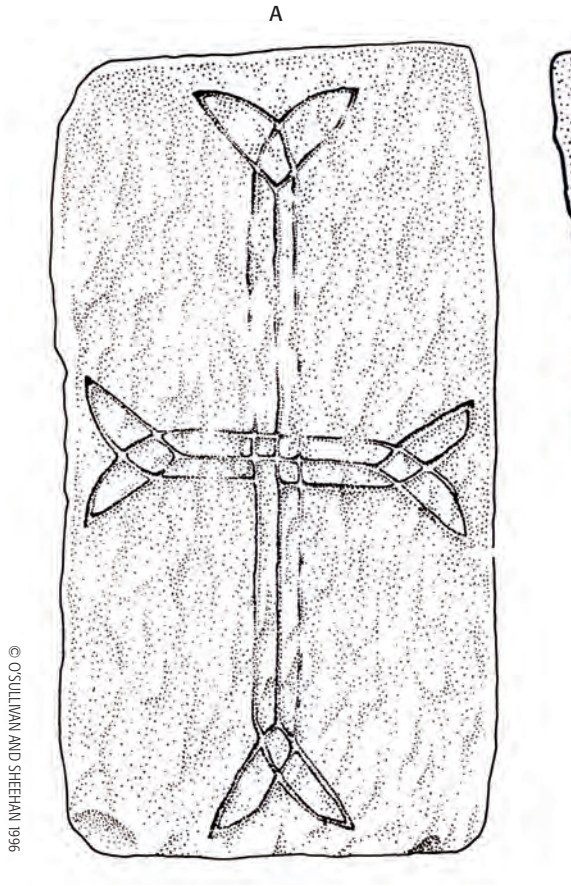
The cross-form on the Shronahiree slab is unusual in a two respects. First, it is formed by shallowly recessing the area of the cross, a technique that is also found on some of the crosses of arcs in Corca Dhuibhne (see below), but its arms are separate, throwing the centre into relief. Second, above the head of the cross is an arrangement formed by four curving grooves, in opposed pairings. The resulting motif may be a representation of the elevation of a gable, complete with a finial, of a drystone-built church of Corca Dhuibhne type, the probable date range of which lies between the eighth and twelfth centuries. It seems likely, therefore, that this slab dates to this period.



(FIG 20) Plain Latin outline cross from Ballynakilly

Like the Shronahiree cross, the cross-form on the newly discovered slab from Ballynakilly, near Glenbeigh (FIG 20), is formed by recessing the area of the cross; both crosses also feature expanded terminals. In the latter respect these cross-forms are broadly related to that on the slab at An Lothar, which is probably of fifth- or sixth-century date. This is a finely executed double-outline Latin cross with expanded arms, beneath which are versions of the *alpha* and *omega* symbols, positioned in the manner of those suspended from bronze altar-crosses of Coptic type in obvious reference to Revelations 1:8 – 'I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, says the Lord…'

The four cross-slabs bearing plain outline Latin crosses from Inis Úasal form an amorphous grouping. The crosses are of widely differing types, and they vary considerably in size. The first slab is a large example and is cross-inscribed on both faces: one face features a plain outline Latin cross, with open-ended terminals, while on the other is an elaborate ringed outline Latin cross (FIG 22C). The second example is a medium-sized slab inscribed with an outline cross, with median lines, incorporating a debased form of the swastika motif at the crossing of the shaft and arms and loosely formed,

