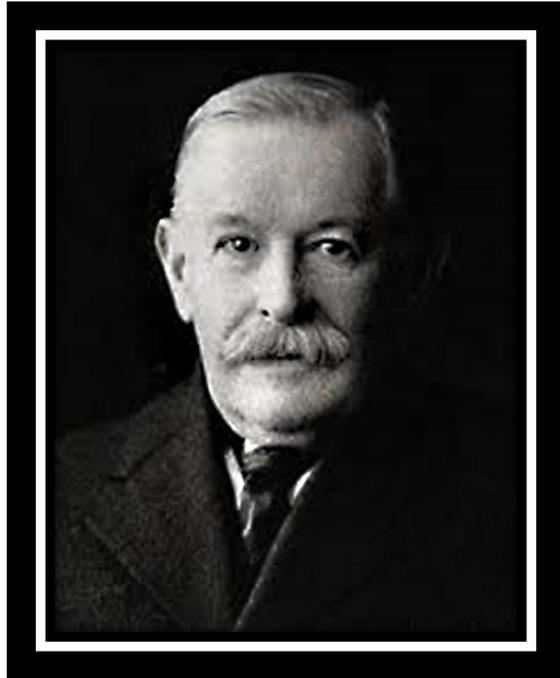


ATTRIBUTION OF IONÆ GRAVESLÆB No.154







Professor RAS MacAlister "*prefers to discuss the possibilities and this he does with a great wealth of detail*" and he also has a "*nucleus of unquestionable readings that constitute a valuable record*".



**ATTRIBUTION OF IONA GRAVESLAB No.154**

**MEDIEVAL CARVED STONES - "Iona School, 14th - 15th century".**

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Ian Macdonnell, Australia, March 2015

## 1. THE INSCRIPTION

**Carved Stone No. 154; "Iona School, 14th-15th century".**

The inscription was "almost worn smooth," but as "I think it reads" by the experienced and well qualified Professor RAS MacAlister in 1913.<sup>1</sup>

"HIC IACET RANAL /  
LDVS MACDOMNUILL"

(His slab no. 112 on his Iona Inventory, p.426. FIG 1.)

He tacitly expressed a hope that as this was "the first published attempt" that someone else later would verify it before it was completely worn. But unfortunately this never happened and after 64 years of more damaging wear, the RCAHMS, who did not know about his reading, declared it "illegible". MacAlister wasn't prone to wild, exaggerated guesses, albeit one or two of the more difficult, early Christian, insular half uncial readings by him are tentative, ones which most others shied away from. He did declare inscriptions illegible if too far worn, e.g., his Iona Inventory slab No. 122 :- "There is an illegible inscription around the edge not noted by Drummond or Graham". If he is not sure he indicates so : his Inventory No. 37 ; "Oroit do Chum?"

For his reading of 'RANALDVS MACDOMNUILL' (FIG 1) he uses neither a question mark anywhere, nor, as is known he also did, use dotted lines for restored letters. It is known and accepted that MacAlister pushed the boundaries, "prefers to discuss the possibilities and this he does with a great wealth of detail", but, he also has a "nucleus of unquestionable readings [which] constitutes a valuable record".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. A. S. MACALISTER, Dr. Litt; M.A. PROFESSOR OF CELTIC ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN. – VISITED IONA 1913: his 'An inventory of the ancient monuments remaining in the island of Iona', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (PSAS), No 48: pps 421-30; 1914.

<sup>2</sup> REVIEW OF :- *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* (CIIC); 1945-1949. R. A. S. Macalister.

By E. G. Quinn, Irish Historical Studies Vol. 5, No. 17 (Mar., 1946), pp. 91-93; Published by: Irish Historical Studies Publications Ltd.

**CAMBRIDGE UNI PRESS REVIEW** - *Speculum* / Volume 24 / Issue 04 / October 1949, pp 598-601 (Medieval Studies) - Criticizes MacAlister's 'CIIC', but for "inadequacy of bibliographical and other documentation".

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON REFERENCE** :- "Brittany was excluded from R. A. S. Macalister's great *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* (1945-1949), still the fundamental reference for medieval Celtic inscribed stones".

**Recognition of his accuracy**, his "unquestionable readings", is evidenced by his decipherment of the early Christian inscription, No. 46, p.187, in RCAHMS' Argyll Vol. 4 (It's MacAlister's No. 38). He first determines correctly that Drummond misread it in 1881. His 1913 reading, as re-published in the later 'CIIC; ii', is referenced by RCAHMS to fill in illegible gaps in 1977. Two other readings also have been used, but that is not the point here. It is not an easy reading, but MacAlister's early 1913 reading of it, done at the same time as for this much later medieval slab No. 154, was quite perfect, as can be seen by his record in his Iona Inventory, monument No.38. The actual 1913 PSAS inventory record of his was never used by RCAHMS for their No. 46 assessment, where they used his later '*Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum, VOL II*' [CIIC]; 1945-9. No. 46, VOL 4, is an "Early Christian" slab (c. 8th century), broken in pieces, with half-uncial Old Irish, including abbreviation marks for letters and with much wear of course, but MacAlister's 1913 reading was highly accurate.

Slab No. 154 is in the ARGYLL VOL 4 IONA<sup>3</sup> Inventory, where it is said that the inscription "two-line in Lombardic capitals now illegible" (NB : RCAHMS described no. 157's inscription as even worse worn, ie, "obliterated"). MacAlister's measurements for his slab No. 112 exactly match those for slab 154 in 'VOL 4'.

*Macdomnuill* was not a common kin or clan name then, but it was the Chief's surname to which especially Ranald, "High Steward of the Isles; of first importance in the Island polity", would have been entitled at that time ('[Clan Donald \(CD\) II](#)'). He was also recorded as "de Yle", 1372; Reg. Mag. Sig; 520. He was "Regent, ruling over them"<sup>4</sup> during the last years of John's life when Donald (II) was "Master of the Isles" (Chief only was 'de Yle').

Not only is the foliated cross design a match for a known monument of the right period for Ranald's death (Campbeltown Cross) but the formula for the observed inscription, including style of name, also has "obituary uniformity" (as opposed to his Texa cross formula) as verified by that on the officially re-attributed graveslab of his grandfather, Angus Og, d.1318 :-

"HIC IACET (---/---)  
ANGVSII MACDOMNUILL"

<sup>3</sup> "ARGYLL : An Inventory of the Monuments VOL 4, IONA"; p.224; Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS); 1982. And.. Inscription 49; "Late medieval monumental sculpture in the West Highlands" (LMMSWH); K. A. Steer, J. W. M. Bannerman, G. H. Collings. RCAHMS; 1977. [[Abbreviations used](#)]

<sup>4</sup> Lamont, W; *Mediaeval sculptured stones of Islay*; p.46. 1972

Good John of Islay's first son to Margaret Stewart, Donald, Lord of the Isles, "Donald of Harlaw", signed the "Gaelic Charter of 1408" as "The MacDonald",<sup>5</sup> "m<sup>c</sup>Domnuill" (patriarchal title) :-



Good John's second son to Margaret Stewart, Eòin Mòr Tànaiste (half-brother to Ranald), the progenitor of the MacDonalds of Dunyvaig signed as witness :-

Eoin macDomnuill :-



Also note the obit of *Good John*, Ranald's father, in the 1387.7 Annals of Ulster (NB : annals of acknowledged accurate orthography; representative of the contemporary material) :-

"EOIN MAC DOMNAILL,  
rí Innsi Gall, d'ég."

There is consistency. There is no doubt that Ranald, son of John, son of Angus Og, would not use his father's established *surname* for his obituary and burial monument:-

"RIC IACET RANAL /  
LDVS MACDOMNUILL"

"It is important to appreciate that the MacDonald surname was largely confined to the actual descendants of Donald, the grandson of Somerled, until the seventeenth century".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Clan Donald Vol 1", facsimile; p.1; 1896.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. David H Caldwell; 'THE ILICH – PEOPLE OF ISLAY'.

**CLAN DONALD SURNAME  
"MACDOMNAILL" IN USE.**

**Annala Uladh**

Accurate orthography; representative of the contemporary material in Ulster and Western Isles

**1346.1**

'Eoin Dubh Mac Domnaill do marbadh la Maghnus mac Echadha Meg Mhathgamna.'

'John Mac Domnaill the Black was killed by Maghnus, son of Echaïdh Mag Mathgamna.'

**1362.8**

'Brian mac Aedha Meg Mathgamna, do ghabail righi n-Oirghiall & cleamhnus & caradrag d'fhas dó ar Somairligh mac Eoin Duibh Mic Domnaill, ar Consdabla Coicidh Uladh.'

'Brian, son of Aedh Mag Mathgamna, took the kingship of Oirghialla and marriage-alliance and friendship were contracted by him with Somairle, son of John Mac Domnaill the Black, namely, with the Constable of the Fifth of Ulster.'

**1363.3**

'Tinol do Domnall h-Ua Neill & do Clainn Domnaill, idon, do Thoirrdhelbach Mac Domnaill & d'Alexandair Mac Domnaill d'innsach Neill Uí Neill.'

'Muster was made by Domnall Ua Neill and by the Clann-Domnaill, namely, by Toirdhelbach Mac Domnaill and by Alexander Mac Domnaill to attack Niall Ua Neill.'

(1363 : Alexandair mac Toirdhelbach mic Alexandair Og 'ic Aongus Mor 'ic Domnaill. The same generation as "Ranaldvs Macdomnuill.")

**FIG 1.** R. A. S. MACALISTER, Dr. Litt; M.A. PROFESSOR CELTIC ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN. – VISITED IONA 1913: his 'An inventory of the ancient monuments remaining in the island of Iona', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, No 48: pps 421-30; 1914.

His "Class VI", 108 = ARGYLL VOL 4's 151 (MacLeod); 109 = 155; 110 = 150 (Angus Og); 111 = 152; **112 = 154**; 113 = 156. G = Graham; "Antiquities". D = Drummond; "Sculptured Monuments". RO = Reilig Oran. OC = Oran's Chapel. C = Cathedral.

426		PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY, MAY 11, 1914.	
CLASS V.—continued.			
Number.	Dimensions.	Description or Reference.	Present Position.
102	5' 5" × 1' 5½" - 1' 2" × 0' 4"	D 22a.	RO
103	6' 1" × 1' 5" - 1' 3" × 0' 3½"	D 20a.	RO
104	5' 9" × 1' 6" - 1' 3" × 0' 3½"	D 19b.	RO
105	5' 10" × 1' 8" - 1' 4½" × 0' 4"	G 16a, D 27a.	OC
106	5' 7" × 1' 5½" - 1' 2" × 0' 3½"	D 22b.	OC
107	4' 3" × 1' 7" - 1' 5" × 0' 3"	Sword between floral scrolls, much worn, top of slab broken off.	C
CLASS VI.—SLABS WITH GALLEYS.			
108	6' 9" × 1' 10" - 1' 6½" × 0' 5½"	G 15, D 17b.	RO
109	5' 10½" × 1' 7" - 1' 5" × 0' 4"	G 24b, D 25b	RO
110	6' 2" × 1' 8½" - 1' 7" × 0' 5½"	G 10, D 25a.	OC
111	6' 4" × 1' 8" - 1' 6" × 0' 5"	Floral diaper, galley at top.	OC
112	5' 11½" × 1' 7" × 0' 4½"	Galley, floriated panel above, inscription * and floral diaper below.	C
113	5' 11½" × 1' 5½" × 0' 4"	Galley, floriated panel above and floral diaper below.	C
CLASS VII.—SLABS WITH ECCLESIASTICAL EFFIGIES.			
114	6' 2" × 1' 9" - 1' 8" × 0' 3"	G 11, D 33a.	RO
115	6' 2" × 1' 6" - 1' 3½" × 0' 4"	G 19b, D 33b.	RO
116	5' 5" × 1' 6" × ?	G 23b.	RO
117	5' 6" × 1' 9½" - 1' 5" × 0' 4"	G 26, D 34a.	OC
118	6' 4½" × 1' 11½" × 1' 2"	G 34, 35, D 45b.	C
119	6' 4" × 1' 10" × 1' 1"	G 36, D 45a.	C
120	1' 3½" × 1' 6" × 0' 3"	Much worn fragment divided into two panels by a vertical bar: in each panel a small figure, one of which may represent a priest serving at an altar (as in the top panel of No. 94). Too worn, however, for certainty.	N
121	4' 2" × 1' 9½" × 0' 3"	G 46, D 32b.	N
122	6' 5" × 1' 9" mean breadth × 0' 2"	G 47a, D 32a. There is an illegible inscription round the edge not noted by either Graham or Drummond.	N
123	4' 5" × 2' 2" × 0' 3"	G 45, D 44.	N

\* This inscription is almost worn smooth: I think it reads HIC IACET RANA | LDVS MACDOMNUIII, which may be offered as at any rate the first published attempt at its decipherment.

## 2. R. A. S. MACALISTER'S READING

Dr. Litt; M.A. PROFESSOR OF CELTIC ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN. – VISITED IONA 1913.

He was responsible for editing the catalogue of all known ogham inscriptions from Great Britain and Ireland. Many of his translations of Irish myths and legends are still widely used today. This shows he must have always been regarded as a careful person with a high standard of accuracy. Relevant are his : *Studies in Irish Epigraphy*; 1897. *The Memorial Slabs of Clonmacnois, King's County*; 1909. *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, 2 vols; 1949. And many more.

He was elected to the Royal Irish Academy in 1910, and was president of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland from 1924 to 1928. However, in 1977, the RCAHMS, with its enormous task, apparently missed his "Class VI, no. 112 \*" footnote and this palpably crucial, singular evidence and expert opinion were never mentioned and therefore it emerges never utilised when evaluating slab no. 154.

(NB : no one would be in a position to analyse the Iona slabs further without the excellent work and highly detailed publications of RCAHMS - a massive seven vol. series on Argyll alone, out of thirty altogether.)

There are accepted, reliable, common sense methods the Professor would have used in his reading to give an accurate number of letters even if all were not legible (as used by RCAHMS; see Introduction, p.93, 'LMMSWH'). For example, the standard and common Latin 'HIC IACET' (Here Lies) or 'HEC EST' (This Is) at the inscription's beginning is 100% certain even if badly worn (many in 'LMMSWH') where it is almost always rendered and sometimes they are the only words verified and accepted - and with "the exact number of missing letters by an appropriate number of points enclosed in square brackets" (by RCAHMS). See inscription 96 :- "hic iacet [...] / ..." (where '[.]' = one illegible letter before the line break "/"). The last three points/dots indicate illegible passages.

And see No. 59, where five missing letters "[... /..]" are "exactly" determined. Also see nos 52 and 54. These two pair of leading, "generic" inscription Latin words above, no matter what the period or "font/character/script", give the reader the size and spacings of the letters and between the individual words for the entire inscription and are used as a "template" to adequately verify the entire inscription's number of letters and words. It's not whimsical or slipshod guesswork.

Known genealogies (e.g., MS 1467) were then used to narrow down possibilities :- e.g., of all the "Mac Somerleds" possibly buried in St Orans in the late 14th or early 15th centuries with a first name rendered as Ranaldus, there are only two MacDomnuills and one MacRuari. And "MacRuari" or even "MacRuaidri" is not long enough for this inscription's surname letters. "Ruaidri" has a letter sequence where not a single one matches the individual positions of what MacAlister read as "Domnuill". Neither would *possible* misreads of some worn, similarly constructed letters be likely to give a wrong result. There are not enough "susceptible" ones or in the "right" positions, to make this a likelihood. Therefore it's unjustified to suggest it might be for a *Ruaidri*. (See FIG "2"; at this section's end.) Or, there is no rationale to prefer *Ruaidri* over MacAlister's actual reading of *Domnuill*.

I have also attempted to examine the list of *surnames* of 'all' those who would have been buried in Reilig Odhrain from 1350 to 1500 (as complete as best I could; and try to use the right etymology and orthography for them then, in the Isles; and also utilize LMMSWH inscriptions - "*Domnuill*" is Gaelic.).<sup>7</sup> Using a chart (FIG 2.) with columns for each letter, and checking to see how many letters exactly match by position with "[Mac]domnuill", name for name, it is actually a rare occurrence. Also, none *relevant* are as long as [Mac]Domnuill - 8 letter kin name. Even with the four others with seven letters, there is only one letter match, in one of them. This is not the only "test" of course. Some letters when worn can and do look like others, especially in some light conditions - e.g., a top worn "O" might look like a "U" (G, S, € - prone letters to appear similar to liked shaped letters if worn); a bottom worn "L" like an "I", etc. Checking the chart of names, each against MacDomnuill, by each letter column, there was not many of these either - and using "Lombardic Script" ("fonts"; as close as can get to 14th century one).

Even considering the dangers of "tricks of light" and "filling in" (seeing with our brain), I don't see how '*MacDomnuill*' could have been misread, ie, in the context of what I have just explained. Also, there are not endless variations that it had to "compete with"; it's a restricted field (when you think about it). Some may suggest that it is rash to suggest that Professor MacAlister got it right (and *maybe* I am slightly pushing the boundaries too).

<sup>7</sup> LIST : "*Best men of all the Isles*"; "*Council of the Isles*"; MS 1467; key witnesses to Lords of Isles' charters, e.g., The Ilay Charter or Lord Donald's "Gaelic Charter of 1408" ("Acts of Lords of Isles; Munro"); Highlands and Islands Clan Chief's lists published and on-line. They are not really that numerous - because many repeats of generations of same name for eligible family buried there (or presumed).

However, I propose the opposite, the onus is on someone to explain how and why the experienced Professor got it wrong. I suggest MacAlister would have to have been unskilled, inexperienced and lackadaisical, to have read something else as "DOMNUILL". [The current *almost worn smooth* "DOMNILL" on Angus Og's inscription is reasonably evident - at FIG. 3.]

He would have had to "*decipher*" every letter wrong in every other *potential* surname (except in one name where 6 out of 7 letters would be wrong) and, in addition, mistakenly add an additional letter or two or three to every *potential* name. It's extremely difficult or near impossible to explain how [mac]:- KEACHAN, LEOD, MURICH, GUARIE, NICAIL, BETHA, NEIL, CEAIN, FINGONE, AIG or even ILLEAIN, INOLLY or GILLEMAOLAN and ALAXANDAIR<sup>8</sup> could, or would, be misread as DOMNUILL, even when worn smooth. This "*decipherment*", a century ago, was by a well qualified, much practiced Professor, who comprehended the nuances of these script/character shapes and was experienced in the vagaries of their wear - it's 'what he does', it was his profession. In fact I don't think it's necessary to consider names of less than seven letters. A reader might incorrectly add one additional letter that was never there in the first place,

<sup>8</sup> "The [Greek] name Alexander first migrated into Gaelic as *Alaxandar*, also *Alaxandair*. Later, a diminutive form *Alasdrann* (also *Alasdrainn*) appeared. Examples of this diminutive begin to appear in the annals in entries for the mid 15th century. At some point later, a second diminutive appeared. [Modernly, that diminutive takes the form Alasdair.](#)" The form of "*Alaxandar*, *Alaxandair*" appears six times in the annals between 1299 and 1465 (19 times to 1577). "***Alasdair*, *Alasdrann*" only appear from 1465** - ie, and as in MS 1467. See "[Frequency & dates](#)" here. And see [excellent, actual MS 1467 detail](#) and presentation here. NB : see RCAHMS inscrip. no 50, "*macalistaire*", c.1500-60; and no. 2, "*alexander*", 1528.

**U 1363.3** EVIDENCE IS PROVIDED HERE. Annals of Ulster (and Connacht) are acknowledged accurate orthography; representative of the contemporary material and what was used in Ulster was what was being used in the Western Isles :- "*Tinol do Domnall h-Ua Neill & do Clainn Domnaill, idon, do Thoirrdhelbach Mac Domnaill & d'Alaxandair Mac Domnaill d'innsach Neill Uí Neill. Ocus Mac Catmhail do chur astir amach doib & a dul sein d'innsach Neill Uí Neill. Breith ar diredh na n-imircedh. Ocus Ragnall mac Alaxandair, oigri Clainni Alaxandair, do thecht a h-Innsibh Gall fa'n am sin dochum Neill Uí Neill.*" (RAGNALL IS THE SON OF CHIEF ALAXANDAIR OG, K.1299, - NOT "ALISDAIR" MOR, progenitor of now called Clan MacAlester.)

AND here:- 1. [Annals of Connacht, 1366.11](#). 2. My inset box Part 1, *Annala Uladh*. 3. '*Alexandair*'; "[The MacLeran](#)"; p.10."

but not two in a simply calculated word space limitation (of quite regular letter sizes, spacings). See FIG "2" for a structured comparison table, including a study of possible longer names with worn end letters possibly "missed".<sup>9</sup>

If I missed any names off the list, the point still remains that this test is at the very least, a very strong supporting factor in MacAlister's decipherment, albeit not a 100%, fail proof method. There are other "tests".

