

APPENDIX "B i"

Ranald, founder of Clan Ranald and Glengarry branches. His cross and graveslab locations.

Died 1386/8. Son of Lord of the Isles, John I and Amie MacRuari.

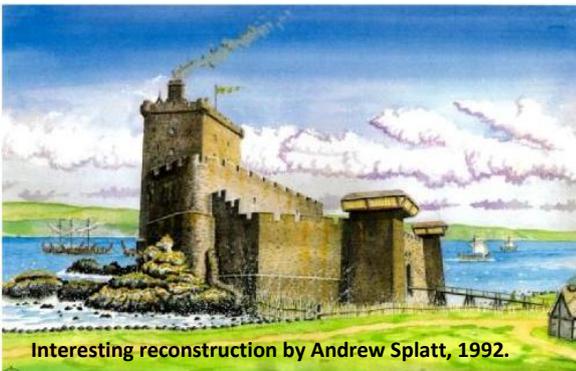


Inscription 49: *"HEC EST CRUX REGNALDI IOHANNES DE YSLE"*.

"This is the cross of Reginaldus [son of] Johannes, of Islay".

(shaft only remains - now in National Museum Scotland.

Above is his cross shaft from Texa Island, off Lagavulin Bay, near Dunyvaig castle, Islay. The RCAHMS - *"assume therefore, that the Texa Cross was specifically commissioned, and it may have been carved on the island, for amongst the other sculptured stones from Texa there is an unfinished late medieval cross-head of large dimensions, which was subsequently converted into a socket-stone for a free-standing cross"* (p.59, Other Carvings).



Interesting reconstruction by Andrew Splatt, 1992.

Texa is almost opposite Dunyvaig castle which was built on top of an earlier fort or dun. Somerled used the castle as a 'naval base' for his galleys and so would have Ranald - with the castle's large *sea-gate* by then.

"The island of Texa was considered to be a place of considerable sanctity" (RCAHMS). Texa has tentatively been identified as the *'Oidecha Insula'* written about by St Adomnan [9th abbot of Iona (679–704)]. The etymology of the name *Oideachd/Oideachas* may mean a word for a religious seminary.

Extract from W Lamont ⁷³ :- *"The first mentioned Reginald must, on the other hand, have had a close personal connection with Islay and particularly with the eastern side. He is actually referred to as 'of Islay' in 1372 when Robert II confirms the charter of the North Isles made by 'John of Islay' to 'Reginald of Islay his son'.*

More significant is the passage in MacVurich's history which says that "Ragnall, the son of Eoin, was High Steward over Insigall at the time of his father's death, being in advanced age and ruling over them". Donald, Master of the Isles, can hardly have been more than 20 when his father died in 1386, and during the last few years of the old Lord's life Reginald, as regent, must have been in control of Dunyvaig (the principal castle in Islay).

This would naturally involve contact with the monastery of Texa. *"A man of augmenting churches and monasteries was this Ragnall"* says MacVurich, and it would have been wholly in character that he should have given a cross to the island. If it was indeed this Reginald who had the cross erected (it was erected by, not to, him), it must be not later than 1386, the year of his death."

Adomnan mentions that St Cainneach (St Kenneth in Scotland) used *"Oidecha Insula"* as a stopping place on his journey between Iona and Ireland. [Kenneth is said to have left his crozier on Iona on this journey, so St Columba blessed it, cast it into the sea, and it washed up on Oidecha where Kenneth found it!] It was at Clonard, Ireland, that Cainnech became a friend and companion of St Colmcille (Columba).

St Cainnech is the patron saint of the shipwrecked. That is relevant, especially for the Kings and Lords of the Isles with their large fleet. Spending so much time in galleys, is it possible Ranald was shipwrecked sometime, maybe even near or on Texa, heading to Dunyvaig? (prevailing winds are S/W).

⁷³ Lamont, WD; *Ancient and Mediaeval Sculptured Stones of Islay*; p.46. 1972.

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And/or, after Ranald's half brother, Donald of Harlaw, was made "tanist-successor", maybe Ranald moved (from Ardtornish?) to live in Dunyvaig for a period, with Texa in full view only about 800 yards, south west. His mother, Amie MacRuari was most likely still alive at that time and she occupied Tioram Castle until her death.

It was nearly always the case that the place of locating one's personal carved cross, a statement of nobility and piety, was not where one was buried. Carved crosses also indicated wealth, the acceptance of one's immortality and a certain desire to please God in readiness - "*earn fast track status*" through the dreaded fires of purgatory. Crosses were usually placed at some nearby early Christian Saint's "hermitage/retreat", and then time was usually spent there in relative isolation, praying and preparing salvation of the soul - doing "*excellent penance*" for the "*Art of Dying*".

After "*going the way of the flesh*", the actual place of burial for Lords was (most) always in the family tomb at the preeminent location, ie, in this case, *Rèilig Odhrain*, Iona. Ranald's graveslab is very similar to his father's (both my research/attribution), who did die around the same year, except Ranald has his galley and John has his "noble sword". Its inscription is entirely worn off, but may have been : "*HIC IACET IOHANNES MACDOMNUILL DOMINUS INSULARUM*".

Ranald's graveslab detail is very worn overall (it was outside but '*Good John's*' was in the chapel). In 1913 the inscription was considered to be : "*HIC IACET RANALDUS MACDOMNUILL*" ⁷⁴ (As read by the respected Irish expert, Proff RAS MacAlister.)

ST ORANS, IONA : "*This sanctuary was wont to be the sepulture of the best men of the Isles, and also of our Kings, as we have said; because it was the most honorable and ancient place that was in Scotland in those days, as we read*". ["Description of the Occidental, ie, Western Isles of Scotland"; Donald Monro; 1549.]

Around the period in question, Donald of Harlaw's wife : *Dame Mary of the Ile, Lady of the Ylis and of Rosse*, located her cross on Eilean Mor, Knapdale; c.1430. Her father in law, Good John of Islay, rebuilt the chapel on Eilean Mor. By tradition, she would have been buried with all the other Lords of the Isles' wives, at Finlaggan (with their deceased children). Eilean Mòr is the largest of the MacCormaig Isles situated near the entrance to Loch Sween in the Sound of Jura, Scotland. The island is the legendary retreat of the 7th-century Saint Cormac.



The birlinn's sail is clearly spread, which became the standard depiction on Oransay carvings after 1500. Note the two men on board and the stag hunt above.

⁷⁴ NB : The slab inscription is mainly Latin but the *MACDOMNUILL* "surname" is Gaelic. The cross inscription is all in Latin, which shows it was made earlier (even though its inscription formula doesn't have a "surname").