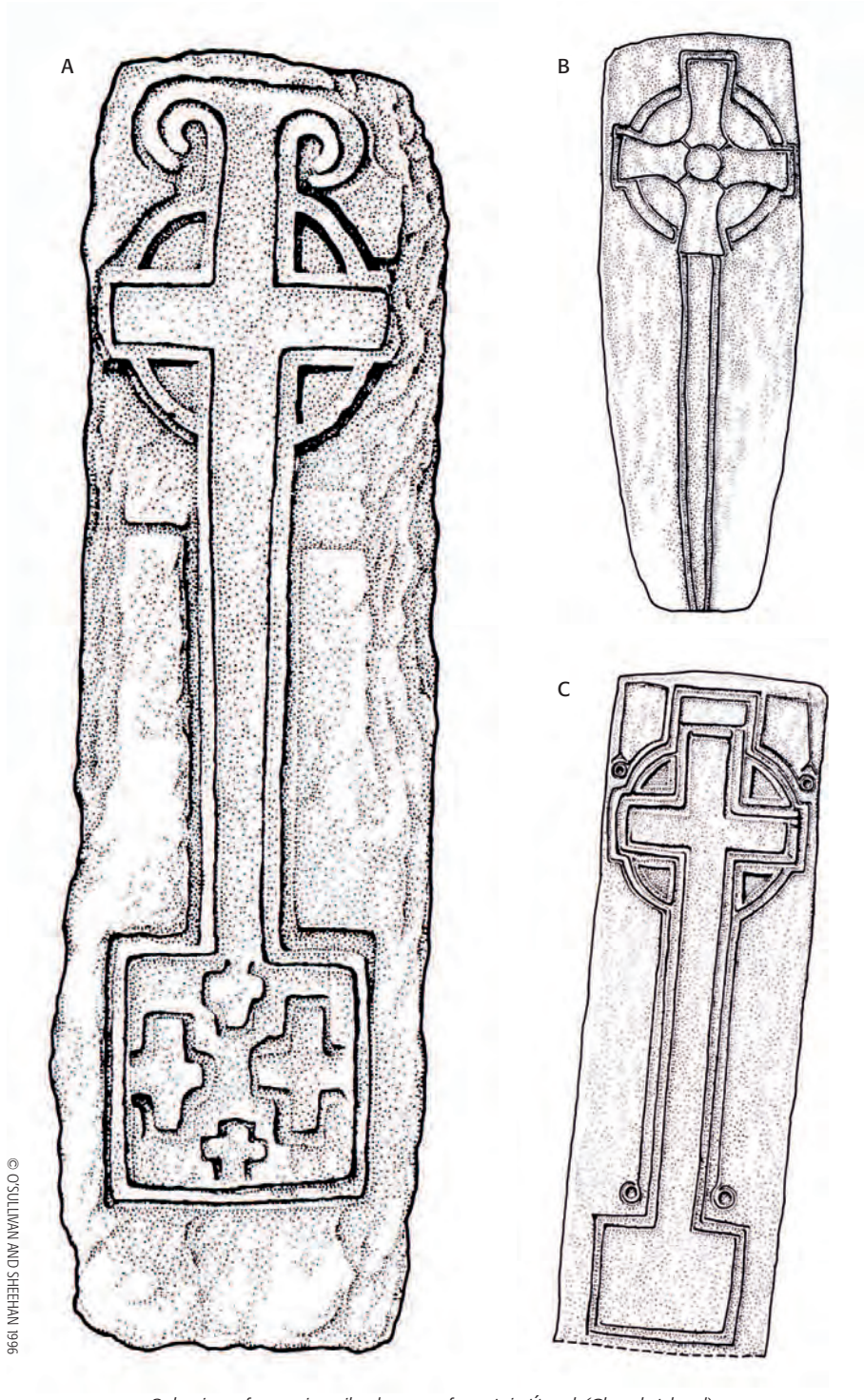


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(FIG 21) Selection of cross-inscribed stones from Inis Úasal (Church Island)

looped-knot 'fish-tail' terminals (FIG 21A). It is broadly similar, though simpler in terms of its execution, to inscribed slabs from Scattery Island, Inishcaltra and Tuamgraney, all in County Clare, to which late ninth-/tenth-century dates have been assigned by Okasha & Forsyth. In its details the design is practically identical, however, to an equal-armed version on a stone built into the inner wall face of the Romanesque church on the island. This may be a consecration stone of the church and, if original rather than re-used for this purpose, it suggests that the design on the related cross-slab is of twelfth-century date.

The remaining two slabs are both of small proportions. The first is inscribed with an outline Latin cross (FIG 21B), the upper portion of which is framed with a second groove; at the junction of the arms and shaft is a small, encircled, equal-armed cross. Below the arms of the cross on its dexter side



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(FIG 22) *Selection of cross-inscribed stones from Inis Úasal (Church Island)*

is an equal-armed linear cross, while in the corresponding position on the opposite side is a T-shaped linear motif surmounting a triangular base; these clearly represent the Crosses of the Thieves. The final slab is inscribed with a rather simple outline Latin cross with open terminals and widely splayed terminals on the shaft.