NB :- 1. Evidence here shows that it's improbable that any of the few other *eligible* surnames could have been misread as "DOMNUILL", especially by an expert (vice-versa : hard to decipher it as anything else).

2. Importantly, if *Ranaldvs* is correct, then none of those other surnames are relevant anyway, except RUAIRI, RUAIDRI (which is too short and I have discussed before). And later, I show that Ranald is also quite uncommon for Clan Donald chiefs, 1350-1500.

3. Many others can be disqualified on separate factors let alone the inscription, such as the numerous and proportionately many Macleans and MacKinnons, because they are interred under their high relief warrior effigies.<sup>10</sup> And exclude the many burials of the early Clan Donald "*Macclains*" of Ardnamurchan and Glencoe. (Later I prove that the galley is Clan Donald and Ruari specific heraldry, *on Iona*, on the flat, low relief slabs.)

If MacAlister's reading cannot be proved to be incorrect and there is every good reason to show that it is correct, then it would also need to be explained why "verification" is necessary. If, for example, Lhuyd had read it, verification would not be asked for. Same for others used by RCAHMS, such as J Smith and Hutton.

<sup>9</sup> I have disqualified (MacMillan) - [MAC] GILLEMAOLIAIN - of 13 letters - as it's obviously far too long, even if a worn out letters on the end were 'missed'; over 50% longer. Same for MacGillivray - [MAC] GILLEBREITH - of 11 letters. To long, same as above. Had no chiefs of the period with name of Ranald and did not use the galley motif. No record of Iona burials from the period. **No letters at all match for these two either and its improbable that GILLE could be (mis)read by an expert as DOMNU.**

<sup>10</sup> Why did they have expensive effigies? Some context :- Before the Reformation the Mull MacKinnons were often Iona Abbott or Prior and after it, the Mull Macleans were often the abbey's *Commendator* ("property manager"). Before the 2nd forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles, the Mull MacKinnons were the MacDonald's powerful military Marischal and the Mull Macleans were their local estate administrators, stewards or lay bailies (office of *Fragramannach and Armannach*). NB :- see more, very good info in Inscription No 28, "The Four Priors"; pps 115-18, LMMSWH.

Lhuyd's reading in 1700, was used in Inscription **No. 15** for an entire first name in 1977 (square brackets denote letters or words within them are illegible) :- ["HIC IACET IOHAN / NESJ"]. "*It is now totally illegible but Lhuyd's drawing (a decipherment) makes it possible to read part of it as above*". And.....

**No. 16** - same as 15. Whole first name [NICOLAVS] illegible but accepted as "*read by Lhuyd*"; and....

**No. 18** - used previous 1844 reading for the whole surname "[BROL/C(H)AN F]". "*Smith's readings .... are reasonably accurate*" ( in LMMSWH; The Texts; p 106).

**No. 94** - "[ALLEXAN]DRI". As read by Hutton, 1802.

If only this had been done 40 years ago in 1977 using MacAlister's Iona Inventory for slab no. 154. It could be tried now, even though it was "*illegible*" in 1977 but now maybe "*totally illegible*" - or even "*obliterated*"? But, a couple of letters may be able to be matched ("Proff RAS MacAlister's *reasonably accurate* reading *makes it possible*?) and a part inscription revealed and then fully confirmed by also using all this separate and solid additional attribution information now provided in this paper which independently supports his reading.

There is no reason for the Irishman R. MacAlister to have any pre-conceived idea, interest or "personal gain" in the person being a Ranald, and/or MacDonald. I doubt he even knew about the significance of Ranald of Clan Ranald (who is not a Lord of the Isles). And I don't think he would have had any clear or specific understanding of the slab's exact period of making as he simply classed them as "*Class VI - Slabs with Galleys*". He made no attempt at dating. In my opinion, I don't think he could have been "second guessing" or overstretching "*ingenuity*".

FREQUENCY OF "RANALDVUS".

Also, of all the other chiefs, "*best men of all the Isles*" or those on the "*Council of the Isles*", who had the right to be buried in this cemetery around that time,<sup>11</sup> and, also double checking with MS 1467 (regarded as satisfactory by D Sellar for Clan Donald genealogy), there does not appear to be any others, outside of Clan Donald, with a first name of "*Ranaldvs*" (ie, Latin from cognate Old Norse, *Rögnvaldr*; Gaelic *Raghnall*). I have already dealt with Ranald MacRuari, k.1346 (surname is too short). Most had names of Gaelic origin anyway (and whether that origin was true or not for them).

<sup>11</sup> "Each of these chief families of the isles had its claim to a tomb in Reilig Odhrain, if not by descent from the house of Somerled, then by right of marriage into Clan Donald"; Marsden, J. "*The Tombs of The Kings*"; 1994

**There is actually another *Raghnall MacDomhnaill*** who exists in the period concerned and must be considered. He is a son of Lord of Isles, Alaxandair Og, k.1299 in Ireland. Alaxandair Og was not deposed or killed, 1308 - "*the most extraordinary collation of historical untruths*" - forceful summation by Dr WD Lamont. Angus Og assumed leadership of Clan Donald, i.e., from 1299.

There is much to clarify and correct about this identity. Raghnall flourished in [1366 - Annals of Ulster](#). His genealogy is solid in [MS 1467](#) (Skene, IV; notes 13, 14) "*Raghnall mhic Alaxandair Oig mhic Aengusa moir (and MS line 21)*" and every other reliable genealogy (e.g., Ó Cléirigh Book of Genealogies; [RIA, Ms. 23 D 17](#)). Even though "*Clan Donald Vol (III)*" does include him (CD [No VII](#)), he and *all* his sons are wrongly killed off in 1366, thereby corrupting the lineage of the *Macdonnells of Tyrone & Armagh*, "*Ard constapla coicidh Uladh*", High Constables of Ulster to The O'Neill to 1602. Then, in an inexplicable, aberrant lapse of comprehension of patronymics and early naming of clan septs, this "*Clan Donald*" history double dips the same 1366 [Irish annal](#) source for this Raghnall and appropriates his identity (and father/son, CD ['III, IV,V'](#)) to *create* a path to Alester Mor for the "*MacAlesters of Loup*" - *and* furthermore, ignores the fact that the [actual genealogies](#) (Skene, VI) for their line never mention any of the three of them. There is no record of Raghnall's death which probably occurred in the 1370's or where he is buried (born c.1297). He is *not* the g/grandson of Alastair Mor, son of Donald (I), ie, not a current termed "MacAlester".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [The \(current\) Clan MacAlester have "body snatched" this Raghnall](#), and his father (Chief Alaxandair OG no less) and Raghnall's son Alaxandair for their pedigree but this has now been discredited. They have a three generation "black-hole" at their "III, IV and V" levels in "[CLAN DONALD VOL III](#)", p.185, and [Burke's Peerage](#), and this is "confirmed" :- Lyon Clerk and Keeper of the Record's reply to me of 18 April 2012:- "*Neither the 1847 nor the 1991 recording narrate the descent from such an early period as you mention, nor did the Lord Lyon make any comment on who might be the original progenitor, nor did he need to do so to confirm that the Petitioner before him on each occasion was in right of the Arms of MacAlester of Loup, Chief of the Name of MacAlester.*"

Their pedigree is maybe only proved to Eoin Dubh ([CD VI](#)). He is dubious as this is the name of [another son of Alaxandair OG](#) (line 49). He does not appear in their MS [1467 \(VI\)](#) - viz, 'his father' as Alaxandair mac Raghnall does not exist either. MS 1467 for the Clan Donald pedigrees has been checked by David Sellar, past Lord Lyon 2008-14, and found to be acceptable. VIZ : [David WH Sellar says of the one error in MS1450/67 that was corrected](#) - "*..by inadvertently omitting a name in another pedigree appears to style Alexander (as) "Mor" and to give him descendants through a son "Godfrey*".

Raghnall MacDomhnaill, "[MacDomhnaill Gallóglach, Clann Alasdair](#)" (*sub-sept name!*)<sup>13</sup> [Dr. K Simms](#); index; p.139), or "[Randolph Mc Alexander \(patronymic\) Chief of the McDonnells](#)"<sup>14</sup> was also it seems :- the "*Roderici de Ylay, forfeited for usurping the Isles for some seven years, 1325,*" during the hazy minority of John, son of Angus Og, k.1318. It cannot be Ruari mac Alan (Clan Ruairidh), and impossibly titled "*Roderici de Ylay*", as he was killed in Ireland in 1318, '*Mac Ruaidhri, Ri Innse Gall*', along with Angus Og. They were together in 1314, Bannockburn. Clearly it was the *Ri*, "**The MacRuaidhri**", chief Ruari killed, not a lesser brother. Ruari was not, and never could or should be a "*de Ylay*". It appears it was a scribal error of *Rögvaldr/Raghnall* as "*Roderici*". However, *Raghnall*, "*Chief of the McDonnells, who came out of the Isles*", of the "[senior family of the line of Somerled](#)" could be, or was at least eligible, i.e., *rioghdamhna*, 'king fit', to be a "*de Ylay/Yle*".

"*Clan Donald*" is guessing about Ruari mac Alan, 1325 : "[What the precise nature of his offence is not recorded](#)". And, Ruari is never heard of otherwise after 1318. Besides, there was : "*No record of old lands of Ruari being bestowed on another [in 1325]*". Their lands were confirmed in 1342 by a new King (David) but this process would have happened irrespective (my "Notes-Detail of Evidence"; [Drs Bannerman, Nicholls, Duffy](#)). Alaxandair Og's sons were certainly '*disinherited*'.<sup>15</sup>

**Raghnall mac Alaxandair Og, 'Title - heir of the Mac Domhnaill'** (not '*the Mac Alistair*'), was in Ireland in 1366 and is recorded as staying there as Galloglaigh Constable to the O'Neills. The [son of this Raghnall, Eoin \(Shane\) Maol, John the Bald](#), was "*expelled from my*

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*These are really descendants of Alexander Og, and the style "Mor" properly refers to Alexander's brother Angus (Mor).*" (ie, one step, the "son of Angus" was left out). "*McDonald & McRuari Pedigrees MS 1467*"; West Highland Notes & Queries; 1st (28), p.6, 1986; WDH Sellar Esq.

<sup>13</sup> "*Angus Mor had good children, viz., Angus Og, the heir, and John, from whom sprang the Clann Eoin of Ardnamurchan, and Alexander (Og), from whom descended the Clann Domhnaill.*" "Reliquiae Celticae" : studies in Gaelic literature and philology; Rev. Alexander Cameron, LL.D. (1892). "*The Book of Clan Ranald*"; [pps 157-9](#)

<sup>14</sup> **MacAlesters may be Clan Donald, but they are not MacDonnells.** [Annals of Clonmacnois; p.303 \(translated 1627; RSAI\)](#). Actual annal (3 year diff); [U 1363.3](#)

AND : '*Raghnall son of Alexander heir of the Clann Domhnaill*'.

<sup>15</sup> "*Alexander left four sons—Reginald, Black John, Angus, and Charles. These and their progeny, victims of the fate which raised a younger brother to the dignity and honour of their father's house, lost the premier position in the Clan Cholla, though undoubtedly in the light of primogeniture they were the senior family of the line of Somerled.*" "[Clan Donald VOL 1](#)"; [p. 89](#).

*country*" to Ireland by his "*consanguines*" (cousin) Lord of Isles, Donald II, Clanranald's half brother, sometime in mid to late 14th century - "*and have been sojourning with O'Neill*". This is written in Eoin-John or Schan MacDonyld's letter, as "*Captain of his Nation and Constable of the Irish of Ulster*" to King Richard II, from Armagh. It was not Iain Mhor Tanister, son of "Good John", who was not a cousin of Donald but a brother (and was never "Constable of the Irish of Ulster", never a "Galloglaoch" - and neither were the MacAlesters).

These sons and grandsons of Alaxandair Og, had no enduring chance of challenging Clan Donald leadership after Angus Og's great and deserved success at Bannockburn, and it is certain that most (of 6) stayed in Ireland becoming the long term, "*nobilis*" hereditary Galloglaigh Constables to The O'Neill, O'Connor, etc, and subsequently to the Great Earls of Kildare and the King of England (under *Surrender and Regrant* system).

After considering the above crucial ramifications, I think it is now safe to conclude that this other eligible *Raghnall MacDomhnaill* (or obit as *Raghnall [mac] Alaxandair?*) was probably not buried in St Oran's graveyard. He may have been buried under a solid sandstone, chapel shaped 'tomb-shrine' covering the 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, Ulster :- "*The mode of sepulture, according to the tradition of the country*", ie, a secondary burial process of *Macdomhnaills*, *Ard constapla coicidh Uladh*.

[ I have definitely excluded *Ranald Bane* of Largie, Killean, Kintyre, son of Iain Mhor (of Dunyvaig/Glens) as he died sometime after 1476. Also, it's clear, as a Cadet of Largie, he was not buried in Reilig Oran (it's his 15th c. burial vault, north aisle, Killean Church; VOL 1, 287 [2 & 4], [pps 134-136](#); my App'x "I"). Any slab of his would be too late for the design of no. 154. "[Clan Donald \(CD\) VOL 3](#)" concurs that the full relief warrior effigy for Ranald Bane, "[Ranaldo Albo de Insulis](#)" is per [Pl. LXXV](#) in Drummond, "*MacDonald of Largie*".<sup>16</sup> ]

#### **BUT IS "RANALDVS" THE ONLY POSSIBILITY?**

One must consider of course what are all the names of Clan Donald Chiefs between 1350-1500 known to be buried in Reilig Oran. These must be examined to see if any of them are such to be possibly misread as "RANALDVS". After checking all the sources for Clan Donald genealogy of chiefs, I have come up with these particular first names which should be considered.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Archaeologia scotica. Sculptured monuments in Iona & the West Highlands*; James Drummond; 1881.

<sup>17</sup> NB: All Chiefs of Ardnamurchan and Glencoe can be excluded because their "surname" then was *Maclain* (e.g., see

IOHANNES - Dunyvaig, k. 1427<sup>18</sup>  
 ALANUS - Clan Ranald, d. 1419  
 DONALDVS - Glengarry, d. 1420  
 (ALEXANDER - Keppoch, d. 1440  
 (ALLEXANDRVS [based on actual above and see  
[ALEXANDRUUM](#) Paisley Charter, c.1295]

"DO-NALDVS" immediately stands out :-  
 "RA-NALDVS" is only two letters different and a  
 misread becomes possible. The other names are of the  
 same or near length but the letter matches are very few  
 with two out of eight in IOHANNES.

ALEXANDER is too long, let alone  
 ALLEXANDRVS, there are no letter matches and a  
 low misread potential. The "X" is not near the "V".  
 (and on this basis I am ruling out Alaxandair Mhor,  
 progenitor of the "MacAlesters". In any case slab 154 is  
 too late for him (d. c. 1300) and also his inscription  
 name would have been the formula "ALLEXANDRVS  
 {son of} DOANALDI" not "MACDOMNUILL" (and we  
 know his descendants became the 'MacAlesters', etc).

Even though IOHANNES is the same length, I  
 cannot see how it would be misread as  
 RANALDVS, as most of the letters are not  
 susceptible to that misreading. How could IO  
 be misread as RA? And LDV as NNE? The long  
 angles of the "V" (for U) do stand out even when worn  
 and the positions of it match in only two first names.  
 (See worn "V" Fig. "3" section's end. PS, this is the  
 Lombardic W-'W'; X-'X' and Y-'Y', approx. "Y" is  
 very like "V" but it's not in any of these first names.)

ALANUS is too short and no letter position matches  
 RANALDVS. In addition, I have identified Slab No  
 153 (no inscription) - for "Alanus" MacRanald ('Alan of  
 Gamoran'<sup>19</sup>), d. 1419, first son of the eponymous  
 Ranald. See the reasons later.

So, is it 'RANALDVS' or 'DONALDVS' on no. 154?  
 Is "DO" likely to be misread as "RA" if the letters are  
 badly worn? The "D" might be misread for an "R". But  
 there is no prospect of an "RA" being misread as an "O".

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slab no. 183, App'x "H"). That is, besides the two progenitors,  
 but any inscription name for them, as can be seen from their  
 clan's *Maclain* 'surname' of the period, would have begun  
 with the patronymic formula and not "macdomnuill" :- i.e.,  
 "IOHANNES {son of} ENGVS" for them both (sons of Angus  
 Mor and Angus Og respectively).

<sup>18</sup> See my later attribution of No. 155 for this Iain Mhor  
 (brother to Donald II, k. 1427 "*Hic jacet Johannes*  
*[(Mac)domnuill?]*..." Inscription no. 15; "the next three  
 letters seem to be 'mac', **very probably** the beginning of a  
 surname.

<sup>19</sup> "Monro & Monro; Acts of The lords of The Isles; 1986

The reality is that I, in fact nobody of course, can know  
 the true extent of the actual wear of this inscription in  
 1913 (or the conditions when read).

But, there is another reality that can be observed and it  
 is the actual size of these carved letters in stone - they  
 are not small. THEY ARE AROUND 30 mm HIGH AND  
 THICK. See FIG "2" at the end of this section for actual  
 worn Lombardic script on Angus Og's c.1318 grave slab.

Could a very worn LOMBARDIC, UPPER CASE "A" be  
 misread as an "O"? It is decidedly improbable. There is  
 no similarity whatsoever, either fresh or worn. 'A' has  
 three straight sides with its unusual, huge flat top and a  
 centre bar as well (see FIG 3.).

Contrast this to the reality of the similar "D" and "R" in  
 ("Early Christian") half-uncial Old Irish, resulting in  
 different readings for them when worn (JH Smith; p.85.  
 See ARGYLL VOL 4, No. 45.) NB : differences usually are  
 about one or two letters, not whole words.<sup>20</sup>

The other consideration is art-history (more detailed  
 evidence later). Briefly, the atypical "Triple Trinity -  
 Triquetra" motif also plays a part in identifying slab no  
 154 as it appears only on two other slabs. One, I have  
 attributed to RANALDVS' father, "Good John of Islay"  
 and, two, for Ranald's son, Alan mac Ranald (as per  
 above for attribution of No. 153). The foliated cross  
 which is similar to the Campbeltown cross is also  
 corroborating art-history evidence and places slab nos.  
 154, 153 in the right period of manufacture to match  
 this genealogy, succession of late 14th century, early  
 15th.

#### SUMMARY - for RAS MacAlister's reading

**There are only four other possibilities of first name and  
 four for the surname. This is a shortlist based on fact**  
 (See FIG "4" for surname example, visual illustration). If  
 it's RANALDVS and it's MACDOMNUILL, as I consider I  
 have separately and then mutually shown to be true,  
 then there is only one certain possibility :-

Ranald of Clan Ranald, died 1386 at "*his own manor at*  
*Tioram Castle*" and was buried in Reilig Odhrain  
 (RCAHMS, LMMSWH; Inscription No. 49, p.127, notes 7,  
 16-17). The next two chiefs of Clan Ranald followed suit  
 in the "*ancestral tomb*" over the next century, Alan in  
 1419 and the last one buried in Reilig Oran was Ruari, in  
 1481.

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<sup>20</sup> J. Huband Smith; *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, First  
 Series, Vol. 1 (1853), pps. 79-91. Dr D Wilson gives  
 "ARONID" and Mr WF Skene gives "ARDONID".

## SUPPLEMENTARY MOOT

WAS SLAB No. 154's INSCRIPTION ACTUALLY ILLEGIBLE IN 1913 - OR EVEN BEFORE?

One should ask why wasn't slab no. 154's carving designs and inscription recorded by one of the many "antiquarians"<sup>21</sup> between the 17th and 20th century, before MacAlister did his decipherment in 1913?

Which raises the point, was 154's inscription actually "illegible" in 1913 or were the slab's attributes repeatedly passed over, "ignored" for some reason?

"*We speak from facts not theory*" :- Examining the historiography of another slab, no. 156, which was also never specifically recorded, that is, before MacAlister did (his no. 113; but no decipherment), we find however that its inscription (no. 17) was able to read by RCAHMS in 1977 as "HIC IACET ALA[N]/US...", that is, without a prior "as read" by anyone. RCAHMS gives just a basic one line description :- "*The inscription is on a panel at the top of the slab*" (the illegible [N] was an obvious deduction, not the more usual, "as read by").

There is no illustration of no. 156 in any medium, no apparent photo (CANMORE) available, no defining description - and no earlier inscription decipherment on which to base a reading for inscription no.17. It was first done in 1977. (The closest "image" is a rubbing of Barra slab [\(Fig 148\)](#) copied from Iona slab no. 156: [no. 436 \(c\)](#); p.124, *Cille-Bharra*.)

