

Appendix (A) to Attachment F.



Author's photo 2011.

The native sept of *Clankelly* Macdonnells, the Tyrone-Armagh *MacAlaxandair* Macdonnell Galloglaigh *High Constables of Ulster*, Nobilis, and the MacMahons all possibly appropriated this *mortuary house* covered grave at Clones. It is not a hollow, real sarcophagus.

This is a solid sandstone 'tomb-shrine' covering the shallow grave of the body/relic of St. Tighernach, Clones, county Monaghan thought to be originally near the High Alter of the *Great Church of Clones*. The church was destroyed during the Nine Years War, 1594 to 1603. Tighernach was the first (royal) Abbot of Clones Monastery and Bishop of Clogher, d.548 (it is thought he was the *Primus Abbas*, or first mitred abbot of Ireland.) He was said to have been the godchild of Saint Brigid, and educated in Scotland. He also is called Tierney and Tierry. He was descended from Colla da Crioch, one of the Three Collas. His feast day is April 4.

It is a 12th century representation of an early Irish church and was originally carved from a single block. Possibly it is a copy of the Saint's small wood and metal reliquary; chapel shaped "tomb shrine" reliquary casket/box like Columba's Brebannach - note shape and proportions also to St Oran's Chapel (same period). It has a mitred head carved on the east end (sanctuary, altar end) and animal heads on the west end like St Orans chapel doorway arch (voussoirs on second order). That is, celtic, like an Irish "*sheila*", possibly to frighten away evil spirits from going through the door.

There are unknown number of *Macdonnell* burial inscriptions on the pitched "roof" areas which can still be seen but they are now illegible with several being totally defaced. It's a disappointment to not be able to see the script of all the inscriptions which may have helped to date them. Did all of these burials have an inscription in any case? There are no visible inscribed years of death and even to have the total number of inscriptions may not have helped calculate the length of the custom.

[Annals Ulster 1346.1](#)

John MacDomhnaill the Black ("Owen Duv") was killed by Maghnus, son of Echaidh Mag Mathgamna (MacMahon).

NB : Owen Duv (John The Black) is the senior, disinherited son of the Lord of The Isles, Alaxandair OG de Yle, k. 1299, in Ireland, and buried in St Oran's Chapel. (see chart at end)

[Annals of Four Masters 1365.8 \(rectè 1362\)](#)

"Brian, the son of Hugh MacMahon, assumed the lordship of Oriel (Airghialla). He sued for an alliance by marriage with Sorley, son of Owen Duv Macdonnell, heir to the lordship of the Insi-Gall, and High Constable of the province of Ulster."

But over a dispute, Brian ritually murdered Sorely by drowning;

“Woe the world and land and water wherein was submerged the noble, well-born offspring, to wit, one who was to be king of Insi-Gall, namely, the son of John the Black, son of Alexander.

As the poet said:

This is the lake wherein was put an innocent one, Somuirle of the sharp-pointed spears,”

(Annals of Ulster 1362.8).

The O’Neil and “Scots” Macdonnells attacked him: *“The men of Oriel were defeated, and deprived of their arms and cattle. After this Mac Mahon was banished from his own country, and his wife and his daughter were made prisoners.”*

1372 : *Brian Mor Mag Mathgamna, high-king of Oriel, fell at the hands of one of his own gallowglasses.*

These Galloglaigh Macdonnells (descent from Colla Uais-*Cenél Meic Cárthind*) and distantly “related” MacMahons (descent from Colla Fochrith) were originally both close to Clones. MacMahons were *Uí Cremthainn* – from one of the Three Collas, first king of Airghialla, Colla-da-Chríoch, aka Colla Fochríth. The common ancestor of Maguire, MacMahon, and other chiefs of Oriel were the *native* Macdonnells, barony of *Clankelly*. There apparently was some dispute over “ownership rights” to the revered *mortuary house* holy grave site – ie, *deposito ad sanctos* and status. MacMahons were the ex-“bandit” relatively new Kings of the reduced A/Oirghialla (Monaghan) and also coarb/Abbots of Clones four times between (1413-1536). However the Macdonnells are said “by several intelligent persons,” to have prevailed, even latterly resorting to litigation (UJA).

No matter which Macdonnells or MacMahons are buried there, the re-burial “mode of sepulture according to the tradition of the country” that is described in the UJA article and specifically the 13th – 16th century essentiality of burial near a Saint, is the primary consideration for the Iona burials of Donald I to Donald II. It’s not surprising at all if they are the same or similar because the language, culture, religion of the Western Isles all came from Ireland – Dalriada.

It is an interesting twist that the last lineal Macdonnell descendant who claimed the right to the “tomb-shrine” was deprived of his honour - he died in Scotland (and might mean nought).

Unfortunately the period of the custom cannot be certain and the extent of it is limited by rank, status and privilege to the elite of royalty, nobility. Also the sheer cost and scarcity of relics/‘tombshrines’ determines a very restricted practice. But to be regarded as “*tradition of the country*” enshrined in a medieval pre-occupation with saints bones and to be the subject of disputed access rights, it must have had considerable longevity and gravitas. The fact that that they moved this enormous solid block off and then back on every time for a new burial is a certain indicator that it was a genuine long term tradition of some weight! In comparison, the “thin” Iona slabs would be regarded as a breeze to relocate.