Ringed outline Latin crosses

Seven examples of this cross-form occur in County Kerry. Six are large slabs from Inis Úasal, while the seventh is from Ratass. Four of the Inis Úasal cross-slabs share sufficient characteristics to be treated as an assemblage. The classic example of this group, with an inscription commemorating an anchorite named Anmchad, features a cross with a tapering, slightly curving shaft; the cross-head is ringed by an outline circle, the outer element of which extends beyond and encloses the ends of the arms and upper shaft (FIG 23). This arrangement is repeated on two of the other slabs (FIG 22C), differing on the fourth only in so far as its cross-head is of equal-armed type (FIG 22B). The curving of the shaft is also a feature of two of the other slabs, but does not survive on the fourth (which is a fragment containing only the head of the cross). Three of the four cross-heads have hollowed angles at the juncture of the arms and shaft.



(FIG 23) *Ringed outline Latin cross, with an inscription commemorating Anmchad, from Inis Úasal (Church Island)*

The most striking of these stones is the Anmchad slab (FIG 23), which features a number of inscriptions discussed by Okasha & Forsyth. On the upper portion of the cross-head is a debased *alpha*, while a debased *omega* occurs in the corresponding position below. *IHS* and *XPS, nomina sacra* monograms of the Greek letters for the Latin *Ihesus Christus,* occur on the cross-arms. An inscription, in half-uncial script, commences on the shaft of the cross, just below the cross-head, and

continues on one side: this reads *BENNACHT F(or) ANMAIN ANMCHADA* ('a blessing on the soul of Anmchadh'). It has been suggested that the slab is to be identified as a commemorative stone for Anmchad Ua Dunchada, whose death is recorded in the Annals of Inisfallen in 1058. A second inscribed slab features only part of its inscription, also in half-uncial script, which reads *OR DO T*..., an abbreviation for *Oroit Do T*... ('pray for T...'). Given the similarities between both slabs, this example is also likely to be of eleventh-century date or thereabouts.

Ringed outline Latin crosses of the type featured on Inis Úasal occur in large numbers in the midlands, where the main concentration is at Clonmacnoise, County Offaly. There, many are accompanied by inscriptions, and the majority of those that can be dated, according to Lionard, on the basis of annalistic references are of the ninth century, though a few tenth-century examples are also on record. The 1058 date for the Anmchad slab evidences the survival of this cross-form into the eleventh century, and as such is of some significance in that it provides a link between the ninth-/tenth-century examples and those later medieval slabs which exhibit the ringed cross-form.

The second Inis Úasal group, represented by only two slabs, share two significant characteristics beyond both being of ringed outline Latin form. First, both rise from a large rectangular base; and second, both feature techniques designed to create a false relief effect to the cross-head (FIG 22A, 22C, 24). On both slabs the angles between the cross-head and its enclosing ring have been recessed: in addition, an unfinished attempt to recess the entire area beneath the ring by pocking is clearly evident on one of the slabs. The rectangular basal panel on one example is plain, but four outline crosslets, disposed in a diaper pattern, occur in this position on the other. This is a feature that commonly occurs on metalwork and sculpture of later eleventh- and twelfth-century date. In a harking back to an earlier Corca Dhuibhne tradition, the cross-head on this slab is surmounted by a scrolled pelta form.

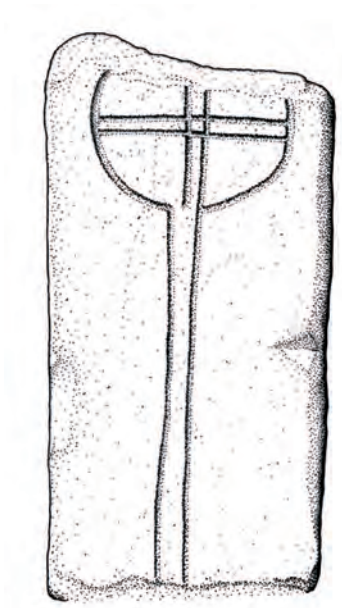
It is evident that probably all of the six ringed outline Latin crosses at Inis Úasal are of eleventh- or twelfth-century date. Furthermore, it is likely that the carvers of this group built on the earlier, but related, tradition of



(FIG 24) Ringed outline Latin cross from Inis Úasal (Church Island)

plain outline Latin crosses that is also represented on the island. Finally, it is worth noting that two of the other three examples of linear or outline Latin crosses with square bases in Corca Dhuibhne are both found on the shores of Lough Currane, in close proximity to Inis Úasal. These occur on the pillar stone at Inchfarrannagleragh Glebe and the cross-inscribed ogham stone at Dromkeare, for both of which Ó Carragáin has proposed an eighth–ninth-century date. This may well be the case, and it is possible that these monuments provided part of the inspiration for the distinctive forms of some of the latest cross-slabs on Inis Úasal.