Even around the turn of the 20th century, [Rev. MacMillan](#), 1898, does not describe no. 156 in his list. He describes and draws no. 155, which he calls "The Galley and Stag Hunt" {his 'XVII'; where he wrongly mixes it up for the incorrect ascription to "*Ailen nan Sop*" Maclean but who he has also attached to his no. VIII [probably his no. VIII is actually no. 153.]

And then [Rev. Trenholme](#), in 1909, doesn't specifically describe no. 156 in his listings. Maybe it's one of his non-descript "ornamented slabs" or "ornamented stone with floriated cross".

The conclusion seems to be that nos 154 and 156 were both in effect almost disregarded in comparative terms or were only mentioned in very vague terms. One has to presume this was so because they were amongst a set of slabs that, because of their carving's overall worn state, their drab and non-descript appearance, they were not as interesting as others and didn't attract the proverbial second look (from amongst 100 or more; plus the many early Christian ones).

No. 154 (and 156?) had taken on an overall "muddy" appearance from either being in a deleterious location or from an unfavourable stone quality and it appears therefore that the slab was basically ignored and the worn inscription wasn't even observed let alone properly inspected. The slim inscription panel, plinth-like "*supporting*" a central galley, is rather unusual and may not be that obvious in this slab's condition.

Not one of the many antiquarians who visited between 1650 and 1909 took any real notice of it. It is not singularly identified, until Proff MacAlister did so in 1913.

**NB :** Yet, on the other hand, many slabs with totally illegible inscriptions, or with only one or two standard, common words retrievable, were often noted, drawn and or described by multiple authors. One has to again ask - why? And the answer surely has to be that slab no. 154 is a *drab slab* relatively speaking. It is dull and nondescript amongst others in the cloister. I was drawn to it because I knew of MacAlister's 1913 decipherment and I knew its number.

This slab no. 154 has only been recorded twice. Once by MacAlister, *after* it had been removed to the *Cathedral* to prevent further deterioration and probably making it more "visible", and once by RCAHMS - both doing *serious inventory* taking and not just looking for the "interesting" ones to draw attention to.

Based on the above facts, there is no justification to consider that slab no 154's inscription was "illegible" in 1913.

<sup>21</sup> For a good list see: Sharp, Proff. Richard (Oxford); "[Iona in 1771; Gaelic tradition and visitors' experience.](#)" The Innes Review 63.2 (2012): 161–259. And [my bibliography](#) :- (A) - Historical accounts of Iona, chronologically.

## FIG "2".

WAS "MACDOMNUILL" READ CORRECTLY? COMPARE TO OTHER SURNAMENAMES OF "THE BEST MEN OF THE ISLES" THAT WOULD OR MIGHT HAVE BEEN BURIED IN REILIG ODHRAIN 1350-1500 : FINLAGGAN COUNCIL OF THE ISLES, "Royal Blood of Clan Donald"; "Greatest of the nobles"; Thanen". (Excluding Priors, etc : no. 154 is not ecclesiastical).

RED LETTERS ARE THOSE MATCHING IN THE SAME POSITION AS IN "DOMNUILL" (2 ONLY).

\* LONGER NAMES ARE UNDER THE TABLE.

Nos of Letters [no mac]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Inscrip no. RCAHMS
8	D	O	Ɔ	N	U	I	L	L	
7	R	U	Ɔ	I	D	R	I		
	I	L	L	€	Ɔ	I	N	Mac lean	35, 56
	F	I	N	G	O	N	€	Mac kinnon	12, 23
	K	€	Ɔ	C	h	Ɔ	N		54
"ILLEAIN" (per inscrip. nos 35, 56). IF "GILLEAIN" ALSO 8 LETTERS BUT NO MATCHES AT ALL									
6	I	N	O	L	L	Ƴ			27
	N	I	C	Ɔ	I	L			
	S	P	O	R	Ɔ	N			
	Ɔ	U	R	I	C	h			36
	G	U	Ɔ	R	I	€		Mac Quarrie	
	B	€	T	h	Ɔ				
5	L	€	O	I	D				25
	C	€	Ɔ	I	N			Maciain	24, 52
	D	U	F	I	€				35
4	N	€	I	L					
3	Ɔ	Ƴ	G					Mackay	98

\* **"FREEHOLDERS" - FINLAGGAN COUNCIL.** I have disqualified (MacMillan] - [MAC] GILLEMAOLIAIN - of 13 letters - as it's obviously far too long, even if one or two worn out letters on the end were 'missed'; over 50% longer. I think they were buried at Knapdale in any case. And I don't think they had chiefs with a first name of Ranald in the period concerned or used the galley motif. Same for MacGillivray - [MAC] GILLEBREITH - of 11 letters. Too long, same as above. Had no chiefs of the period with name of Ranald and did not use the galley motif. No record of Iona burials from the period. **No letters at all match for these two either and improbable that GILLE could be (mis)read by an expert as DOMNU.**

I have also excluded the Lord's of Isles' harpists [MAC]ILSCHENOCH of 10 letters - too long and no letters match at all - a misread to DOMNUILL is also improbable. Would not have a first name of Ranald or a slab likely to have a galley even if they were buried on Iona (buried Kintyre?). And, see in the prior text I have also ruled out [MAC]ALAXANDAIR for a number of reasons. And, in addition "MacAllisters" do **not** have a Ranald in their genealogy in the period concerned.

**FIG "3"**. Part of actual inscription - no.22. Angus Og, d.c. 1318. My photo, 2006, with only existing light (and it's not that good in the cloister either). It's untouched or manipulated in any way. The exposed, more vulnerable top two lines in the designed inscription panel of a higher plane ("raised" above lower background field), are now "worn smooth". In 1977, the first Angus, "[EN]G[VS]II", was confirmed by RCAHMS using ["as read by Lhuyd"]. See images underneath.

**ACTUAL 14<sup>th</sup> c. LOMBARDIC CAPS**  
 ACTUAL SIZE = ± 30MM HIGH  
 {Incised; Inscription no. 22}

"Lombardic-Normal" & "Goudy Text Lombardic" font mix.

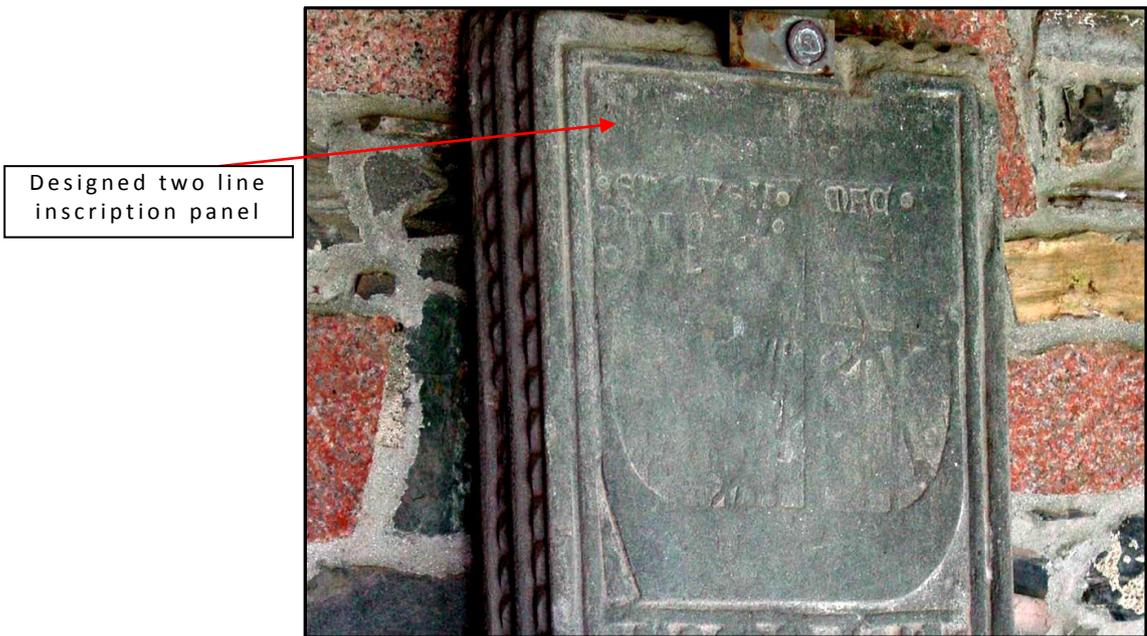
"ALMOST WORN SMOOTH"

HALF WORN SMOOTH

**HIC • IACET • CORPVS •  
 ENGSII • FILII • DOMINI  
 • ENGSII • / / \ \ MAC •  
 DOMNILL • / / \ \  
 DE YLE • / / \ \**

Here lies the body of/  
 Angus son of Lord /  
 Angus Mac /  
 Domnill /  
 of Islay {d.c.1318; slab soon after.}

IRM 2015



## FIG "4"

**SLAB 154.** Shortlisted out facts for major clan contenders. Example of the justified "odds shortening".  
Disqualification of Maclean, MacKinnon, Macleod.

"CLAN". CHIEF'S KIN NAME, 'SURNAME'.	SAME OR CLOSE NUMBER OF LETTERS IN SURNAME LENGTH AS READ? OR PROBABILITY OF MISREAD AS MACDOMNUILL	ANY CHIEF'S FIRST NAME RANALD IN PERIOD ?	PROVEN TO HAVE GALLEYS ON <i>LOW RELIEF SLABS, ON IONA, BEFORE LORDSHIP FELL</i> - <i>BY INSCRIPTION</i>	TYPE OF SLAB USED BY THEM.  IE, LOW RELIEF, AS IS NO. 154	NUMBER OF TIMES COULD BE "DISQUALIFIED" FOR 5 REASONS.  OUT OF 5.  ( 3 + = out)
MACDONALD  "DOMNUILL" <i>As read.</i> 8 letters	N/A, N/A	YES	<b>YES</b> One proved from <b>St Oran's Chapel</b> of Lords of Isles. Angus Og, K.1318.  (Another certain MacDonald Lord also in there with galley but without inscrip. See App'x 'G')	YES	<b>0</b>
MACLEAN  <i>ILLEAIN GILLEAIN</i>  6, 7	YES, <b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b> High relief effigy	<b>4</b> <b>SHORTLISTED OUT</b>
MACKINNON  <i>FINGONE</i>  7	YES, <b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b> High relief effigy	<b>4</b> <b>SHORTLISTED OUT</b>
MACLEOD  <i>LEOID</i>  5	<b>NO, NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	YES	<b>4</b> <b>SHORTLISTED OUT</b>
MACRUARI  <i>RUAIRI RUAIDRI</i>  6,7.	YES, <b>NO</b>	YES	<b>NO</b>	YES	<b>2</b>  <b>CONSIDERED</b>

### 3. FOLIATED CROSS, VINE AND LEAF



**RANALD OF CLAN RANALD, d.1386.**

**Slab No. 154.**

Attributed, by author pictured 2011, to the eponymous Ranald of Clan Ranald, d. 1386.

The foliated cross on no. 154 is alike in design to that on the *back* of the Campbeltown cross head of c.1380 (in RCAHMS; see VOL 4; p.224; Ref. No. 153 "*closely resembling*" and No. 154 is grouped next as similar).

NOTE: Slab no. 154's close similarity to No. 157 which I had also attributed many years ago by a completely different, unrelated process, to his father John I ("*Good John of Islay*"), who died in the same calendar year, 1386. (And No. 157 is from MacDonald's St Oran's Chapel, no question. I was then concentrating on Lords of the Isles' slabs from inside the chapel).

Only swap the Gall-Ghàidheil "*Mac Somerled - Clan Donald*" galley <sup>22</sup> for *Lord John's nobilis* "[Sword of State](#)" <sup>23</sup> and encircling belt. Vassal clans of the Lords of the Isles used the galley *in fealty* only on the escutcheon on their effigies, or on slabs/crosses *not* on Iona (MacDonald Lords of Isles' ecclesiastical capital), or slabs *after* 1493 (more later).

Both 154, 157 have a large, similar foliated cross at the top <sup>24</sup> with the same centre design, a small inscription panel/s near the centre and two large animals (not the much more common four). Both have very similar plant scrolls design and arrangements at the bottom. Notably, each has a very uncommon, leaf petiole triquetra on the right side, ie, in a "Triple-Trinity" setting of :- 3 leaves; 3 lobes; "*trionaid*" triquetra crossing of 3 leaf petioles.

<sup>22</sup> Particularly on Iona SLABS, galley motifs are the heraldic "charge" pre-eminently and predominately of the MacSomerleds and then the MacDonalds. LMMSWH; p.183 :- "*goes back at least as far as the time of Reginald (abbey founder)*" - ie, his seal, then on his heirs, Angus Mor's and Angus Og's - then his slab, etc. SEE NEXT SECTION.

<sup>23</sup> Inside "*this Chappel; the burying-place - of the Royal family of MacDonald*" - W. Sacherverell, 1688. "*Eoin Mac Domnail, rí Innsi Gall*" (AU1386) was nobilis, with his Stewart wife, Princess Margaret.

<sup>24</sup> Foliated crosses on 153, 154, 157 aren't *exactly* the same as the Campbeltown cross, or each other. "*Good John*" was a great cultural and religious patron. John also founded an Augustinian priory at Oronsay, an act unique in the period.

This vine leaf design on both, lower half, has :-



**(A. no. 157; Left side)** Bigger triple sets of tri-lobed leaves on the left side area of both 154 and 157 and the bottom left of Campbeltown cross shaft:- "spiral-like" compositions with intertwined vine stalks/stem (the leaf petioles are not crossing - kept quite separate). This is quite common (e.g., at Kilmory Chapel, South Knapdale; Loch Sween school).

**(B. no. 157; Right side)**

Smaller triple sets of tri-lobed leaves on the right side area of both 154 and 157 BUT with the addition of their individual leaf petioles crossing centrally.



This is very interesting as the triple crossings, clearly seen four times on no. 157 (from St Oran's Chapel) and on ....

**(B. no. 154; Right side)** ... but

which has less repeats visible [only top one is very clear from poor photos, worn slab], have been intentionally done to make open (trefoil) knots, ie, as obvious open triquetra symbols. AND, overall within a symbolic religiously ordered, tri-triplet Trinity motif of three x threes :- 1. three leaves; 2. each with tri-lobes; 3. and central petiole triquetra. This is not common.



At this exceptional holy place and period, that result is certain not to be simple variational chance, or just regional artistic evolution, but conscious, "intelligent ecclesiastical design" by devout master craftsmen (See App. 'K')



A bit of 'Hy'-perbole? Maybe. But, three petioles can be easily crossed or overlapped *without* making a highly distinctive open triquetra (three overlapping *Vesica piscis*) or any knot at all and avoiding much extra, more difficult, finer stone carving. See

good example on Mackinnon cross here; back, centre 'circle' (and with a mixture of leave numbers - not all of three.) NB: Even otherwise good drawings don't always render these triquetras accurately. MD Graham, 1850, does a reasonable job on his no.153, Plate 15, Fig. 2.

This exact 'triplet, holy trinity motif set' (B) isn't seen elsewhere to my knowledge (slabs or crosses), at least in Iona or the Isles, before the 16th c., except a less better crafted one on No. 153 and in the same position under the right side 'beast' (Pl. 1) - and which has the foliated cross that RCAHMS states "closely resembles in design" the Campbeltown cross. This exact "tri-triplet" or "Triple Trinity" with triquetra motif is not specifically categorised or drawn by LMMSWH of the common ones in "Iona School" insular art, implying its uniqueness, or in the schools of Kintyre, pl. 10, p.49, and of Loch Awe, pl.12, p.54 ("A" above is, but as four leaf; p.16, Fig 3; no.3). On the front of the Campbeltown cross shaft, are also tri-lobed leaves with triple petioles crossings, but rendered simply as tight knots (as best I can see). The cross has only two animals as well, albeit at the bottom, a lion on left and a griffin on right.



NB : There are two big, stand alone (trefoil knot) triquetras on "cross slab" no. 126, St Oran's Chapel (left; bottom one is worn).

Unique on Iona medieval slabs, this heavysset, "3D" high relief technique and large size is analogous to this 11-12th century "[Govan School](#)" cross slab's longer knots (right). In 2011, I attributed this slab to the Clan Donald founder, Donald, k.1247, son of Iona Abbey founder, Reginald, d.1207. And slab no. 161 also has one of these same triquetras (see App'x "F") which I attributed in 2011 to Reginald by a entirely independent process. It and no. 126 (double-plaited cross) do appear to fall between the 10-12th century "[Govan School](#)" cross slabs and the 14-15th century *Iona School*. It's probably not a co-incidence that this major centre of 9th-12th century stone carving at "*Royal Big Govan*" was only some few miles from both the "[Battle of Renfrew](#)" and Walter fitz Alan's new Priory (1163; originally "[of the island beside Renfrew Castle](#)"; Sand Inch?) where Reginald, Donald and Angus Mor had very strong emotional ties (Somered was killed in 1164, Renfrew; his evisceration, ritual body part likely kept in a jar by the Priory's Cluniacs). Despite fitz Alan, all three were generous patrons of the Priory, later Paisley Abbey (moved/raised c.1169), with repeated grants to 1249. Reginald retired to Paisley "*before 1200*", he founded Iona Abbey in **1203**, and died as a brother of the Paisley Cluniac order after at least eight years there. His wife, a sister of its convert, granted the tithe of all her goods. Donald and Angus Mor also "*assumed the cowl*" there (John II MacDonald made Paisley confirmations, 1455).

I also state no. 161 was originally "[deposito ad sanctos](#)", Gospel side of the alter, before being moved to near the door, c.1925 (by PWS; e.g., see App'x Fii, 4a). "*Good John of Islay*" was a great cultural and religious patron and he was the impetus for the "*Iona School*" of carving's 14th

century revitalisation. For him, in particular, to have resurrected such a triquetra motif which had ancestral, cultural and ecclesiastical significance for dynastic regeneration and continuity, is an altogether realistic proposition. The triquetras on nos 161, 126, (153?) 154 and 157 are positively indisputable. (One other *possible* tiny one is on Iona, no. 191, of "no particular school".)

Intentional or not, precisely exact or not, and however my notional "*triple-trinity*" motif is classified or categorised, it is for certain distinctive, unusual and/or infrequent in the Isles and west coast and possibly exclusive on Iona to slab nos. 154, 157 and also it appears on no. 153. I have done a substantial search but cannot guarantee zero "margin of error". Please see Plate 1 next page.

One of only six approximating it that I can find (but maybe more) is on an Islay slab at Nereabolls. The same size as "B" above, it is the only one in a variety of vine/leaf styles, but instead of its leaves being tri-lobed, they are bi-lobed - breaking the "*triple-trinity*" code. Another is at Oransay Priory, founded by "Good John of Islay" around the mid 15th century (where one might expect to find an example). It's on the late 15th century cross of MacDuffie hereditary record keeper to the Lords of Isles. However, it has a tight central knot which might first appear like a open triquetra but it isn't.



One of its three petioles also divides into two before the three separate leaves appear and are not a "Tri-lobe" leaf (the divided petioles then also leave the unit's circle). The other two petioles might also be said to divide and the leaves considered not to be true tri-lobed (at best with two lobes on one division and one on the other).