A supplementary consideration is that the old northern Airghialla was, at least, the believed Irish “birthplace” of Clan Donald. That is, the *Cenél Meic Cárthind* from Colla Uais of Tir-Keeran, Carthend’s lands, Nth Airghialla - on the east side of River Foyle and only four miles to the contemporaneous Colmcille’s Derry on the west side. Fact, fable or latterly “pseudo-history,” it was of no difference to this ‘race of Conn, Clann Cholla’ : “*Sons of Conn remember*” (*Conn of 100 Battles* - High King of Tara); “*Race (children) of Conn; “as for hospitality, this race of Conn are followers of the Royal example* (Leinster Galloglaigh Macdonnells – Tinnakill Dunaire); The Three Collas - Colla Uais, d.c. AD 337 – “*The sovereignty of the Gael to the Clann Colla, It is right to proclaim it*”; “*Founder of Clann Cholla*”; “*Colla’s race*”. *During a raid Colla’s race continually smashes axes*” (Tinnakill Dunaire).

Their descendant King of Airghialla, the historical *Gofraidh mac Fearghus, Taoiseach of The Isles*, fl. 835, is a Clan Donald ancestor. (*Taoiseach* is not an anachronism; the usual “simple substitution” into Middle Irish by recension.) Chief Guthfrith Mac Fergus, *Taoiseach Oirghiall*, Somerled’s ancestor, took the Airghialla host to Kenneth MacAlpin’s side in 835 (*Gofraidh* name: *Finn-Galls* came c.795; by 832, based Lough Neagh). McAlpin began the dynasty of the first Kings of the Scots and Picts, his daughter married *The O’Neill* and Guthfrith became the “*Taoiseach Insi Gall*”, marrying MacAlpin’s sister. Their daughter married Somerled’s grandfather, Gilledomnan.

Why in particular did the sons of Alaxandair Og originally return to the then reduced lands of southern Airghialla/Oriel, a federation of clans and placename associated with Clan Donald's Irish birthplace 500 years before? (even if all had contracted south). What choices did they have? Was it more than the Airghialla simply being an ancient "warrior clientship" class; or the noble Macdonnell Constable's Galloglaigh being cessed (billeted) by The O'Neill on the lands of his MacMahon and kin MacCawley vassals? (*"The Galloglaigh Macdonnells of the old countries of Wicklow, Leix and Offaly"*; I. Macdonnell; coming.)

NOTE : There was at least one Macdonnell of Clan-Kelly burial in Clones, late 15th century :-

1449 : *Mac Donnell of Clann-Kelly, i.e. Cormac, the son of Art, a charitable and truly hospitable man, died, and was interred at Clones.* From this one burial, which says nothing of the burial spot, the journal article concludes the Macdonnells using the tomb shrine were this clan. The Clann Kelly Macdonnells, the Nobilis Scottici Macdonnells, High Constables of Ulster and the MacMahon Chiefs and Abbots were all possibly "usurping" at one time or another this much sought after saint's tomb.

Whatever the case, the "**mode of sepulture according to the tradition of the country**" is a rare insight, because day to day customs regarded as "normal" are not normally recorded. It is a tradition that can be related to St Oran's Chapel as it also fits in with the independent evidence there of both the "transition of kingship" custom and use of a temporary "ancestral grave". That is, it has a basis in the recorded history of the burials of the Lords of the Isles, eg, "same tomb" and "south side" of St Oran's Chapel, plus archaeological evidence of the expensive wall niche being especially built over this south side ancestral grave location - there were other distinct wall spaces from which to choose.

POSTSCRIPT

After "*The Macdonnell*" and his Tyrone Macdonnell Galloglaigh accompanied *Shane O'Neill The Proud* to the court of Queen Elizabeth I for his short lived submission in 1562 - in great style and to the wonderment of all ¹ - and then suffered his many lost battles, they become a vital "pike & caliver" force in the Nine Years War for *Hugh, The Great Ó Neill* (c. 1590 – 1616), 2nd Earl of Tyrone. He was aiming to be "King of Ireland" with his High Constable of The Province of Ulster (*Ard constapla coicidh Uladh*), Chief of the Tyrone & Armagh MacDhomhnaills, Emann Og, Dean of Armagh (returned from Spain), d.1601.

Emann Og Macdonnell was postulated by Hugh, The Great O'Neill for Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland, upon selection by the Chapter. ²

"For many centuries then, the ancestors of Dean MacDomhnaill were held in the very highest esteem by reason of their nobility and their function".

¹ *Annales* of William Camden, collected 1590's; Pub. 1630: "*And now Shane O'Neill came from Ireland, to keep the promise he had made a year before, with an escort of galloglas armed with battle-axes, bare-headed, with flowing curls, yellow shirts dyed with saffron, large sleeves, short tunics and rough cloaks, whom the English followed as much wonderment as if they came from China or America*".

² *Archivium Hibernicum*, III, 241. (Op cit. *Macdonnells of Tyrone*, p.210). An **Anglo**-Irishman was appointed of course. *Archivium Hibernicum*, III, 241. *The MacDonnells of Tyrone and Armagh – A Genealogy Study*"; *Seachas Ardmhacha* (Journal of Armagh Diocesan Historical Society), 10/1 (1980-1); Donald M Schlegel; p.210. *Domhnach Mór* (Donaghmore) : Part IV: *The Insurrection of 1641 and Its Background*. Éamon Ó Doibhlin. *Seachas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1959), p.413.