The only other known ringed outline Latin cross from County Kerry is from Ratass, Tralee (FIG 25). It is of rather plain form when compared to the Inis Úasal collection, featuring no embellishment and of poor conception. Its shaft is of unequal width, resulting from a mistake made either when the cross-head was added to the shaft and encircling ring or vice versa, whichever came first.



(FIG 25) Ringed outline Latin cross from Ratass, Tralee

The Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh (Raheenyhooig) slab

This interesting cross-inscribed stone (FIG 26) only recently came to light close to Daingean Uí Chúis as a result of Kerry County Council's Graveyards Survey Project. Although it is an outline cross, it does not conform fully to either of the two types that this group is normally subdivided into, the plain outline crosses and ringed outline crosses. This is because the point where the lower transom crosses the shaft is not ringed, but the head of the shaft, which is a moderately complex cross-form with loosely formed, two-lobed knot terminals, is enclosed within a square device formed of four triangles interlinked at their vertex angles, by interlacing, with the grooves which form the cross-head. Thus, in overall terms, the design may be viewed as a double-armed outline cross in which the cross-head is enclosed within a square, a unique form in County Kerry.

The design is by no means perfectly executed. For instance, the base, which is partly broken away but was of either square or rectangular form,



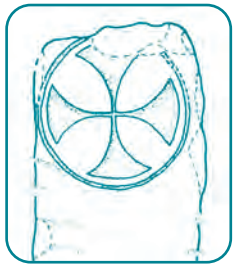
(FIG 26) Cross-inscribed stone from Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh (Raheenyhooig), near Daingean Uí Chúis

appears, given its lack of symmetry, to have been either casually executed or an afterthought. In addition, the lower portion of the shaft features a median line which becomes its dexter side above the lower transom, suggesting that the groove which forms the dexter side of the shaft below this point was simply an addendum designed to widen the shaft. This is also suggested by the base of the cross, which is only traversed by the shaft's median and sinister grooves. On balance, however, the overall design is reasonably well accomplished, particularly in terms of the interlaced terminals to the cross-head and transom. Interlacing of any type is of rare occurrence in Corca Dhuibhne, being otherwise only represented on a multi-strand palimpsest design carved over an earlier cross-form on a slab from An Riasc.

The closest parallels for the Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh cross-form lie in the collection of outline crosses at Inis Úasal. The form of its base is matched, in a general way, by the bases of two ringed crosses from the island (FIG 22A, C) and, as noted above, the only other examples of crosses with square bases in Corca Dhuibhne are found on the shores of Lough Currane. More important, however, the form of the Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh cross-head and transom two-lobed knot terminals are fairly closely matched at Inis Úasal, on two cross-inscribed stones, and find no parallel elsewhere in Kerry. The first of these, like the Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh stone, is a medium-sized slab inscribed with an outline cross featuring median lines and fish-tail terminals (FIG 21A). In its details this design is practically identical to the second Inis Úasal parallel, an equal-armed version carved on a stone in the inner wall face of the Romanesque church on the island.

Given its lack of an inscription, it is only by considering parallels for the overall form of the cross and its individual features that a date can be suggested for the slab from Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh. Its loose two-lobed knot terminals, for instance, are quite similar to those recorded by Henry on an outline cross from Inishkea North, County Mayo. However, more broadly similar cross-forms occur in County Clare, including on the islands of Inishcaltra and Scattery, to which a late ninth-/tenth-century date range has been assigned. An eleventh-/twelfth-century date range appears more likely for the examples from Inis Úasal and, by extension, for the cross-inscribed stone from Ráithín Uí Bhuaigh.