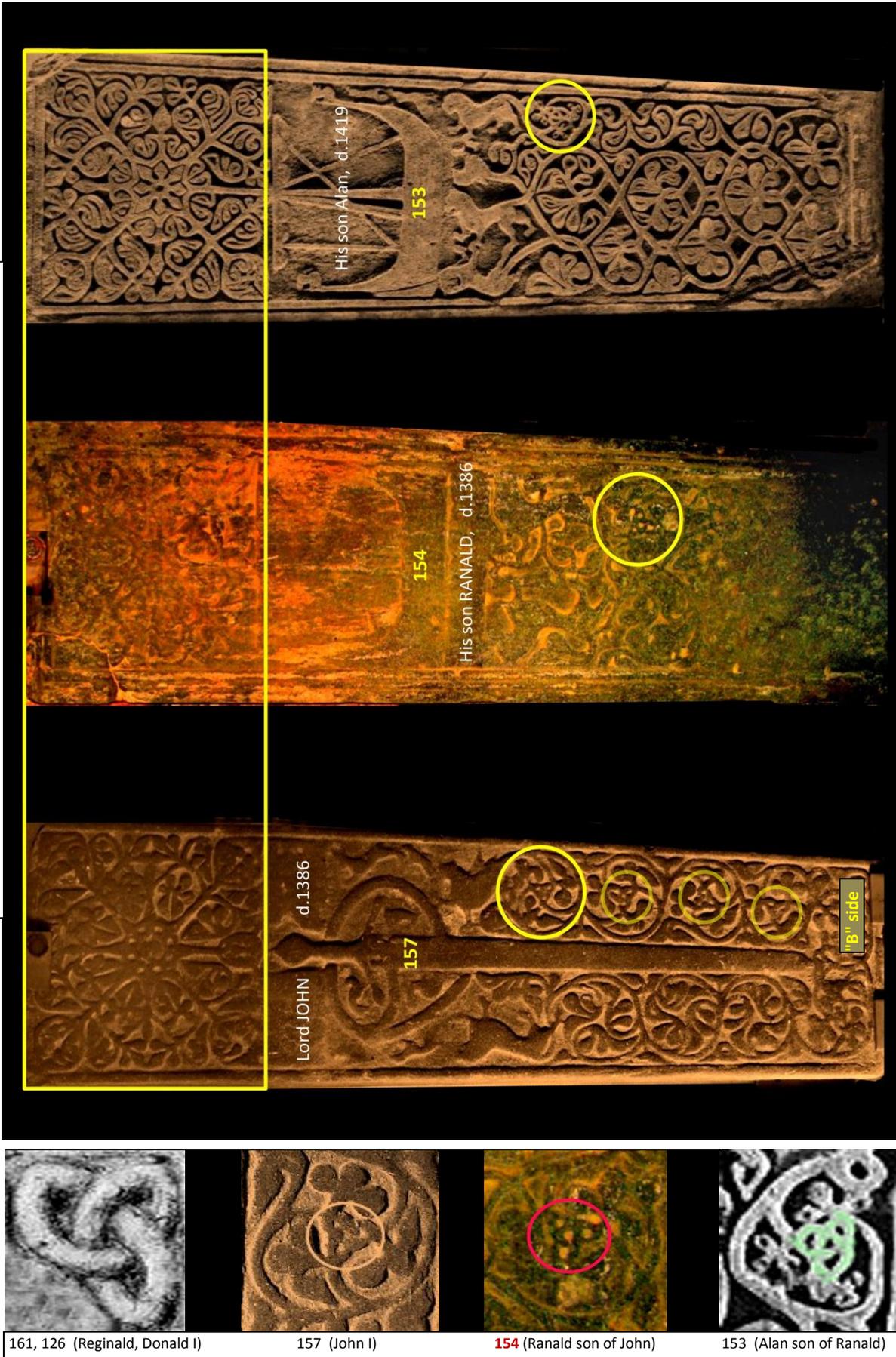
One at Killean, Kintyre has three tri-lobed leaves but no triquetra knot (Drummond; pl. LXXVIII, 2). Kilchoman Old Parish Church, west (back) face of the cross has one with three leaves but of four lobes each and no triquetra knot. The larger, petiole triquetra on the other side of Abbot MacKinnon's cross (top front) has four petioles with a range of different leaf lobe numbers from 3 to 6.



The other is a single, huge one taking up the full top quarter of an Iona School slab at the Inchkenneth Chapel, Mull, but it has double the number of petioles, ie, six - again breaking the "*triple-trinity*" code. It is not repeated on that slab anywhere, or any others, even in a smaller size. It does have the "A" type spiral on both sides of the central sword (non-crossing petioles - no triquetras).

PLATE 1. (Colour and contrast have been added to aid visibility of detail.)

Of slabs with foliated crosses of this type, these three are the closest matching.



161, 126 (Reginald, Donald I)

157 (John I)

154 (Ranald son of John)

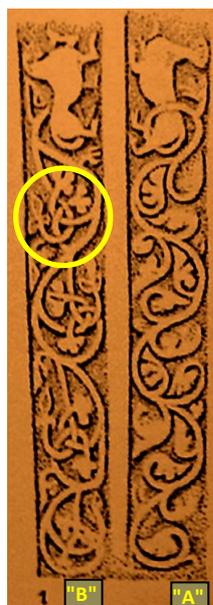
153 (Alan son of Ranald)

Having said all that, here's [the rub.](#)  
A "Carved Slab" on Skye, Fig. 245 :-



Brackadale Parish Church, Kilmoruy (anciently St Maelrubai);  
**Borline**, Loch Eynort, Skye. [Fig 245](#); in no. 474;  
"Carved Slabs", p.139; VOL 9; 1928.

This slab, no. 245, Borline, Skye, is basically *a copy* of the fundamental layout, design and general motifs of Iona slab no. 157 (minus the belt and small stag hunt). RCAHMS say it is "*Oransay School*". It's updated with a claymore sword of straight quillons with quatrefoil ends which also puts it firmly into the 16th century (Fig. 19, no 11; p.169; LMMSWH). The cross of "*eight rays with foliage design .. and in the corners*" appears different but it's not complete - e.g., refer to [147 Barra](#). A blank panel is apparent for an inscription, either side of the sword handle, just as in no. 157. The same "beasts" surmount the foliage columns.



RCAHMS have actually drawn no. 245's (copied) foliage motifs: - Fig 26 (1) Borline, p. 67, '*The Oransay School*', pps 65-71, LMMSWH.

I've mirror imaged the *rubbing* image so it's more obvious to visualize the foliage copying done with Iona slab 157 (Pl. 1). The fact remains of a simulated "*triple trinity*" columnar set "B" down the sword blade just as on Iona slab no.157. And the same open, separated leaves "A" design on the other side.

Cadets of Dunvegan, the early or pre-'McLeods of Talisker',<sup>25</sup> were buried here. They had this slab copied just as MacLeods of Lewis copied Iona no. 152 for their Iona no. 151 of 16th century (for Colum McLeod, d.1515-1524) - my App's "G" and "H". Many in fact were copied (e.g., [147, Barra](#); [144, Rodel](#)).

So there does appear to be another "*Triple Trinity*" motif in the Western Isles? But, it's just a very late 16th century, poor *imitation* of that on no. 157, "Good John of Islay's" original design of that special Iona motif. It's 'triquetra' doesn't have the centre *and* the intrinsic *three corners* of the trefoil knot. 

Basically, the Borline, Skye slab no. 245 is a "knockoff" of Iona slab no. 157 well after the Lordship of the Isles had collapsed. For the period of the Lordship, the "*Triple Trinity*" motif remains unique to the three Iona slabs, nos 157, 154 and 153.

I will show later with different reasons, why these slabs are probably for three successive generations:-

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <b>No. 157.</b> John I, son of Angus Og,         | - d. <b>1386</b> |
| <b>No. 154.</b> Ranald mac John (1st Clanranald) | - d. <b>1386</b> |
| No. 153. Alan mac Ranald                         | - d. 1419        |
- (Plate 1, previous page.)

PS : I don't think there is any basis to dramatically overturn the RCAHMS opinion that slabs 157, 154 and 153 are Iona School (to become Oransay School). That would be a major upheaval of the west highland medieval carved stones substantive categorisations. It stands to reason that the Lords of the Isles' *master masons* took their Iona pattern books to "Good John's" Oransay Priory when they abandoned Iona, c.1500.

<sup>25</sup> For hundreds of years Talisker was associated with a cadet branch of the chiefly line, founded by **Sir Roderick Macleod**. Sir Roderick was the second son of Dunvegan Chief Rory Mor Macleod (d.1626) and **Isabel, daughter of Donald Macdonell, 8th of Glengarry (Clan Donald)**.

#### 4. WEST HIGHLAND GALLEY MOTIF

The Gall-Ghàidheil "*Mac Somerled - Clan Donald*" birlinn heraldry. "*Clan Donald famed for galleys and tall swift ships*". The MacDonald Lordship specified the feudal dues of its subjects in terms of *ship service* - the numbers of galleys and how many oars:- "*two seven-thwarts boats to every twenty houses.*" <sup>26</sup>

THE AIM IS TO SHOW, THAT CONTRARY TO CURRENT PERCEPTION, THE GALLEY MOTIF ON LOW RELIEF SLABS DOES SIGNIFY: (1) "CLAN DONALD" and (2) "CLAN RUARI" - ON IONA, BEFORE 1493.

Particularly on Iona, birlinn motifs are the heraldic "charge" preeminently and principally of the MacSomers and then the MacDonalds. LMMSWH; p.183 :- "*goes back at least as far as the time of Reginald*" (abbey founder and father of clan Donald's founder), ie, on his seal, then on his heirs, Donald, Angus Mor and Angus Og's - then on his graveslab, etc, etc.

FOR CLAN DONALD LORDS OF THE ISLES :-

- Iona was *their* sacred territory.
- The founder of Iona Abbey was *their* forebear.
- As patrilineal successors of the founder, and under "*conditionality of endowment*" (not "*tenure in free alms*"), Iona Abbey was *their* responsibility as feudal liege lords and an "enterprise" for which they were truly accountable and managed. <sup>27</sup>
- Iona was *their* ecclesiastical capital.

<sup>26</sup> Bannerman; *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, 1974; p.49

<sup>27</sup> '*if clerics occupying temporalities are wanting according to the form of the donation, temporal lords are held not only by fiscal law, but by the law of scripture to protect against impoverishment of the land.*' [John Wyclif as Legal Reformer](#); p.109. 1309. {more later on this in relation to the MacKinnons}. Iona Benedictine Abbots were tenants-in-chief and *Functional reciprocity* was a perpetual "*conditionality of endowment*" that extended to all Clan Donald Lords of the Isles who had the power, authority and responsibility to manage the *mutual obligations*. They were not given freehold, inalienable, "heritable" land endowment "*in puram et perpetuam elemosinam*".

Parliament to Pope Clement : "*According to the law of the land, possessions given to churches and religious places, should they be applied to a use contrary to the desire and intention of the founders and donors, can be most certainly recalled through their founders and donors or their heirs.....*".

"*It was the founder of a house and his heirs who provided the impetus to build or rebuild.*" *Monastic and Religious Orders*; p.152; Burton, J., 1994.

- The "*Iona School*" of carving was under *their* patronage. <sup>28</sup>
- The Ó Brolcháns were *their* hereditary stone masons/carvers on Iona, back to foundation. "*Reginald's masons were drawn from Ireland.*" (And so were the Ó Cuinns.) <sup>29</sup>
- The galley was *their* heraldic charge going back to at least *their* ancestor, the Iona abbey founder, Reginald.

Therefore, it would be hardly surprising that *their* significant heraldic motif, the galley, and the potent symbol of *their* power in *their* sea-kingdom, was actually limited to *their* use - ON *THEIR* IONA DURING *THEIR* REIGN OF POWER (irrespective of others using it elsewhere, e.g., Kings/Lords of Argyll, <sup>30</sup> Man, Dublin).

To talk about Iona as just being another one of the multitude of islands in the Hebrides and that its singularity makes no difference in these matters, is to suppose that the Lords of the Isles' galley motif was something of a "free for all." And that's patently a grave mistake.

In other isles locations where other clan chiefs held their land, were sometimes the patrons of the different schools of carving and had their own separate ancestral burial grounds, then it becomes obvious that the reasons for restriction on use of the galley heraldry become less significant and observance unwarranted - particularly after the Lordship of the Isles was ended.

In any case, some slabs with galleys not on Iona were for 'Clan Donald *de isles* aristocrats'; e.g., '*mariota nic ceain*' (Mariota MacLain), inscrip. no. 34 (slab no. 31, VOL 5). As was the other slab with galley made by Mariota for her brother John MacLain who was buried on Iona, c.1509 (no. 183, VOL 4; App'x 'H'). Her husband was Malcolm MacDuffie, Lord of Colonsay, who held a place on the Clan Donald Council of the Isles. The galley motif is not surprising as the slabs were made at Oransay Priory, a foundation of "*Good John of Islay*" and where MacDuffie was the carving school's promoter and patron - and both slabs were made after 1493. The later Murchadus MacDuffie slab with galley of 1539, no. 31, VOL 5 (inscrip. no. 35), was this time made by another *Mariota, nic illeain* (Maclean).

<sup>28</sup> LMMSWH; p.38.

<sup>29</sup> Professor Richard Fawcett, OBE, PhD; "*Scottish Medieval Churches.*"; 1985.

<sup>30</sup> Dougall MacSomairle, King in the Isles, d.1207, is far too early for these slab's with galley, etc, design, as is his 2nd son Uspak, d.1230. MacDougalls were not buried in Reilig Oran after 1231.

**Proposal** :- Other than the MacSommerled Clan Ruari, there was only one vassal clan of the Lords of the Isles who used the galley motif *on Iona* :- .... MacKinnon, *permitted in fealty* as their hereditary *Marischal* and feudal duty as their Standard Bearer<sup>31</sup> and only on their escutcheon/shield on their high relief warrior effigies, and, on a very late cross (no. 214) when the Lordship was in its final death throes<sup>32</sup> (see APP'X "I").

Otherwise, the galley is on slabs and crosses *not* situated on Iona, even if made there, or, on slabs made *after* 1493. Or slabs fundamentally copied from pre-1493 Iona pattern book "models", made on Oransay post 16th c., and shipped elsewhere, e.g., see prior examples and VOL 9, [no. 537, p.166](#), Kilmuir, Skye; galley and claymore, 16th c. And [no. 436 \(slab c; p.124\)](#), *Cille-Bharra*, Barra . And, I repeat, some or many are Clan Donald "*de isles*" slabs. It must be remembered, that of the graveslabs collectively *not* on Iona, a large proportion of them were either produced on Iona and shipped elsewhere *or* were made after the fall of the Lordship of the Isles, e.g., the combined entirety at Oransay Priory, a foundation of John I, Lord of the Isles.

By a significant margin, Iona has the largest number of pre-1493 graveslabs with a galley motif. Another point not to be forgotten is that the small number of just pre-1493, *late medieval*, slabs of the *Kintyre School* which have a galley motif were made at Saddell abbey which was also a foundation of Reginald, King of the Isles and the founder of Iona abbey. The Chief of Clan MacEachern held a place on the Finlaggan Council of the Lords of the Isles as a freeholder. This clan is a recognised sept or 'dependant clan' of Clan Donald. There is a tradition that the MacEacherns of Islay were hereditary masters of horse and armourers to the Lords of the Isles. So on the Kilkerran, Kintyre cross of Colin MacEachern and his wife of late 15th century, it is hardly surprising (expected?) to see a "*military*" birlinn (piece No. 98, VOL 1; inscrip. 99).

Another slab with birlinn on Kintyre for a "Clan Donald noble" is one from Iona. It is for Ranald Bane of Largie, [Ranaldo Albo de Insulis](#)", d.c. 1476, son of Iain Mhor, Chief of Dunyvaig and Glens (as said before; see App'x "I"). There were many minor nobles of Clan Donald cadets and septs in the isles and west coast and if you were not one of their "*de Insulis*" aristocracy, then you could be of one their vassal clan chiefs married to one of their daughters.

<sup>31</sup> MacKinnon. "**Marshal**, who was responsible for individual commanders, horses, arms and equipment. **He usually carried the standard, or nominated a standard-bearer.**"

<sup>32</sup> Another cross or cross-slab, no. 95, with a rudimentary galley is categorised as "Early Christian" and Scandinavian. It is nothing like Iona School galleys. There are no others.

I have now covered all the slabs with a galley that are *not* on Iona that have a readable inscription, except one. It is no. 56 for Lachlan, son of Donald Maclean, Lord of Ardgour (Lochaline, Morvern). Once again, it should come as no surprise that Maclean branch Chiefs were on the MacDonald's Council of the Isles and that this slab with galley was made on Oransay after 1500. The earlier founder of Maclean of Ardgour, *Lachlan Bronneach*, was with his father on the field of Harlaw, 1411, with Lord of the Isles, "Donald of Harlaw", where after he was made prisoner by Alexander Stewart, Earl of Mar. He was in prison in 1429 with Alexander Macdonald, Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles.

There are many monuments with a galley motif all up and down the western isles and coast, 81 in fact.<sup>33</sup> {Albeit just 9% of the total.) But it's not easy to find a *pre-1493* graveslab with a galley, even *not* on Iona, that can be proved to *not* be of, or closely associated with, the wider Clan Donald "*de Isles*" nobility, male or female - temporal or spiritual.

If we are to accept that in the majority of cases "the galley cannot be construed as a *personal emblem*",<sup>34</sup> the following statement will surprise most, if not all.

Currently, the only recumbent, *low relief*, flat slab *on Iona* with a galley that can be unequivocally identified and proven as *NOT* for Clan Donald, is one carved *after* the Lordship was forfeited and fell, and when the Lords of the Isles' hereditary master masons had abandoned Iona, ie, post 1493, and it's for Colum MacLeod, d.1515-1524. And it's almost a direct copy, a rather poor one, of slab No. 152, which is probably for "*Donald of Harlaw*", the last MacDonald Lord laid to rest in Teampull Odhrain :- "*His full noble body was buried with befitting pomp and solemnity in the tomb of his ancestors on the south side of Teampull Odhrain; the sacred storehouse of his predecessors and guardian of their bones.*"

The MacKinnons, "*followers of the Lords of the Isles*"<sup>35</sup> were the hereditary military Marischal and Standard Bearer to the MacDonald Lords (as well as being hereditary Iona Priors and Abbots). Chief Bricius MacFingone/Gilbride MacKinnon was reputed to have been at Bannockburn under Angus Og's leadership.

<sup>33</sup> Rixon, D. "*The West Highland Galley*", 1998. Appendix, pps 201-2. His catalogue.

<sup>34</sup> "*In the great majority of cases therefore the galley cannot be construed as a personal emblem on a pre-reformation West Highland carving*". LMMSWH; p.183.

<sup>35</sup> Skene, William Forbes. *The Highlanders of Scotland, Their Origin, History, And Antiquities*. pps 258-260. London: John Murray, 1837.

And if so, he would have had, and did have (see his effigy <sup>36</sup>) on his shield a "charge" of a galley in identification of his "Marischal/Standard Bearer"<sup>37</sup> rank and duty under the leader of the "Islesmen force".

See Lord Angus Og's galley standard/pennant represented in the centre of this significant, historic mural <sup>38</sup>.....



Bannockburn Mural - National Portrait Gallery, Scotland.

At the National Trust's Bannockburn Battle 2014 re-enactment (below), which was "authoritative and authenticated" <sup>39</sup> by the select *academic advisory panel*, 'Angus Og' also displayed the galley on his surcoat and shoulder placards. (As per the National Gallery mural above on Walter Stewart's right shoulder; [left front, red helmet] and as on The Bruce himself.)



### 'CLAN DONALD'

Donald J. Macdonald of Castleton; 1978 (p.160)

#### *The Nature of the Lordship - Heraldic Emblems*

"We find in those heraldic emblems, which can with certainty be regarded as belonging to the Lords of the Isles, evidence of their premier position among the western clans of Scotland. Amid all the variations which the taste and fancy of later ages have introduced into the Macdonald arms, there are two features that stand out prominently as belonging unquestionably to the Family of Islay, and these are the galley and the eagle.

We find the galley as far back as the time of Reginald, and the galley with an eagle against the mast we find in the seal of John, last Lord of the Isles, after he was forfeited in the Earldom of Ross in 1476.

The galley is intended to convey the idea of the sovereignty of these Celtic Lords over the western seas, and the eagle symbolises, under another form, the royal superiority of the Macdonald Chiefs.

No doubt other western clans have the galley in their armorial bearings, but these in every case have borrowed the emblem from the arms of the house of which in previous ages they had been feudatories and vassals."

<sup>36</sup> Plate 8a. LMMSWH.

<sup>37</sup> Latterly flag bearer to MacDonald of Sleat. Also, the Council of the Isles :- "*MacFinnon was obliged to see weights and measures adjusted*" (Hugh of Sleat; 17th c.).

<sup>38</sup> Bannockburn mural on the wall of the Great Hall's first floor ambulatory, National Portrait Gallery, Scotland.

<sup>39</sup> The Advisory Panel's role is "to ensure that our telling of this important story is as authentic and accurate as possible. To ensure that the new interpretation is strong and academically sound, based on acceptable and authoritative research and thinking."

**OTHER LOW RELIEF SLABS WITH A GALLEY IN REILIG ODHRAIN, IONA.** (Exclude two in St Oran's *Chapel* which are *definitely* MacDonald Lords of Isles; see App'x "G".)

THEY ARE MOST PROBABLY ALL MACSOMERLED OR MACDONALD MONUMENTS, THAT IS, FOR CHIEFS OF CLAN DONALD BRANCHES - THEIR RIGHFUL "CHARGE", ESPECIALLY AT "THEIR" RIGHTFUL IONA ABBEY. (MacDougall chiefs of Argyll/Lorn/Dunollie are buried at their foundation of Ardchattan Priory from 1230.)

**THERE ARE, IN ENTIRETY, ONLY ANOTHER SIX OF THESE SLABS IN THE CEMETERY GROUNDS (7, incl. no. 154).**

The Mull Mackinnons have one effigy under which five chiefs were buried and there is another effigy which is probably also theirs (almost identical shield blazon, etc). So slab no.154 is not one of theirs. And, they had no chief with the first name of Ranald. Same goes for the Mull Macleans and their choice of slab was also the high relief warrior effigy, not a flat, low relief slab.