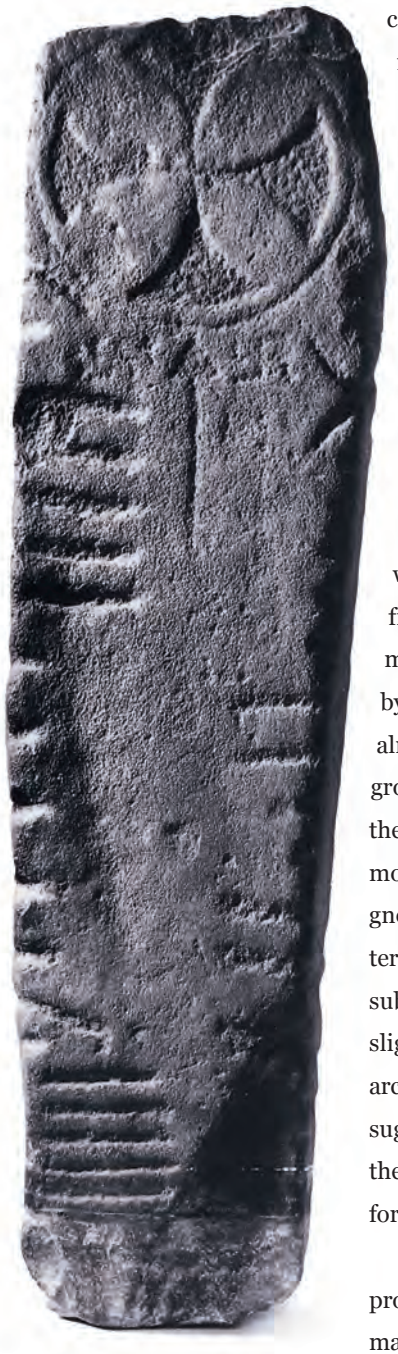
Maltese crosses/crosses of arcs



Maltese crosses and the closely related crosses of arcs are often regarded as a characteristic form of Corca Dhuibhne cross motifs, though they are by no means the most commonly occurring types there. The arms of a Maltese cross are straight, while those on a cross of arcs are curved or arched, yet despite this important distinction examples of each type are sometimes mislabelled. There are over 25 Maltese crosses/cross of arcs on record from Corca Dhuibhne and they occur on various types of monument, including ogham stones, cross-slabs, pillars, a sundial, the lintel of a church doorway, and even a prehistoric standing stone. Some examples are unenclosed, a few are contained within a rectangular or irregular frame, but the majority are encircled. Two examples occur on KLA graveyards, Cill Maoilchéadair and An Eaglais, and both are crosses of arcs.

The cross of arcs from An Eaglais occurs on an ogham stone (FIG 27). It is encircled, beneath which there is a vertical linear groove surmounted by a triangle and flanked on either side by a small swastika motif. The ogham inscription occurs on the same face and is inverted with respect to the cross, and it is difficult to decide which is the primary element. It seems unlikely that the cross could be earlier than the seventh century, and it may well be of eighth- or ninth-century date. The presence of the swastika motifs, nonetheless, indicates a likelihood that the cross carving dates to the seventh century. The swastika as a Christian motif is known from fourth- to sixth-century Mediterranean contexts, though its currency as a separate motif in insular contexts appears to be confined to the sixth and seventh centuries. It resurfaces later, however, when it is subtly incorporated into the designs of one of the cross-inscribed slabs from Inis Úasal.

An important attribute, which the stone from An Eaglais shares with several other Corca Dhuibhne cross-inscribed slabs, is the occurrence of a vertical stem or shaft directly beneath the cross. It is generally accepted that the overall form of such arrangements, frequently that of a disc surmounting a stem, is derived from that of the *flabellum*. *Flabella* were liturgical fans of the Eastern Church, in which they were used from at least as early as the fifth



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(FIG 27) Cross of arcs on An Eaglais (Aglish) ogham stone, inverted to the inscription

century. While discretion should be exercised in the identification of flabella, given that some potential examples could simply be developed versions of encircled Latin cross-forms, there can be little doubt that some of the Corca Dhuibhne carvings are intended to represent these devices. The Caherlehillan example, for instance, has expansions on its vertical stem which are representative of the mountings on an elaborate handle, while the two S-shaped motifs disposed on edge below the disc are likely to be representative of the pendants or tassels that were sometimes suspended from *flabella*.

The cross of arcs from Cill Maoilchéadair occurs, within an irregular frame, on the well-known sundial from the site (FIG 28). Standing in a socket, this monument consists of a rectangular shaft surmounted by a semi-circular head. Both sides of the shaft feature almost identical ornamentation; they are bordered by a groove and contain two grooves that run vertically along the centre of the shaft and terminate at the ends in fret motifs. One face of the head features the sundial's gnomon hole, from which five paired or triple grooves, terminating in hemispherical forms, radiate outwards to subdivide the semi-circle. The opposite face features a slightly asymmetrical design consisting of intersecting arcs of circles that form a stylised cross of arcs. It has been suggested by Harbison that this stone possibly dates to the twelfth century, though an earlier date could be put forward.

It is clear that the cross of arcs is related to and probably derived, at least in part, from the multi-petalled marigold motifs which were popular in late Classical and Merovingian art and which occur on a number of cross-inscribed pillars and slabs from Ireland. Forms similar to

the designs as they occur in Ireland are found in the western Mediterranean zone, particularly in southern Portugal, and France, where Edwards notes, some are dated to the mid- to late sixth century. A date range spanning the sixth to eighth centuries is generally accepted for the currency of such cross-forms in Britain and Ireland. The presence of *chi-rhos* on some of the stones with crosses of arcs, such as Killeenleagh, Dromod, and Ara-Ghleann (Arraglen) and Com Dubh (Coumduff) , both on the Dingle peninsula, reinforce this impression.

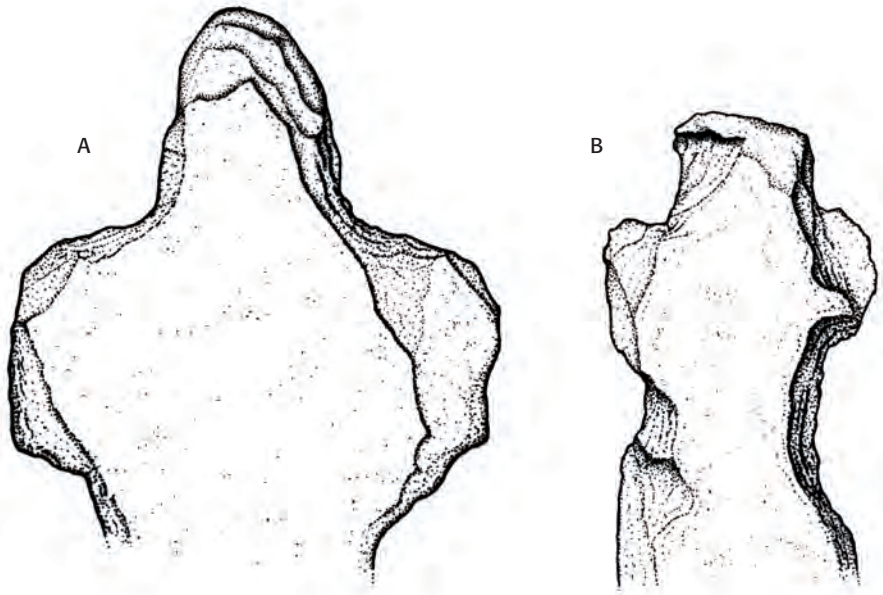


(FIG 28) Decorated sundial at Cill Maoilchéadair (Kilmalkedar) with cross of arcs



Stone crosses

Cross-shaped stones, some of large proportions, are of fairly common occurrence in parts of County Kerry. At least 15 of these are cross-inscribed. These tend to feature the same types of cross-forms discussed above, particularly various types of linear crosses, with the exception of the cross of arcs. They include well-known monuments, such as various crosses on Sceilg Mhichíl and Valentia Island and a fine example at Rinn Chonaill (Reenconnell), on the Dingle peninsula. The only cross-inscribed examples on record from KLA graveyards are from Cill Maoilchéadair, where three simple examples are on record. In addition, there are three large plain crosses from KLA graveyards, from Cill Maoilchéadair and Killiney, both on the Dingle peninsula, and Tonaknock, adjacent to Killahan graveyard, in north Kerry. Technically the latter example is not in a KLA graveyard, but it is situated directly opposite the entrance to one and was probably associated with the site in the early medieval period. There are many other examples of plain stone crosses from the region, such as those from the KLA graveyards at Cill Dromann (FIG 29A) and Dún Chaoin



(FIG 29) Plain stone crosses at (A) Cill Dromann (Kildrum) and (B) Dún Chaoin (Dunquin)



(FIG 30) Large plain stone cross at Killiney



(FIG 31) Large stone cross at Tonaknock

(FIG 29B), both at the western end of the Dingle peninsula, but it is virtually impossible to date these types and it is possible that some may be relatively recent. The notable exception, however, is a small example from Caherlehillan, which was found in a sixth-century grave.