Besides the six Macdonald Lords of the Isles buried in St Oran's chapel, it must be remembered that also buried in Reilig Odhrain are the "*great men of the royal blood of clan donald*" (Dean Munro, 1549; on the Council of the Isles). Many generations of the "*Macdonalds of*" :- "Loup" ('Clan Alester' - 6), Ardnamurchan (6), Glencoe (5), Clan Ranald (3), Dunyvaig (2), Keppoch [2], Glengarry [3], Lochalsh (1), all had the right to be buried in Reilig Oran - total **28**.

Even if some of them are not buried there, they, as a Clan Donald group of slabs, would make up by far the largest proportion of *relevant* slabs from Reilig Odhrain, i.e., of 43 that I counted from VOL 4<sup>40</sup>. That is, at least 50% of relevant low relief slabs are Clan Donald. (Not including from total medieval Iona graveslabs : Clerics (8; incl from abbey church), children (3), high relief warrior effigies (5),<sup>41</sup> and of course the Nunnery (30)

<sup>40</sup> (Total :- Nos 114 to 211 = 97. Exclude as above, 54 = 43 relevant of which 22 max are Clan Donald). Even if the not all there now, ie, some stolen or smashed, this is a significant number of that category remaining and provides a statistically reliable sample and a valid cross section of all to make this observation and deduction. [Appendix "C", "D" - graphics of relevant interest.]

<sup>41</sup> Mid to full relief "warrior" effigies range from mid 14th to mid 16th century. On Iona they are for the two or three main powerful warrior clans of close by Mull:-

[1.] **MacKinnon** : no. 207 with inscriptions for 5 burials and no. 208 has the same escutcheon blazon/heraldry (APP'X "I") and,

[2.] **Maclean** : By consistent, strong tradition, "*The families of Mack-Lean of Duart, Loch-buy, and Coll, lie next all in Armour, as big as the life*" (Martin Martin; c.1695) :-

(A) **Of Duart**, no. 209, reputed multiple monument for at least:-

and St Oran's Chapel (8)). This means, on arithmetic alone, any of this type of slab from Reilig Oran has a 50/50 chance of being a Clan Donald monument. I have only done this to show the identification "problem" is not overwhelming. It's not one or two "MacDonalds" buried there out of hundreds.

I have legitimately and considerably shortened the odds, by logically reducing the field and increasing the valid contenders.

**RELEVANT SLABS, 1:2 CHANCE BEING CLAN DONALD. OF SIX OTHERS WITH GALLEY, ALL CLAN DONALD?**

**1. Slab No. 155, Inscription No. 15** :- "HIC IACET JOHAN / NES MAC..." ("*Stag Hunt*"; wrongly Maclean)

The 'MAC' - "Very probably the beginning of the surname" (LMMSWH; RCAHMS). Accepted as "MAC" in Argyll, VOL 4.

All "*Johannes Macdougail*" are buried at Ardchattan.

There are three possible Clan Donald "IOHANNES".

Iain Mhor Tanister, k.1427 (murdered by Campbells on Islay) is the second son of Lord of Isles, "Good John of Islay" MacDonald and Princess Margaret Stewart. John Mor was the progenitor of the Dunyvaig and (Antrim) Glens Macdonald/donnells. He would be rightly JOHANNES MACDOMNAILL. Using his father, Angus Og's known surname on his slab, which is called a "*surname*" by RCAHMS in slab no.150. And as per his *Gaelic Charter of 1408* signature as '*Eoin Macdomnuill*'.

The two other possible Clan Donald "Johannes" are :-

1. *Iain Sprangach*, d.c. 1330, natural son of Angus Mor, Ardnamurchan branch founder; and
2. *Iain Fraoch*, d.1358, natural son of Angus Og, Glencoe branch founder (and '*buried Reilig Orain, Iona*').

(i). *Red Hector*, k.1411;

(ii). *Sallow Hector*, k. 1513. No. **209** has an escutcheon 'charged with an **embattled tower**', which is on the MacLean's clan badge :- "**A tower embattled Argent**". And,

(B) no. **211**, with inscription no.13, for a "*Lachani*". There were many Duart Maclean Chiefs called Lachlan. The hereditary Iona mason was more likely an earlier *Mael-Sechlainn O Cuinn* {see Inscrip. no. 13} so it could be for Lachlan Lubanach Maclean, fl 1390, married daughter of "Good John of Islay." 'First' Maclean of Duart {by charter}.

(C) **Of Lochbuie**, effigy no. **210** by tradition is for *Maclean* of Lochbuie (Mull), '*Ewen of The Little Head*', k. 1538.

3. **OR**, is 210 for MacQuarrie? '*Clanna garga gusmora gniocht mhora Guaire*' (The fierce, fearless, great-feated MacQuarries) - Array of John, Lord of the Isles. See later.

They are less likely because they would have had a patronymic formula which does not include a "MAC" and even if they did, not the [MAC]DOMNUILL surname. That is, an inscription of "HIS IACET IOHANNES {son of} ENGVS" for them both (as sons of Angus Mor and Angus Og respectively). Their sons and heirs were MACIAINS.

Could it be for "*IOHANNES MACGUARIE*", d.1473? (JOHN MACQUARRIE). Two charters of John de Yle, earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, one at Tain and the other at Dingwall, were witnessed by John McGeir or McGoyre of Ulva on 12 April 1463. This was probably the same John *Makquhory of Wlvay* who is known from later records to have died about 1473 in heritable possession of the lands of Wlvay and the five-marklands of Mull called *Laganwalsagaray* (Lagganulva).

They are from very close by to Iona, and kin of the local MacKinnons, but there is no record of any local guide, antiquarian or researcher from any period ever declaring that No. 155 is, or might be, for Chief *John MacGuarie*, d.c. 1476. D. Munro, 1549, says their chiefs are buried in Reilig Oran - "*McKinvin and McGuare with thair linage*". The only repeated references to a monument for "MacQuarrie of Ulva" has been an incorrect one to the effigy of Bricius MacKinnon (starting with Martin Martin). While no. 155, with clearly "John Mac..." on it, was incorrectly said to be for a local Mull Maclean.

Because the local Mull MacKinnons and Macleans both had mid to full relief effigies for their chiefs, there is certainly potential that so would have the Mull MacQuarries - '*Clanna garga gusmora gniochtmhora Guaire*.'<sup>42</sup> ('The fierce, fearless, great-feated MacQuarries') - Array of John, Lord of the Isles. The founders of Clans MacKinnon and MacQuarrie were brothers, contemporary with eponymous Donald of Clan Donald. The above is possibly why the mistake was made in attributing the MacKinnon effigy to MacQuarrie.

Warrior effigy No 210 is a candidate. 'Tradition' (Maclean curator/guide?), says it's for a Maclean but it has no inscription to identify even a first name and no heraldry at all (no Maclean '*embattled tower*' as per 209 of reputed multiple burials; no small galley like MacKinnon the Clan Donald's *Flag Bearer* on 207 of multiple burials or on 208). And so 210 could just as well be for MacQuarrie/s as for a Maclean.

These mistakes and assumptions are no basis upon which to make any firm deduction, but I still doubt that

slab no. 155 could be for a MacQuarrie even though they do have a galley on their current coat of arms.

[*Johannes Maccoinnich*, d.1328. Not buried Iona.<sup>43</sup>  
[*Johannes Maclachlainn*, d.c.1460? Not buried Iona.]

On the basis of probability (let alone positively weighted statistically) I think it's for one of the three Johns of Clan Donald, all with the right to have the galley charge on Iona, and most likely for Iain Mhor MacDomnaill, Chief of Dunyvaig and the Glens, k.1427.

[NB : it's hard to disagree with RCAHMS that the "MAC" is less likely to be the first three letters of a reduced form of "*Malcolm*", ie, "*Macolm*". '*Hic iacet Johannes Maccolmi*' - formulaic for 'John son of Malcolm'. See this section's summary for discussion on the two Macleod chiefs, *Iain Ciar*, d.1392, son of *Gillecaluim*; and *Iain Borb*, d.1448.]

**2. SLAB no. 156; Inscription no. 17..** "HIC IACET ALA[N] / US..." (See APPENDIX "F" - note inscription fit.)

Probably for **Alan (Ailean) MacRuari**, fl. 1372 (charter, "*Alani fili Roderici*"), d.c. 1400, Chief of Clan MacRuari from 1346 (his father Ranald was murdered). He is the brother of Amie MacRuari, the first wife of MacDonald Lord of Isles, "Good John of Islay". Besides the possibility of Alan mac Ranald, d. 1419, to which I attach slab no.153 (below), there are no other '*Alans*' that I can find who were Clan Chiefs with a right to be buried in Reilig Oran over c.1350 - c.1500. In LMMSWH there is no research included to identify this Alan (p.13).

In the above context, the name "Alan" only comes down the MacSomersleds line of MacRuari - and then passed by John Macdonald and Amie MacRuari down to Clan Ranald. This is so of all the major families buried in Reilig Odhrain, especially from c.1350-c.1500 and definitely in the late 14th century. MacDougalls were not buried in Reilig Oran after 1231; e.g., their *Ailen of Dunollie*, fl. 1451, is buried at their Ardchattan Priory.

Firstly, Clanranald called his son Alan after his mother's line's names. Allan, MacAllan and Allanson are major surnames in Clan Ranald. Alan and Ranald were favourite first names in clan MacRuari and Clan Ranald. The Keppoch MacDonells only pick up *Ranald* after 1500 and the Glengarry's in the 19th century.

The 'Clan Alasdair/Alester', from Alexander Mor, son of Donald I, does **not** have a *Ranald*, so-called "f.1366". No wonder his "[succession seems obscure](#)" in "*Clan Donald*

<sup>42</sup> 'Book of Clanranald' in *Reliquiae Celticae*, ed. A. Cameron, J. Macbain & J. Kennedy (1892-4), ii, 260-1.

<sup>43</sup> Brydall, Robert. "*The Monumental Effigies of Scotland from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century*". Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Volume 29 (1894-95). pp. 329-410.

Vol 3"; p.185, and there's just a shadowy "glimpse" of him and "we infer the succession", because 'he and his father and his son' never existed as *MacAlesters*. They have all been *patronymically body snatched* from Clan Donald Chief Alaxandair OG's line, leaving a confirmed triple black-hole of ('III', is Alaxandair Og) + ('IV', *Ranald*) + ('V') in the MacAlester's pedigree - see prior info.

There is no reason to believe that MacRuari Chiefs, *MacSomerleds*, were not buried in Reilig Oran. There is every reason to believe they should have been but I cannot find proof. In 2006 I proposed that the eponymous Ruaidri mac Reginald, second son of the Abbey founder Reginald (and brother to eponymous Donald who was buried on the south side of the chapel) was also buried in St Oran's Chapel, under slab no.167 on the north side, just west of his father's head, who himself was reverently buried, "*deposito ad sanctos*", on the Gospel side of the alter ("standard position" for abbey founders). But now, see slab no. 127 below.

**3. Slab No. 153** (no inscription). Probably for Clanranald Chief (2), **Alan mac Ranald**, '*Alan of Gamoran*'<sup>44</sup>, d. 1419, first son of the eponymous Ranald (see why later for design and genealogy reasons). "*Alan mac Ranald died at his castle of Tirrim in 1419 and was buried with his fathers in Reilig Oran in Iona.*"<sup>45</sup>

A further *Clan Donald* possibility, if not *Alan of Gamoran*, is the younger son of Lord "Good John (I)" and Amie MacRuari, *Godfrey of the Isles*, d. 1401, at Castle Tioram, Lochaber (the traditional seat of Clan MacDonald of Clan Ranald). He was *Strenuus vir*, progenitor of [Sìolachadh Ghorraidh](#), Clan Godfrey.

**4. Slab no. 127** (no inscription). The galley orientation on this slab is very different to all the others. It is set vertically along an edge, to the left of the long shafted, central cross. It is somewhat elongated and flattened, has no oar-ports and only shows the lower part of the central mast. It does have some likeness to the galley form on the small "*Great Seal of Islay*" which was replicated from the seal of Reginald.

No. 127's galley has "*figures on board*" (RCAHMS) which are impossible to make out, but also hark to the "*four men-at-arms*" in the MacDonald's "*Great Seal of Islay*" (of Reginald, [Donald], Angus Mor and Og).



Alaxandair Og's 1292 seal also has the galley. This time, it appears to me, with two men and unsurprisingly, the *Red Hand of Ulster* (Province) inside it - and [Clan Donald VOL 1](#) agrees it's the *Red Hand*.

If slab no. 127 is for a MacSomerled or it's a Clan Donald monument, then for whom? The other designs in the slab may help to date it. The sword is similar to that on no. 120 and it is regarded as Iona School, 14th century (from 1300). Slab no. 126 which I have attributed quite separately to eponymous Donald, k. 1247, also has a sword similar to no. 120 and a long shafted, two-strand ('tubes') plaited, ringed cross. They, nos 126, 127, have been catalogued together because they are so obviously "close" in many respects. I think they are both actually older than 14th century (after *Govan School*? See p.15). RCAHMS say both are "*probably Iona School, 14th-15th century*", because it's clear that they are not a "fit" for that period or style. No. 126 cross' plait work is very similar to an earlier "[Govan School](#)" grave slab's two-strand plaited knots (were also 'tubular', but worn).<sup>46</sup>

The atypical galley design and rare orientation support that no. 127 is *not* Iona School. Nos 126 and 127 are also the same as (exemplars for?) the coarser Kilmartin and Invereray "*transitional*" slabs of mid 13th-14th century<sup>47</sup> with their similar swords, central long crosses (but different heads), plant-scroll - and triquetras, same as on no. 126.



No 127's unique cross design, of any other monument type and of any period in the western highlands and isles, with its additional transverse bars at top and centre, is a "**True Cross**". This cross is also outwith "Iona School".<sup>48</sup> See Appendix "E" for more. **This is the first identification and attribution of this extraordinary motif.**

I now think slab no. 127 might possibly be for the eponymous Ruari, d.c.1266, founder of Clan Ruari. The galley motif, with "*figures on board*" is one he would covet and be entitled. Same as for his brother Donald, as evidenced by the same style seal of their father Reginald and then of Donald's son Angus Mor and then both his sons Alaxandair Og and Angus Og (all west highland galleys).

<sup>46</sup> There is only one, poor example of *early Christian* double beaded 'Scandinavian' plait work on Iona; cross shaft no. 95.

<sup>47</sup> Fig 2, no 3, p.14; LMMSWH.

<sup>48</sup> MACMILLAIN, REV. ARCHIBOLD; "[IONA: Its History, Antiquities](#), etc". p. 62. 1891. He assigns it to 12th century.

<sup>44</sup> "Monro & Monro; Acts of The lords of The Isles; 1986

<sup>45</sup> Macdonald, DJ of Castleton; "Clan Donald"; p283. 1978.

Ruari is often portrayed as a "raider" but that should be put in context and it will become apparent that he and Donald's actions have been misinterpreted.<sup>49</sup>

To simplistically label Donald and Ruari mac Reginald as mere "*piratical pillagers*", having no motives or inspiration other than crass "Viking blood" raiding for its own sake, is severely deficient in any recognition, let alone appreciation, of prior events, time and place. It is an uncohesive, biased narrative and inadequate history.

It's instructive to recall the disgraceful propaganda days of Geraldus Cambrensis, Spencer, Stanihurst, etc, who were duly put in their place by the eloquent Dr Geoffrey Keating :- "*The English historians...when they write of Ireland, seem to imitate the beetle, which, when enlivened by the influence of the summer heats, flies abroad, and passes over the delightful field, neglectful of the sweet blossoms or fragrant flowers that are in its way, till at last, directed by its sordid inclination, it settles upon some nauseous excrement. Thus the above-mentioned authors proceed when they write of this kingdom: what was worthy or commendable in the Irish nobility and gentry, they pass over. They take no notice of their piety, learning, and courage, of their charitable disposition to build churches and religious houses*"<sup>50</sup>

After only five years from the Irish "**razing**" (ie, to the ground) of the emerging Benedictine Iona Abbey, it was again **plundered** (by others) in 1210. "*Punishment was merely delayed for those who had attempted to prevent Reginald's Benedictine foundation on Iona, 1203 (Power).*" In 1212, the two sons of the abbey's founder Reginald who died 1207, ie, Donald and Ruari, together with Tomás mac Uchtraigh, led a raid on Derry and its hinterland, and two years later Ruari and Alan again attacked Derry and took away many of the church's prize possessions (AU 1212, 1214). "... *the sons of Raghall, son of Somarle, came to Daire of St. Columille with six and seventy ships*" (galley image, no 127).

Redemption, retribution and restitution, was not swift, but sweet. "*Ruaidhri, son of Raghall, plundered Daire completely and took the treasures of the Community of Daire and of the North of Ireland besides from out the midst of the church of the Monastery*" :- To rebuild and replenish Iona abbey. To restore the prestige and status of Iona. Those who destroyed it should pay! "*At all levels of the church hierarchy across Europe, from pope downwards, the 'defenders of the faith' frequently*

<sup>49</sup>Power, R (2005). "Meeting in Norway: Norse-Gaelic Relations in the Kingdom of Man and the Isles, 1090–1270" . Saga-Book (Viking Society for Northern Research) 29: 5–66.

<sup>50</sup> A *General history of Ireland* (1861). G Keating. His Preface XV.

*sought recourse to the battlefield to air grievances, redeem pride and foster might.*"<sup>51</sup>

These are the responsibilities of the line of heirs of the abbey founder and Donald and Ruari were his sons.

The right of patronage is hereditary (*haereditarium*), e.g., "*entitled to the right of presentation, honorary rights, utilitarian rights (iura utilia) and the cura beneficii.*" And so are the responsibilities : "*If the church connected with the patronage is threatened with total ruin, or the endowment with a deficit, if those first bound to restore it are not at hand, the bishop is to exhort the patron to rebuild (reœdificandum) or renew the endowment (ad redotandum).*"<sup>52</sup>

As the founder's heir, Donald (with brother Ruari) also had the responsibility "*not only by fiscal law, but by the [canon] law of scripture to protect*" the abbey.<sup>53</sup> NB: The founder's endowment does not pay for the construction costs. "*The patron has the subsidiary duty of building*" (Trent, Sess. XXI, "de ref.", c. vii); the erection of the church at one's private expense (*aedificatio*). "*It was the founder of a house and his heirs (Donald) who provided the impetus to build or rebuild, who might contribute ideas, and who furnished resources to finance the project.*"<sup>54</sup> (see website "[Iona Abbey & Clan Donald 1200-1550](#)" for more on this.)

This was also natural justice, normal for the period. Under Irish custom, if not secular, civil law ("Fenechas"), the reasonable 'compensation' for Derry and Armagh sacking and razing Iona.<sup>55</sup> Donald and Ruari refilled the abbey purse and re-instated the church ware (and one of St Columba's relics?) This two pronged episode 1212-14 was the only evidence that critics use to label Donald and Ruari as mere "pillagers". It is deceptive and misleading and the catchy, emotive book titles designed by marketers to rouse attention don't help either, e.g., the otherwise very good: - *Duanaire Na Sracaire (Songbook of the Pillagers)* Anthology of Scotland's Gaelic Verse to 1600; McLeod, Bateman; 2007.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> A.T. Lucas, 'The Plundering and Burning of Churches in Ireland, 7th to 16th Century', in E. Rynne (ed.), North Munster Studies: Essays in commemoration of Monsignor Michael Maloney (Cork 1967).

<sup>52</sup> [Catholic Encyclopedia \(1913\) Patron and Patronage.](#)

<sup>53</sup> *John Wyclif as Legal Reformer* (Conditionality of Endowment; p.108); William E. Farr; Uni. of Washington; 1971. (Wyclif : c. 1320 – 31 December 1384.)

<sup>54</sup> *Monastic and Religious Orders*; p.152; Burton, J., 1994.

<sup>55</sup> The laws were a civil rather than a criminal code, concerned with the payment of compensation for harm done and the regulation of property, inheritance and contracts; the concept of state-administered punishment for crime was foreign to Ireland's early jurists.

<sup>56</sup> A "*huge range of rich and diverse poetry: prayers and hymns of Iona, lays of Finn, praise poems and satires from the*



Ruari's father Reginald", was an aristocrat, a noble "knight" - his seal inset.<sup>57</sup> He was "*The greatest warrior then in the western isles*". He was "*Rex Insularum*", "*the most distinguished of the Galls or Gael for prosperity, sway of generosity and feat of arms*".

Ruari's father Reginald went on pilgrimage to Rome and "*obtained a cross from Jerusalem*" (MacVurich; 'Books of Clanranald'). It may have been, but not necessarily, The *Jerusalem Cross*<sup>58</sup> also known as the Crusaders' Cross.

Slab no.161, which I have attributed to Reginald, has the unmistakable pilgrim's staff<sup>59</sup> with "*round pommel, long tang-button and a spike at the lower end*" (RCAHMS describe this staff under *Ecclesiastical Objects*; not as a secular *slat na ríge* (rod of kingship); LMMSWH; Fig. 24, no.3; pps 178-9). [See APPENDIX "F"]

EPONYMOUS DONALD'S (contested) DEATH.

Angus Mor granted a charter to Paisley Abbey, dated between 1241 and 1249<sup>60</sup> and this is a strong indicator at least that Donald was no longer Chief, ie, from 1247. Coeval to this, Angus Mor is eulogised (shamelessly flattered) in a contemporary Irish poem, "*about 1250*", "*An Address to Aonghus of Islay*".<sup>61</sup>

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*drinking halls of chiefs, courtly songs and lewd rants from the aristocracy, songs of battle and death, poems of love, and incantations.*"

<sup>57</sup> (reverse) 19th c. interpretation of a 15th c. description of Reginald's seal as per a copy of his Paisley charter, late 12th c.



<sup>58</sup> The design originates with the coat of arms worn by Godfrey of Bouillon during the First Crusade, and it remained in use as the armorial of the Kingdom of Jerusalem throughout its short duration (1099–1203).

Not to be confused with the Lorraine cross (now practically identical with the patriarchal cross), which has also been called the "Jerusalem cross". The "Crusader's Cross" is also called the "New Jerusalem Cross".

<sup>59</sup> "The only undisputed pilgrim staff, at Worcester, had a **metal spike at the end**". "*Death and burial in medieval England, 1066-1550*"; Daniell, Christopher. 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Munro & Munro, *Acts of The Lords of The Isles*; , p. 280

<sup>61</sup> Bergin, Osborn; *Irish Bardic Poetry, 1970*; pps 169-172; 291-294. "*Ceannaigh duain t'athar a Aonghas* – Purchase thy father's poem, Aonghus". "*There is nothing in the language or style to contradict the internal evidence that is was composed about the year 1250*" (p.170).

<http://bardic.celt.dias.ie/main.html> (no 401). This also states "*13th mid*"; Patron [Aonghus mac Domhnaill](#); [MacDomhnaill d.](#)

It is obvious that Angus' father, named as Domhnall in the c.1250 poem, is dead – "*thou hast the King's house* (pps 10-12); *thou hast the roots and the flower of the tree. Each treasure chest belongs to thee, his houses and his hounds entire, thine are Domhnall's cattle and his steeds To thee he has left in his will each house from Mull to Kintyre; thine are the galleys he left.*"

The poet would not be penning such excessive praise to Angus, even if only to resolve a debt for his father's poem, if he wasn't the Clan Donald Chief, 1247. Donald (I) was the "*Mac Somurli ri Airir Gaidil, K.1247.*"

It's pertinent that slab 161 (Reginald attribution) has the same sword as 126, 127 and also has the triquetra, same as the one on 126 (Donald attribution). What's more, the schematic layouts of nos 161, 126, 127 are *identical*. Especially notable on 126 and 127 is the *exact* same spatial juxtaposition {mirror imaged} of:- the rare crosses, both *double plaited*, and the swords, *short canted, unexpanded* quillons {and also 161? See App's "E-F"). **I think no. 126 and no. 127 are for the brothers, Donald. k.1247 and Ruari, d.c.1266, sons of the Iona Abbey founder, Reginald mac Somerled (no. 161).**

#### POST 1493 SLABS WITH GALLEY (APPENDIX "H")

**5. Slab no. 151.** Inscription no. 25; Colum MacLeod, *of Lewis*, d. 1515-1524. Note this is well after the Lordship fell in 1493 and these McLeods would be free to use the MacDonald's chief heraldic device on Iona.

**6. Slab No. 183** (now in St Ronans. Unrestored still?).

CLAN DONALD. "HERE LIES JOHN MACIAIN (MACDONALD) LORD OF ARDNAMURCHAN (Killed 1518). Made 1500-09 on Colonsay by his sister. Black-Letter raised script in border around perimeter.

**NB:- There are no other recumbent, flat, low relief Iona graveslabs with a large galley on them** (excl 2; Chapel).

The only other ones are those with a smaller galley "heraldic charge" on the escutcheon shield (at the "honor point") of two effigies (nos 207, 208; VOL 4) of vassal chiefs to the Lords of the Isles and done by custom in fealty, role, rank and to be recognisable on the battlefield :- who you were fighting for?; on which side? One is Chief Gilbride MacKinnon, mentioned before, and the other appears also to be a MacKinnon because the shield's "engrailed" tressure and blazon are almost identical - lion 'salient' (albeit reversed) and probably an otter chasing a salmon. (RCAHMS also agree that the traditional identification of the second being for a 'McClean of Ross' is probably erroneous. LMMSWH; p.183.)

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[1296](#). This database is the work of Dr Katharine Simms, (past) Department of History, Trinity College Dublin.

So it appears that MacKinnon is the only other user of the galley motif **on Iona**. Their very late cross with galley of 1489 was only made during the death throes of the Lordship of the Isles which expired just four years later in 1493.

This all makes sense as they were the Lord of the Isles' Marischal and Standard Bearer, thereby having the obvious privilege, rationale and military tradition to include their Lord's heraldic military device on the "honour point" of their escutcheon. And for a long period were almost permanent Iona Abbots through "hereditary family possession".<sup>62</sup> And being located on Mull they probably had the feudal, security obligation of protecting the abbey (See APPENDIX "I").

So, by exception, because of the unique position held, they had the right, possibly assumed, to use the Lord's Of the Isles' galley motif, *on Iona*. Why not, they considered they had a "God-given" right to be Abbott of Iona and thought they had the local military advantage and superiority to enforce it. Sometime after the Lordship was forfeited, the MacKinnons had the audacity to deliberately place the "*stateliest tomb in the isle; a statue as big as life*" of their Chief Bricius [of five burials from outside in Reilig Òdhraim] exactly right over *The MacDonald's* ancestral tomb in the family chapel, the last buried there being their nemesis, Donald of Harlaw. He was the 6th MacDonald Lord occupying [in turn] the "*sacred storehouse of his predecessors on the south side of Teampull Òdhraim*" below the later elaborate, triple arched wall niche. A clear message perhaps of a hollow triumph, reflecting their apt motto - "*AUDENTES FORTUNA JUVAT*"; "*Fortune favours the bold.*"

It must be remembered :- The local "*perverse noblemen*" MacKinnons, had (c.1390-5) inspired a serious rebellion against Lord of the Isles, Donald of Harlaw, after usurping "*control of a substantial part of the Abbey property*" (RCAHMS).

The Mackinnon brothers, the "*wicked*" abbot Finguine<sup>63</sup> and chief Niall, son of Giilebride, committed treason-sedition in an attempt to protect their long standing

<sup>62</sup> Partly because of the characteristic "hereditary family possession" (p.368), the powerful Clann Finguinne, the MacKinnons, thought they were the Iona Abbey's sole ecclesiastical polity. [ "*..it is not uncommon to find abbots charged with exploiting their position in favour of their kinsmen*"; Knowles, D. *The Monastic Order in England*; 1963.]

<sup>63</sup> The first Finguine MacKinnon, the "*subtle and wicked councillor – the Green Abbot*" [from c.1357] - "*unlawful occupier, who falsely bears himself as Abbot*"; "*the greatest tyrant (who) had his lands from the goods of the monastery, and moreover dilapidated the monastery.*"

abbey "corruption"<sup>64</sup> by instigating a rebellion, a coup, to place their "puppet" [Iain Mor Tanister] as the Lord of the Isles. ([See here for more.](#))

The point here is that in this locality, the significant and singular burial locality of the MacDonald Lords of the Isles (responsible heirs to the founder of Iona Abbey) and of their main branch chiefs, "*Great men of the royal blood of Clan Donald lineally descended*", it is to be expected that their "*MacSommerled*" heraldic charge of the galley was reserved, restricted to them, for their display on their low relief graveslabs - while they were in power. The one possible exception being for the only other MacSommerled family buried on Iona, MacRuari.

And it was only in other localities, outside of MacDonald's "ecclesiastical capital"<sup>65</sup>, e.g., Kilmory, that their vassals were permitted or felt free to use the galley as large motifs on their recumbent slabs.

It's worth pointing out that both grave slabs with galley motif that have in the past been attributed to a family *other than* MacDonald, have both been regarded by RCAHMS as '*probably wrong*'. ([Graham, "Antiquities, XXI, f.1](#), doesn't generally help when he describes one of the rows of re-arranged slabs :- "*probably / a Maclean/ in same row with tombs of that clan*".)

EXAMINE :- POSSIBLE TIMING and ATTRIBUTIONS of relevant monuments with foliated crosses like the Campbeltown cross. Consider their other design elements, e.g., galley, animals, vine leaf and interlace designs, etc (Campbeltown Cross - c.1380).

<sup>64</sup> This is not about trying to assign proportionality of cause and effect on the abbey's "*impoverishment and collapse*". It is about the fact that MacKinnon corruption **did** "*usurp substantial church property and wealth*" - and the fact that their fraud and excesses did contribute to "*impoverish and dilapidate*" the abbey - and the fact that many MacDonald Chiefs took continuous action over a very long period (> 150 years) to stop them contributing to the Abbey's probable demise. That is, the proof, that MacDonald Chiefs, as the responsible founder's heirs, were continuous guardians and protectors of their hereditary 'asset-investment' - that endowment is not a once off event; that its feudal "*functional reciprocity*" is a dynamic obligation - that MacDonald Chiefs were clearly not merely subsidiary patrons or benefactors as is wrongly portrayed and demeans their fundamental and essential role in the abbey's entire existence. (And not about hereditary family possession itself, or celibacy which had generally broken down over two centuries, or concubinage which had become an established feature, **but** excessive spending of the Abbey resources by MacKinnons on them and their children, ie, "*dowered them large with goods of the monastery*" for daughter's dowries.)

<sup>65</sup> "*The ancient ecclesiastical capital of The Royal Family of MacDonald, formerly Kings of the Western parts of Scotland and the Isles.*" (W. Sacherverell, Governor of Mann; 1688)  
**In deference, on Iona, the galley restricted to "MacDonald".**

'SIMILAR' FOLIATED CROSSES, grouped together in RCAHMS VOL 4; nos 153-7. It's unfortunate I can't physically examine them all more closely to get better comparisons, e.g., cross foliation variation; no. 156's interlace component instead of foliation.

There are two rational groupings based on motifs/design :-

**"A" Group. Similar foliated Cross; Triple Trinity - Triquetra" signature (see Pl. 1) :-**

**No. 157.** John I, son of Angus Og, - d. **1386**

**No. 154.** Ranald mac John (1st Clanranald) - d. **1386**

**No. 153.** Alan mac Ranald (see before) - d. 1419

153: *Triquetra* not as well done as it is 30 years later. It has a foliated cross, no inscription :- "*Closely resembling in design that on the back of the Campbeltown cross*". RCAHMS state:- incorrectly attributed by Pennant in 1772 to a Maclean, "*Ailen nan Sop*", who flourished in the 16th century, d.1551. (But interestingly to an "Ailen/Alan" - just the wrong one I propose.)

If no. 153 is not for Alan mac Ranald, it could be for others of Clan Donald, not only based on pure prevalence, and the galley on Iona, but proven period identities. E.g., other sons of "Good John" :- Godfrey, d. 1401; or, Alastair Carrach of Keppoch, d.1440, etc.

The three above are the father, the son, and grandson.

If the rare, highly symbolic "*Triple Trinity*" is in fact a signature or mark of a master mason, then the evidence points to it first being used for John I, whom, "*among the Churchmen of the Isles, was known as "Good John of Islay on account of his munificence to their order"*". He also founded the large Oransay Priory. In addition he was the impetus or the reviver for *The Iona School of Carving* and would have had as his mason only the best, the MacDonald's hereditary *Prime Artificer*, O'Brolchan. It stands to reason that "*Good John*", *Dominus Insularum*, could have inspired the "*Triple Trinity*" use - and then it was religiously copied "in succession" on his first son's slab, Ranald,154, and then on his first son's slab, Alan, 153 ( tri-slabs?).

If I am correct about the attributions for slabs no. 161 to abbey founder Reginald and no. 126 to the Clan Donald founder, Donald son of Reginald, who both have the *triquetra* on their monuments, then it would follow that the munificent "Good John of Islay", great cultural and religious patron, might have this dynastic ecclesiastical motif re-drafted on his monument into his unique, Iona School "*Triple Trinity*".<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> The triquetra is only on one other slab, the "*crudely carved*" no 191 which "*does not bear the characteristics of any particular school*" (RCAHMS). It was located in the grounds of

**"B" Group. Labels at top, a different foliated cross, galley, stag hunts, "decoration is generally similar".**

**No. 156.** Alan MacRuari - d.c. 1400

"*Hic lacet Alan / us [Macruaidri?]*" (Inscription no. 17)

"*the decoration is generally similar to that on 155..*"; RCAHMS, VOL 4; p.225 (not the earlier Alan mac Ruari who died c.1284). See App'x "F". NB: [inscription *fit*].

**No. 155.** Iain Mhor (brother to Donald II) - k. 1427

"*Hic lacet Johan / nes Mac[domnaill?]*" (App'x "F")

Inscription no. 15; "the next three letters seem to be 'mac', very probably the beginning of a surname" {accepted as "mac" in Argyll VOL 4, no. 155}. This slab is the "*Stag Hunt*" and wrongly given for Macleans, again.

Both 155 and 156 have distinctive stag hunts. The only other slab on Iona with this kind of "*beast of venery*" motif is no. 157 from St Oran's Chapel and I have attributed it, on independent grounds, to Lord John (I), the father of Iain Mhor of Dunyvaig, above (155). John I's son, Clanranald has a 'hart-stag' hunt on his *Texa cross* (Appendix "B"). And no. 153, which I attribute to Clanranald's son Alan, also has a small hunt depicted along the stem and prow of the galley.

#### SUMMARY OF GALLEY MOTIF

1. I have shown that all of the six low relief graveslabs with a galley, *in Reilig Oran*, are Clan Donald's or Clan Ruari (MacSommerled's). And I've probably identified them all, by a process of analysing inscriptions, art design and motifs, genealogy-succession, regional history, custom and ritual (2 in chapel *are* Clan Donald).

2. **MacLeods of 1. Dunvegan-Harris and 2. Lewis.** Reference slab no. 155. While there are two Dunvegan chiefs with the name John who were buried at Iona between 1350-1500 (*Iain Ciar, d.1392* and *Iain Borb, d.1448*), I have disqualified them on these grounds :- LMMSWH; p.184, "*The McLeods having a castle emblazoned on the coat of arms to this day*" - no galley heraldry exits for them but they have the "Three legs of Mann", a "Bulls Head" and a "Golden Sun". Iain Borb's blazon is: "*azure, castle triple-towered argent*".

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Reilig Oran so it simply cannot be for Sommerled, Reginald or any MacDonald Lord of the Isles, because it is widely accepted they are all buried in their St Oran's family chapel. And RCAHMS say it is of "**15th century date**" (at least two centuries after Reginald died). It has a **Latin Cross**, a much **different sword** also with its **plaited scabbard**, a '**charter box**', etc, etc. as per VOL 4, p. 229. See clearly the plaited scabbard by Drummond, *Monuments, pl. XXVII, 1*. It is not a plain, smooth white *slat na righe* - symbol of purity (rod of kingship).

NB :- Both the carved galley at St Clements, Rodel, Harris and the one at Iona, are products of after the fall of the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles in 1493 (ie, three decades later, 1528 and c.1524). There is no evidence to suggest or show that McLeods ever used the galley motif *on Iona, during the Lordship*. [Some also suggest that five MacLeod chiefs were buried under the huge matrix slab with monumental brass inlay in the presbytery, abbey church. I consider this to be false.<sup>67</sup>]

3. The evidence for restricting these type of *Iona* slabs with galley to Clans Donald and Ruari is totally supported by being able to methodically attribute credible, historic identities. And, with the prospect of anyone else being improbable (from a restricted cohort of eligible clans - in a fixed time period).

4. The low relief slab no. 154, from Reilig Oran, which I have separately identified by the inscription as being a monument for Ranald MacDomnuill, d.1386, also has the MacSommerled *Donald-Ruari* specific galley heraldry on Iona and this reinforces the case and goes to strongly affirm that attribution. In 1373, MacRuari lands were bestowed on Ranald, the son and heir of Amie MacRuari (Robert II charter).

5. The rare "Triple Trinity - Triquetra" motif also plays a part in identifying slab no 154 as it appears only on two other slabs which I have by quite separate and independent processes, identified as being, one, for his father, "Good John of Islay" and, two, for his son, Alan mac Ranald. The foliated cross which is similar to the Campbeltown cross is also corroborating art-history evidence and places this slab in the right period of manufacture to match the genealogy, successions.

6. I have categorically dispelled any notion that the west highland galley motifs on pre-1493 Iona graveslabs might be summarily dismissed as having no specific attribution relevance. And shown the opposite, that they have an almost exclusive association with the patrilineal successors of the abbey founder, the Clan Donald *Lords of the Isles* and the "*de Isles*" chiefs of their major branches, buried in Reilig Odhrain.

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<sup>67</sup> The so called *MacLeod of MacLeod*, c.1400 armoured warrior "monumental brass", large inlay slab in the abbey church presbytery and it was wrongly said to be solid ("massy") silver - after the very thick inset brass was stolen. It can be said with almost absolute certainty that this huge, totally out of character slab, was not the original monument for any of "the best men of the isles" c.1400 (definite dating) for many sound reasons [even the wrong stone type]. None would be buried in the **abbey** church c.1400, not even the Lord of the Isles - they were all known to be buried in Reilig Odhrain - "the most hallowed spot on Iona - most ancient graveyard in Scotland". That slab is almost certainly a "ring in", relocated possibly by a grand-standing Maclean chief after the 1493 Lordship collapse and the church's belated Cathedral status raising of 1506/7 - a short window before reformation [just like Maclean's Cross, c.1500 - same Chief?]. The slab is a rare, early brass type for Scotland. And obviously not West Highland. Only two or three examples, and these of late date, are known in Scotland. A likely candidate was killed 1513, Flodden :- Hector Maclean the Swarthy, and sometimes Eachuinn ni num-bristion, on account of his brave and warlike disposition [fits 'the image']. It's also right in the center of the widened church that occurred 1450-80; and so logically it was 'installed' after that for symmetry (unlikely to be disturbed in widening works if there beforehand).



68



MacDonald of MacDonald



LUINGEAS

*"CLANN DÒMHNAILL NAM  
BÀTAN 'S NAN  
ARLONGA LUATHA".*

**"CLAN DONALD FAMED FOR GALLEYS  
AND TALL SWIFT SHIPS".**



Lords of Isles Trust's west highland galley, "Aileach"

<sup>68</sup> The Finlaggan Pursuivant of Arms is the private officer of arms of the Clan Donald in Scotland.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION ON No. 154

Slab 154 has an inscription that was declared "illegible" by RCAHMS, 1977.

Another slab, no. 157 has no record from any time in the past for its now "obliterated" inscription (ie, except by Sir Robert Moray in 1650's, in a list of 300 held by F. Fraser, Dean of Isles, but which was "lost" by the Earl of Argyll. (See APPENDIX "A" for suggested inscription).

Both slabs are categorized by RCAHMS as "Iona School" with a considerably long and indeterminate period of "14th to 15th century".

To arrive at attributions for slabs 154 and 157 out of a large number of slabs in Reilig Odhrain and chapel :-

- by different processes, from completely different directions,<sup>69</sup>
- and for the attributions to turn out being for a father and his son,
- who both died within 12 months,
- and the slabs' layouts and designs to be almost identical from quite a large number of possible coeval designs,

I think adds weight for another general, independent reason why both attributions should be taken seriously.

The odds of this happening by chance are too large. The processes did not start with these two slabs because they were similar, or because the deaths of John and his son Ranald were in the same year. The two slabs share a rare "Tri-triplet Trinity" vine and leaf motif with central triquetra. It even suggests they were made by the same mason around the same time and this unusual motif may be his signature, "mark".

This "Iona School, 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century" prescribed graveslab, no.154, is most probably for Ranald, son of Lord John (I), who died late 14<sup>th</sup> century (1386), the eponym and founder of Clan Ranald and known to be buried in Reilig Odhráin – and it was later moved to the "Cathedral" (probably by Iona Club, c.1850) for protection where MacAlister was able to read it.