The three cross-inscribed simple stone crosses from Cill Maoilchéadair comprise a rough tau-shaped cross, inscribed with a linear Latin cross; an example with a linear Latin cross with expanded, sub-triangular terminals; and one with a simple linear Latin cross. None of these can be independently dated, though they may be early medieval. The large stone crosses at Killiney (FIG 30), Cill Maoilchéadair and Tonaknock (FIG 31) are impressive monuments: the first stands 2.86m high; the second is 2.5m high but has at least another 1.8m buried beneath present ground level; while the third, at Tonaknock, stands 3.5m high. The stone cross at Tonaknock bears a number of inscribed circles on one face, while the Cill Maoilchéadair example features a raised panel. These crosses may well be of early date, and perhaps represent a southwestern version of Ireland's high cross tradition.

Conclusions

There is a very significant number of cross-inscribed stones of various forms in Kerry, particularly in the early medieval polity of Corca Dhuibhne, and several of these are in KLA graveyards. A reasonably wide variety of cross variants and attendant motifs are represented on them, and a significant proportion of the total is reasonably dateable. This is, in part, due to the occurrence of cross-forms on dateable ogham stones where the priority or otherwise of the crosses in relation to the inscriptions may be established or, at least, presumed. Second, a range of distinct Christian motifs and symbols – such as the flabellum, the chi-rho and the swastika – occur in their greatest Irish concentrations in Kerry and, in particular, in Corca Dhuibhne. These types of motif are generally dateable to within a few centuries, resulting in a greater degree of chronological resolution for the material in this study area. Finally, there have been a number of important excavations conducted on early medieval ecclesiastical sites in Corca Dhuibhne, proportionally more

than for any other region of this size in Ireland, and some of the results of this work are of considerable value in dating the various types of minor sculpture that characterise this part of Kerry.

Several important observations emerge from a consideration of the Corca Dhuibhne cross-inscribed stones. Some of the cross-forms and other motifs that occur on them, for instance, display influence from elsewhere in the Christian world, such as the Continent and the Mediterranean region, and this is of use in identifying the impulses that shaped southwestern Christianity. Other cross-forms are quite local in terms of their distribution and development, and these assist in illustrating the regionalisms that define the Church in Corca Dhuibhne. Given that most of the Corca Dhuibhne sites feature just one or two cross-inscribed slabs or pillars, it seems likely that these were conceived of as defining monuments that were erected at the dedication of a site or to mark the grave of a founder saint. Most important, the majority of the dateable examples may be assigned to the period encompassing the fifth, seventh and eighth centuries on art historical, linguistic and epigraphic grounds, or combinations of these. Given that most of these are located in ecclesiastical sites, this evidence may consequently be used to assign a *terminus ante quem* to the period of use of a body of sites that are generally otherwise not dateable without excavation. The fact that later slabs do not occur on the majority of these sites is a clear indication that most of them went out of use at some time during or after the eighth century. Finally, that some sites retained and developed their importance following this watershed period is indicated by the presence on them of later sculpture and other features, such as Romanesque churches, and round towers, most especially at Cill Maoilchéadair, Inis Úasal, Aghadoe and Rattoo.

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This paper draws on some of the work conducted for Making Christian Landscapes, an Instar project funded by the Heritage Council. The author is grateful to Michael Connolly, Kerry County Archaeologist, for this opportunity to consider cross-inscribed stones in KLA graveyards, and to Nick Hogan, Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, for preparing Figure 23.

In the Annals of Inisfallen
he was God's anchorite.
On the island, his inscription
is simpler in stone.

Bennacht for anmain Anmchada
the slab implores.
But the blessing on his soul
(the sculptor misjudging space)

edged Anmchada *off the shaft,*
to rest like a tender afterthought
tucked, almost embraced,
between the arm and the body of the cross.

Paddy Bushe
Cross Slab, Church Island
(2008)

INIS ÚASAL (CHURCH ISLAND)



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