<sup>69</sup> **No 157 - No inscription reading** - "obliterated". Attributed to John, son of Angus Og, by a **process of elimination** from all the known burials in St Oran's Chapel, by each Lord of Isles - in right succession, by known years of burial, who was last buried there, an inscription (Angus Og), where they were buried (burial custom, ritual, etc), age and class of slabs, etc. [For more.](#)

**No 154 - Inscription reading**, "almost worn smooth" by MacAlister, 1913.

**It is certain to be a Clan Donald monument.** The only alternatives to *Ranaldvs MacDomnuill*, d.1386, are *Donaldvs MacDomnuill*, chief of the Glengarry Branch, d. 1420 and *Ranaldvs MacDomnuill*, son of Lord Alaxandair Og, d.c. 1370 (and *Ranald Bane* is excluded).

"Ranald, the eldest son of John of Isla, who resigned in favour of his half-brother Donald - received a princely heritage by charter from his father, and that he realised the responsibilities attached to the possession of such wide territories is confirmed by the testimony of MacVurich, who speaks of him as :- *a man of augmenting churches and monasteries. He bestowed an Unciata of land in Uist on the monastery of Iona forever in honour of God and of Columba.*" ('CLAN DONALD VOL 1', p.473. See short article on his Texa cross, my APPENDIX "B").

There is good detail on Ranald's and his father John's deaths in "*Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands*" (LMMSWH); p.127.

RCAHMS never mentions Macalister's 1913 "*first [and the only] published attempt at a decipherment*".<sup>70</sup> Did they even know? Clearly not, or they would have evaluated and discussed this sole, singular evidence. The facts<sup>71</sup> shows RCAHMS did not know of this much earlier decipherment and it has not been considered.

<sup>70</sup> R. A. S. MACALISTER, Dr. Litt; M.A., PROFESSOR CELTIC ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN. VISITED IONA 1913: his 'An inventory of the ancient monuments remaining in the island of Iona', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, No 48: pps 421-30; 1914.

<sup>71</sup>

- "ARGYLL INVENTORY VOL 4". RAS MacAlister is included in the bibliography, but it only has "*The Memorial Slabs of Clonmacnois, King's County*"; (1909), and "*Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*" [CIIC]; 1945. ARGYLL VOL 4 only mentions MacAlister's PSAS *Iona Inventory* in f/n 1; p.179, regards monument find locations anterior to the 19th century re-arrangements.
- Only MacAlister's '*Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*' [CIIC], VOL II; 1945-9, is used in "*Late medieval monumental sculpture in the West Highlands*"; K. A. Steer and J. W. M. Bannerman.
- MacAlister's work on "re-uniting" St John's Cross, Iona, proved sound - see VOL 4; p.197. Some other of his work, at first glance, may seem not to be. But those opinions must be questioned I think, particularly the negativity to his early Palestinian work, 1902-09. That pessimism is put into perspective of the state of archaeology of the period and his situation there. "*Because Macalister was the only professional archaeologist involved in the excavation, managing a project of such complexity was essentially an impossible task.*" "*Such tragedies were common in the days of Bliss & Macalister, but inexcusable in modern times.*" [Workshop on Macalister's work in Israel, Dec 12, 2012](#)

Therefore, it's inclusion into the examination is vital "new evidence". It can't be seen as insignificant by contemplating :- "there is no evidence to support the reading given by RAS MacAlister" (as was done for No. 68, but for the good reason that all they had was a "photograph showing the alleged reading outlined on the cross by MacAlister"; p. 206, n56 ).

The onus of proof should be on those who might disagree, to provide evidence and reasons why the Professor was totally wrong, even if the inscription was "*almost worn smooth*" and he could not be absolutely certain. This is not that unusual. There are only two words that mattered in this reading, "RANALDVS MACDOMNUILL". No one is dismissive of Lhuyd's 1700 readings as said before. They are taken for granted, "*as read by Edward Lhuyd*", albeit 200 years less old, but still 300 years worn nevertheless (same acceptance for Hutton, 1802, Smith, 1850).

With the extensive and solid evidence provided, Professor MacAlister's reading of "Ranaldvs MacDomnuill" ought to also be taken "*as read*". There is good evidence which points to the right years for the slab's design (Campbeltown Cross, c.1380) and the probability of the almost same slab design (No. 157) for his father, it rightly from St Oran's Chapel, with only a single and understandable central motif variation, *and*, who died in the very same year.

Also, *slab 154's* galley is Clan Donald specific on Iona.

**I think there is a most reasonable case to consider slab No. 154 being attributed for Ranald son of John, son of Angus Og, d. 1386, that is, for the eponymous Ranald of Clan Ranald, major branch of Clan Donald.**

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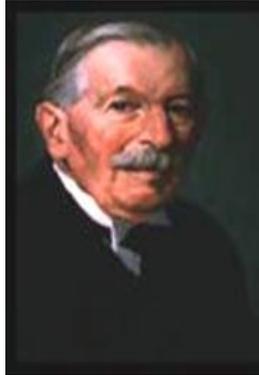
- RCAHMS say that the inscription is "*two-line in Lombardic capitals now illegible*" (VOL 4; p.224). If they had known of any earlier decipherment, by anyone qualified and certainly by someone they had referenced eight times in that particular VOL 4, then it is unthinkable that when making such a definitive statement that an inscription cannot unfortunately be read, that they would deliberately exclude a fact that it had been read, even if with difficulty - by a Professor of Celtic archaeology at University College, Dublin. And exclude that a probable decipherment was available and not make some examination and proper evaluation of it? (Rhetorical). Which simply goes to confirm that RCAHMS did not know about it.

## SUMMARY - ATTRIBUTION OF SLAB No. 154.

1. CLAN DONALD MONUMENTS IN REILIG ORAN ARE ABOUT 50% OF THE TOTAL OF THOSE IN THE SAME, **RELEVANT** CATEGORY - 43 LOW RELIEF CARVED (EXCLUSION REASONS AND NUMBERS AS EXPLAINED). BEING CLAN DONALD SLABS ARE A HIGH 50/50 PROBABILITY TO START WITH. AND THE MANY BURIALS OF THE EARLY CLAN DONALD "**MACIANS**" OF ARNAMURCHAN AND GLENCOE EXCLUDE THEMSELVES (NOT "**MACDOMNUILL**") AND **AGAIN** GREATLY NARROW THE FIELD OF CANDIDATES BY 50%.
2. 'RANALD' (AND 'ALAN') ARE NOT COMMON NAMES AMONGST THE RELEVANT ISLES CLANS AND THOSE FAMILIES KNOWN BURIED IN REILIG ORAN. THERE ARE NOT THAT MANY FAMILIES, "**THE BEST MEN OF THE ISLES**" TO CONSIDER.
3. (I) THERE IS NO 'RANALD' IN EITHER **MACCLEANS**, MCLEODS OR MACKINNONS, 1300-1500. THEY ARE MAJOR NUMBERS HERE.  
(II) AND IN ANY CASE, MACLEAN AND MACKINNON ARE ALL BURIED UNDER MID TO HIGH RELIEF EFFIGIES.
4. THERE ARE ONLY FOUR POSSIBILITIES OF A PERSON WITH THE FIRST NAME **RANALDUS** AND FOUR FOR THE SURNAME **MACDOMNUILL**. THIS IS A SHORTLIST BASED ON FACT.
5. IF THE SURNAME IS **MACDOMNUILL** - NO '**IF**' WHEN ANALYSED AGAINST THE POSSIBILITIES OF SHORTLISTED ELIGIBLE SURNAMES IN REILIG ORAN.
6. WHEN **MACDOMNUILL** - IT CAN ONLY BE **RANALDUS**.  
WHEN **RANALDUS** - IT CAN ONLY BE **MACDOMNUILL**.
7. IN DEFERENCE, THE GALLEY ON **LOW RELIEF** SLABS IS THE SOLE HERALDRY OF IONA ABBEY'S PATRONS. THE ABBEY FOUNDER'S HEIRS OF THE CLAN DONALD LEADERSHIP - IE, **ON IONA, PRE-FALL OF THE MACDONALD LORDSHIP** (exception? Clan Ruari).
8. **RANALDVS** + GALLEY = **MACDOMNUILL**, UNQUALIFIED.
9. ACCEPTED YEAR OF BURIAL MATCHES SLAB DESIGN AND WITH THE PERIOD ALIGNED TO THE CAMPETOWN CROSS, c.1380.
10. ALL THREE SLABS I ATTRIBUTE TO FATHER, SON, GRANDSON ("**GOOD JOHN OF ISLAY**", **CLANRANALD** AND ALAN) HAVE THE RARE "**TRIPLE TRINITY**" MOTIFF AND A SIMILAR FOLIATED CROSS. A GALLEY IS ON RANALD'S TEXA CROSS - **AND HIS GRAVESLAB**.

**A century ago Professor RAS MacAlister said:- "I think it reads 'HIC IACET RANALDVS MACDOMNUILL', which may be offered as *at any rate the first published attempt at its decipherment.*" All The evidence shows his reading was actually *first rate* - an "**unquestionable reading which constitutes a valuable record.**"**

## APPENDICES "A" to "E"



Professor RAS MacAlister "prefers to discuss the possibilities and this he does with a great wealth of detail", but, he also has a "nucleus of unquestionable readings [which] constitutes a valuable record".<sup>72</sup>



<sup>72</sup> **REVIEW OF** :- *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum (CIIC)*; R. A. S. Macalister.

By E. G. Quinn, *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 5, No. 17 (Mar., 1946), pp. 91-93; Published by: **Irish Historical Studies Publications Ltd.**

**CAMBRIDGE UNI PRESS REVIEW** - *Speculum* / Volume 24 / Issue 04 / October 1949, pp 598-601 (Medieval Studies) - Criticises MacAlister's 'CIIC', but for "*inadequacy of bibliographical and other documentation*".

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON REFERENCE** :- "*Brittany was excluded from R. A. S. Macalister's great Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum (1945-1949), ..... still the fundamental reference for medieval Celtic inscribed stones*".

## APPENDIX "A"

**No 157.** Suggested inscription on the separated panels. "*Good John of Islay*", father of eponymous Ranald (slab 154). It is done to period context, scale, style, layout and 'method' based on other contemporary carved inscriptions. That is, it has some basis of practical reality and period application. It's attainable, not fanciful. It is of three line panel depth.



## 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.

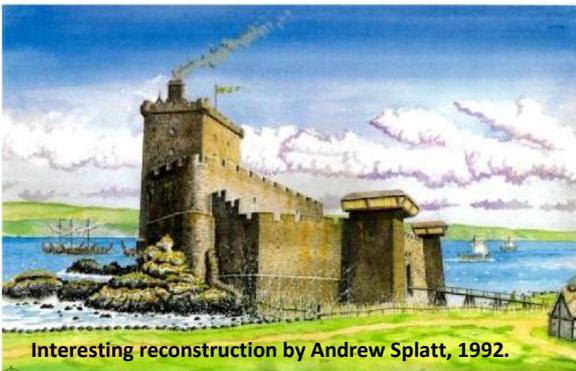


Inscription 49: *"HEC EST CRUX REGNALDI IOHANNES DE YSLE"*.

*"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 <sup>73</sup> :- *"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).

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

## APPENDIX "B ii"

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*" <sup>74</sup> (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.]

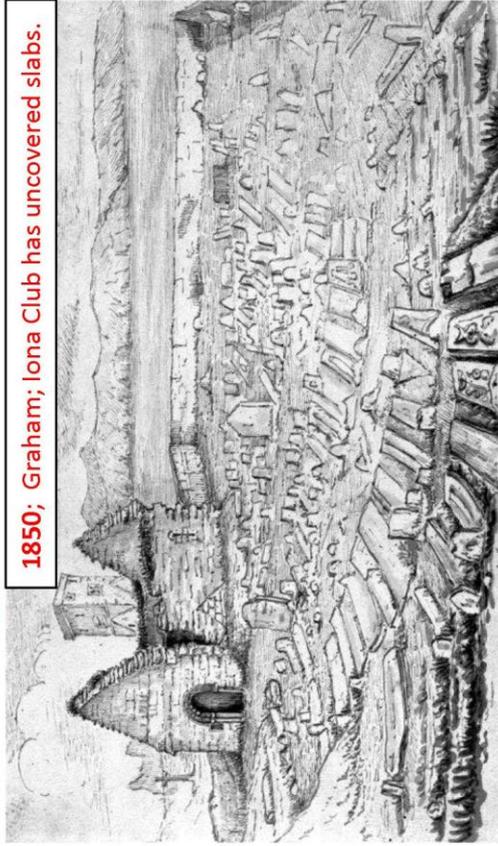
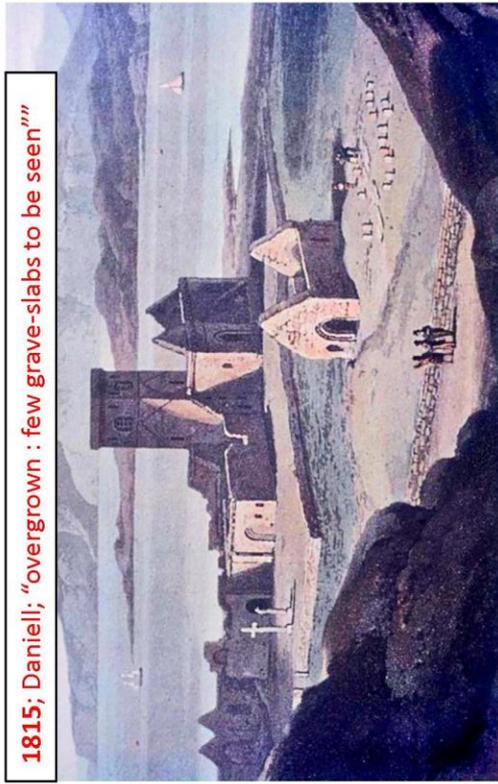
Around the period in question, Donald of Harlaw's wife : *Dame Mary of the Ile, Lady of the Ylis and of Rosse*, located her cross on Eilean Mor, Knapdale; c.1430. Her father in law, Good John of Islay, rebuilt the chapel on Eilean Mor. By tradition, she would have been buried with all the other Lords 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.



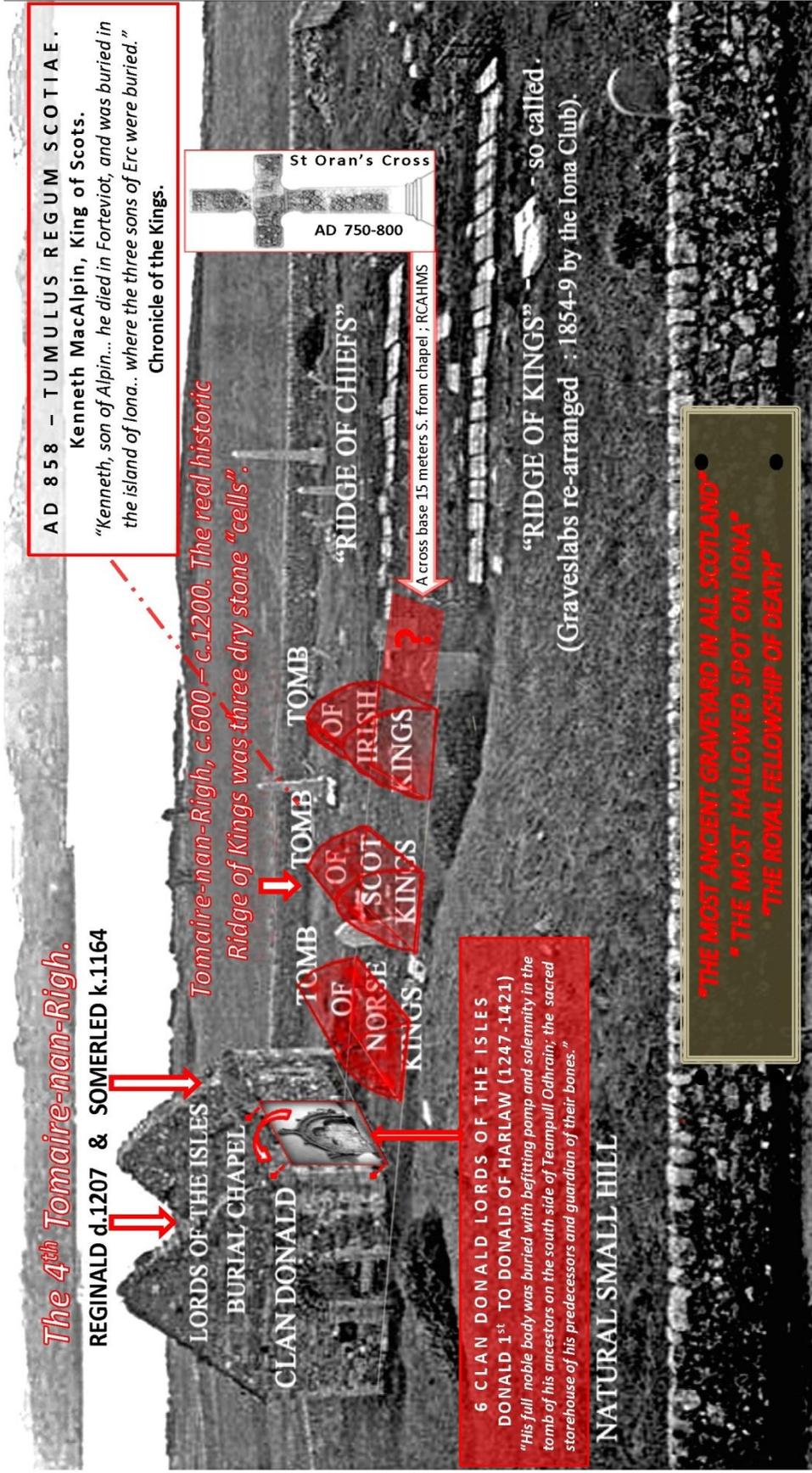
The birlinn's sail is clearly spread, which became the standard depiction on Oransay carvings after 1500. Note the two men on board and the stag hunt above.

<sup>74</sup> 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").

**St Oran's outside cemetery, Iona.**



Slabs of Clan Chiefs, **"the best men of the Isles"** (re-arranged, fenced by the Iona Club, 1854-59). **They include a "Tomb" for the Chiefs of each of the Clan Donald Branches.** *"Each of these chief families of the Isles had its claim to a tomb in the Reilig Odhrain, if not by right of descent from the house of Somerled then by right of marriage into Clan Donald."*



APPENDIX "E"



See the unmistakable **unique, composite** cross on Iona slab, no 127 (left), which has two extra 'cross bars' in the same general positions and relative proportions as the "True Cross" (right - acronym 'INRI' on top *titulus* plaque and low one a "footrest").

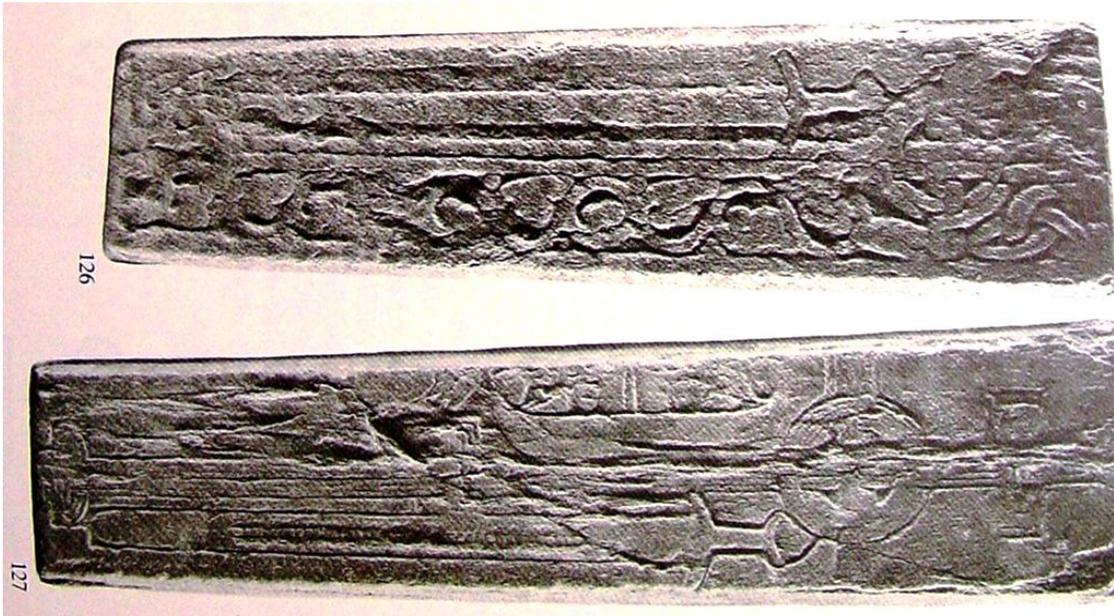
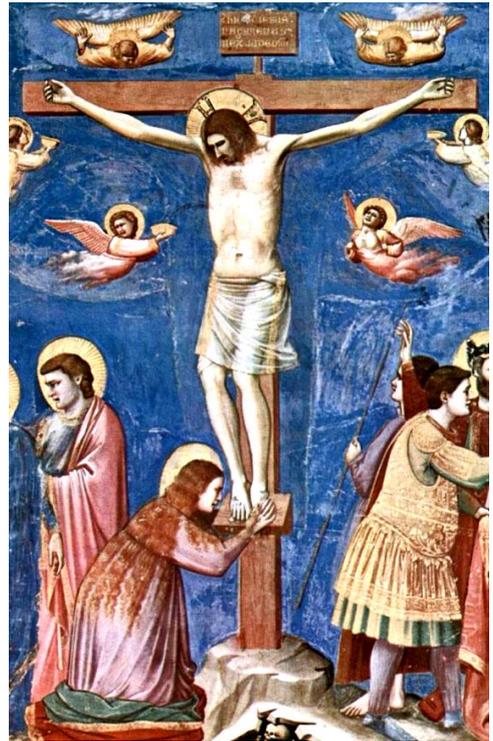


It also has the normal Iona 'open circle' ring at the intersection of the normal (Latin) cross bar of longest length in the "regulation" position.

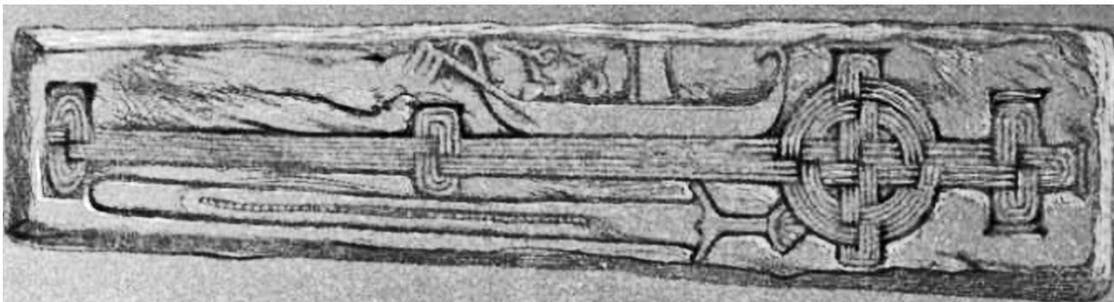
I think Iona graveslab no 127's cross motif represents the "True Cross" with Christ's nimbus/halo expressed as the open circle (as on Iona's early Christian, ringed high crosses) and with a "stone" base ("oval knot").

I cannot find any other representation of the "True Cross" on any other monument of any period on Iona (or highland and islands). This one is simply described by RCAHMS by its design, without provenance/ ascription :- "it has transverse bars at the head and middle of the shaft and an oval knot at the base" (not indexed under iconography or "forms of crosses"; VOL 4, pps288-9).

(Also see Patriarchal Cross, in modern times known as the Cross of Lorraine).

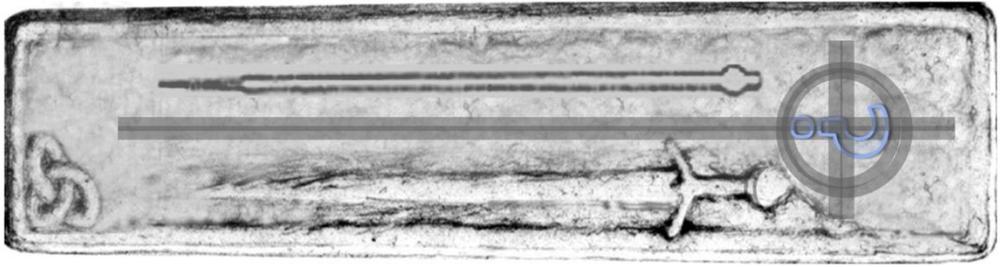


From ARGYLL VOL 4 above. Nos 126 and 127.



127; Drummond; Pl. XXVIII, 2. NB : the sword handles are exactly the same. "Lobated pommel, short canted quillons", unexpanded ends (different to others; see Fig 19, no.2; LMMSWH). And, especially, the only pair of double plaited ring crosses on Iona (127 triple beaded).

APPENDIX "F"



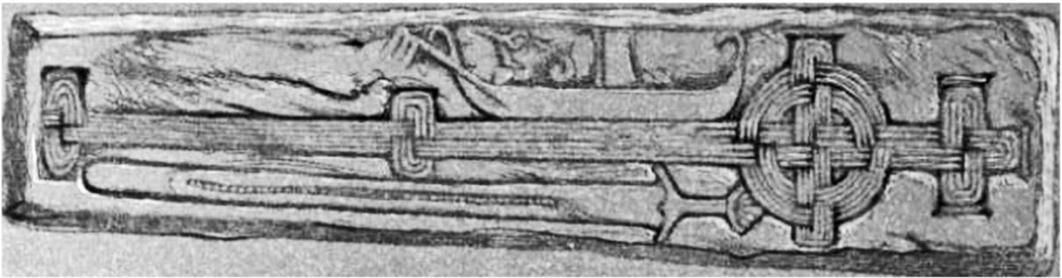
161  
"Reginald" – Abbey founder  
d.1207

Reconstituted from VOL 4 description and Dr Caldwell photo (18). Iona Conf 2012. NB: actual triquetra, Pilgrim Staff, sword.



126  
"Donald mac Reginald"  
k.1247

NB : Triquetra top; and bottom left one worn.



127  
"Ruari mac Reginald"  
d.c.1266  
"The True Cross"

My attributions as in text.



155  
"Iain Mhor 'Tanister'"  
k. 1427

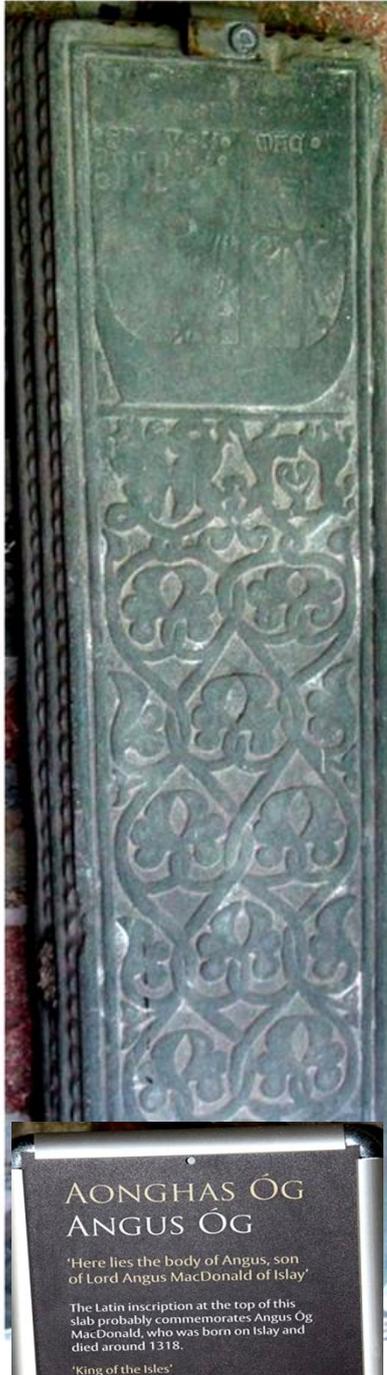


156  
"Alan MacRuairi", d.c.1400  
"Rough up", cut & paste:  
VOL 4 description and MacAlister (no others)  
"generally similar to 155" except with "diaper of intertwined plant-scrolls."

## APPENDIX "G"

THE ONLY OTHER PRE-1493, LOW RELIEF GRAVESLABS WITH A GALLEY ON IONA ARE BOTH ORIGINALLY FROM INSIDE ST ORAN'S CHAPEL AND ARE BOTH MONUMENTS OF THE CLAN DONALD LORDS OF THE ISLES.

Particularly on Iona, galley motifs are the heraldic "charge" pre-eminently and predominately of the MacSommerleds (excludes MacDougalls) and then the MacDonald Lords of the Isles and their Clan Donald branch chiefs.



No. 150 – Angus Og MacDonald, k. 1318



No. 152 – "Donald of Harlaw", d.1421

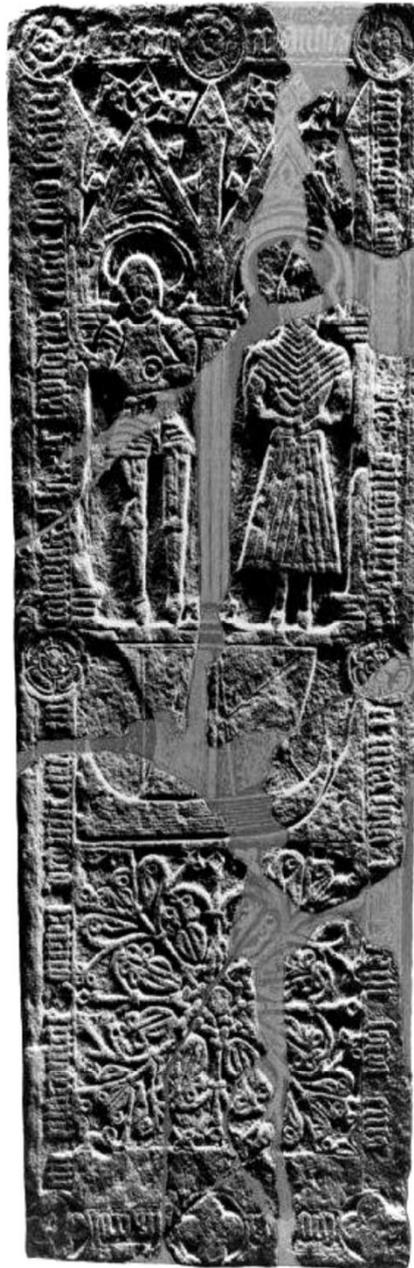
As previously attributed 2011.

## APPENDIX "H"

TWO GRAVESLABS WITH GALLEY - AFTER THE FALL OF THE LORDSHIP OF THE ISLES, 1493.



**Slab no. 151.** Inscription no.25; Colum MacLeod, of Lewis, d. 1515-1524. Note this is well after the Lordship fell in 1493 and McLeods would be free to use the MacDonald's chief heraldic device or "charge" on Iona.



**Slab No. 183** (Made on Colonsay).  
**CLAN DONALD.** "HERE LIES JOHN MACIAIN (MACDONALD)  
LORD OF ARDNAMURCHAN (K. 1518). Buried Iona.

## APPENDIX "I"

AN EXCEPTION ON IONA DURING THE LORDSHIP OF THE ISLES**GALLEY ON WARRIOR EFFIGY'S SHIELD - AS LORD OF ISLES' STANDARD BEARER. GALLEY ON 1489 CROSS.**  
**THE MULL MACKINNONS**

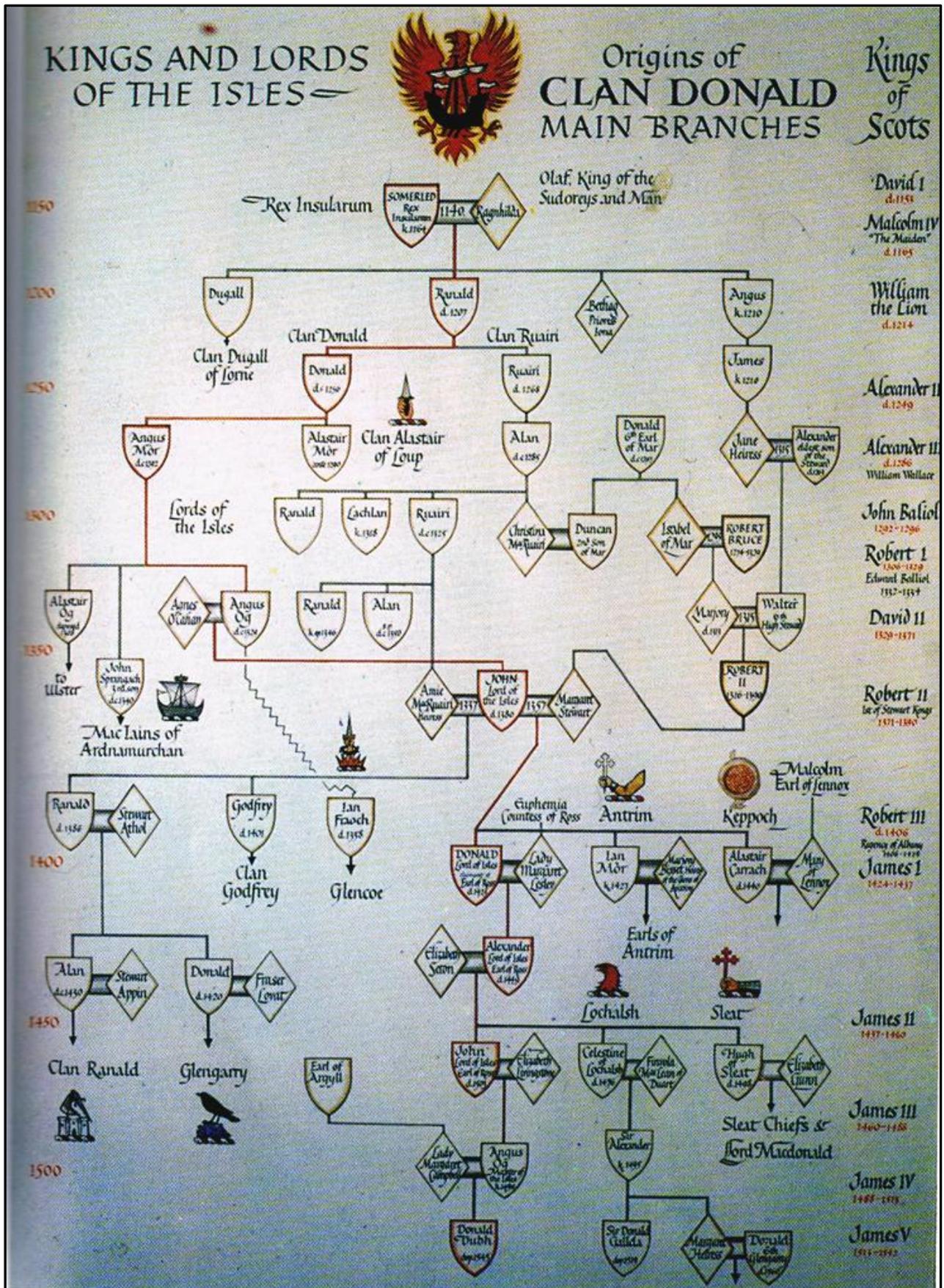
**SHIELD** : High relief "warrior" effigies range from mid 14th to mid 16th century. The Mull Mackinnons have one effigy under which five chiefs were buried and there is another one which is probably also theirs (almost identical shield blazon, etc). [The Killean, Kintyre, effigy with galley on shield, which was made on Iona, Pl. 8C, LMMSWH, is *reliably* identified by Drummond, [Pl. LXXV](#), as the cadet "*MacDonald of Largie*" who "Clan Donald Vol 3" concurs is [Ranald Bane MacDonald](#), d.c. 1476, son of Iain Mhor Tanister. He built the Nth aisle of the Killean church in the 15th c. and this was maintained by the Macdonalds of Largie as a burial-vault to the mid 19th c. (VOL 1, 287(2 & 4); pps 129-137). Also a 15th c. inscribed slab for *Sien MacDonald* in the vault; monument 287(11); Inscrip. 88, LMMSWH.]

The MacKinnons, "*followers of the Lords of the Isles*" were the hereditary military "Marischal" and Standard Bearer to the MacDonalds (as well as being Iona Abbots). Chief Bricius MacFingone/Gilbride MacKinnon, was reputed to have been at Bannockburn under Angus Og's leadership. And if so, he would have had, and did have (his effigy), on his shield a "*charge*" of a galley in identification of his "Marischal/Standard Bearer" rank and duty under the leader of the "Islesmen force".

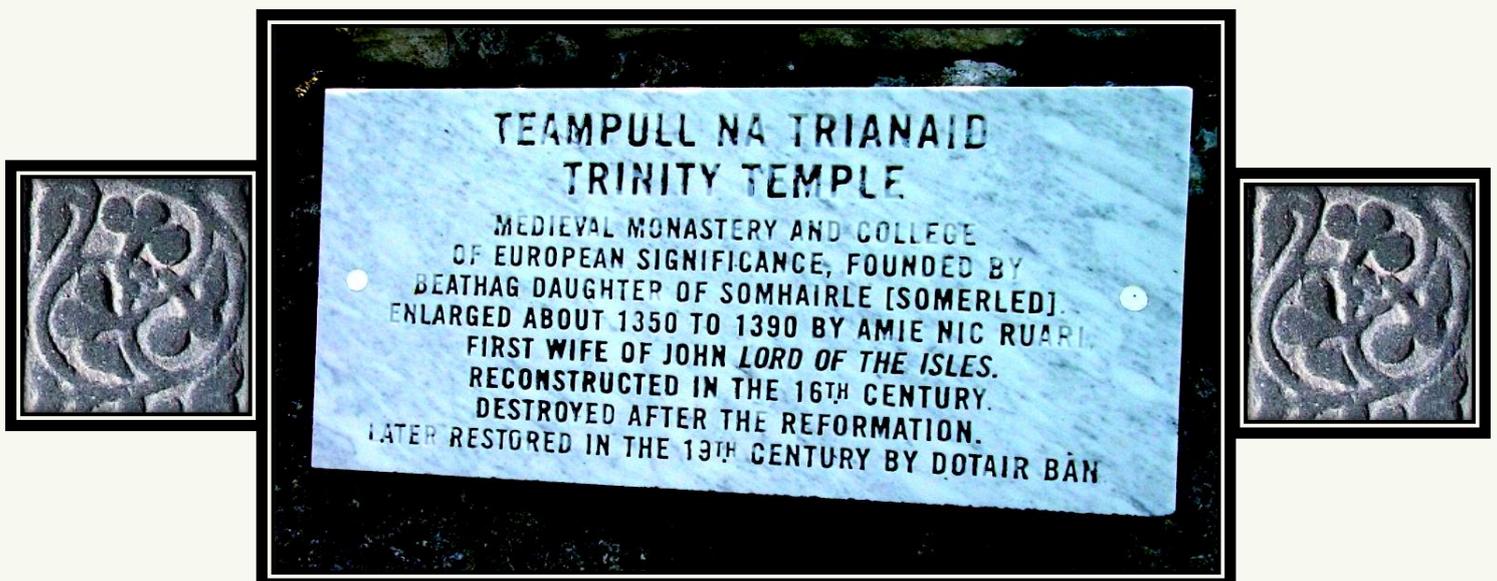
**MacKinnon: no. 207** with inscriptions for 5 burials and **no. 208** has the same escutcheon blazon/heraldry (same pose and weapons). They have a smaller galley "heraldic charge" on the escutcheon shield (at the "honor point") of their two effigies. Being vassal chiefs to the Lords of the Isles this was done by custom in fealty, role and rank and to be recognisable on the battlefield :- who you were fighting for, on which side? One is Chief Gilbride MacKinnon, mentioned before, and the other appears also to be a MacKinnon because the shield's "engrailed" tressure and blazon are almost identical - lion 'salient' (albeit reversed) and probably an otter chasing a salmon. (RCAHMS also agree that the traditional identification of the second being for a 'Mclean of Ross' is probably erroneous. LMMSWH; p.183.)

**CROSS, 1489** : Because of this exception and privilege above, as well as being successive abbots and Priors of Iona, the MacKinnons also made one cross with a galley on it, but it was extremely late in the condemned Lordship's failing reign. The maker was the last Benedictine Abbot of Iona and his grandiose high relief carved effigy also lies in the abbey church. *Mackinnon's Cross* was dedicated in 1489 after the MacDonald's first forfeiture in 1476 and just 4 years before the second forfeiture and eventual fall of the dying Lordship in 1493. The MacDonald Chiefs, responsible heirs of the abbey founder, had mainly succeeded to stem the corruption and excesses of the "*nefarious noblemen*" MacKinnons on Iona for 150 years, but in the end they had their way. After the Lordship was forfeited, the MacKinnons had the audacity to deliberately place the "*stateliest tomb in the isle; a statue as big as life*" of their Chief Bricius [of five burials from outside in Reilig Òdhrain] exactly over *The MacDonald's* ancestral tomb, the "*sacred storehouse of their predecessors on the south side of Teampull Òdhrain*", below the later elaborate, triple arched wall niche. The last of six buried there being their nemesis, *Donald of Harlaw*, d.1421.





*DEDICATED TO RANALD ALEXANDER  
MACDONALD OF CLANRANALD  
24TH CAPTAIN AND CHIEF OF CLANRANALD*



The building was rebuilt around 1350 by Amie MacRuari, whose son Ranald was the progenitor of the Clan Ranald.

Photos – Ian Macdonnell; at *Scotland's oldest university*, Carinish, Nth Uist, 2006.

