

CORRIGENDUM – June 2014

REF : GRAVESLAB No. 161 – IT'S CURRENT LOCATION.

This corrigendum is to provide the correct situation that graveslab No. 161 is not still on the north or *Gospel* side of the altar in St Oran's Chapel. However, Historic Scotland now agree with me that this honoured position is, by ritual and custom, most likely where Reginald, the Abbey founder, is buried. [See their 2014 Official Guide to Iona Abbey, p.39. And its p.17 {and Credits} also acknowledge my essential "reinterpretation of the inscription" on slab no. 150 which identifies it as Angus Og Macdonald's, died, c.1318; see the detail in Ch. 6, this book}.

I now propose that this "*much worn*" slab 161, which has very indistinct carvings, was uplifted from its medieval position on the north side of the altar in 1860, along with the others, and then relaid incorrectly near the door in 1921-5 by the Public Works Dept {they had no plans to show where the slabs laid originally.} There is strong photographic evidence that No. 161 is not currently in its original, medieval position {plus corner missing and cracked through the centre from being uplifted}.

The mistake was made because slab no.116 and the "blank" one now apparently in its place {a non-medieval replacement?}, both appear flat and undecorated on the top surface, both have bevelled edges and only a tiny variation in shape and size. The partly incorrect 1977 RCAHMS map of the slabs in the chapel also confounds the confusion {No. 161 represented as "undecorated", no bevel edges}.

See overleaf for a complex, diagrammatic explanation which gives the "picture" of slab 161's key movements from 1207 to 2000. {Early draft provided to Historic Scotland, 2013. Smallest type may be hard to read.}

I have proposed since 2011 that slab No. 161 is the monument of Reginald mac Somerled, the Iona Abbey founder. But Historic Scotland have selected slab No. 191 {and I have explained with emphatic reasons why this cannot be so}. I have provided a strategy and project model for future archaeology in the chapel - a suitable framework based on the successful "*Looking for Richard III*" project and also using the [2012 SCARF](#) reasons and recommendations.

The pages in the book which this corrigendum relates to are :-

- pps 32, 128, 133.

See website for further research and analysis on all the above :-

<http://www.ionaabbeyandclandonald.com/1-kings--lords-of-the-isles---graveslab-attribution.html>

[A] Why is it the right slab for founder? It is “transitional”, ie, pre-lona school; earlier, very “much worn”. It is the **only** St Oran’s slab with rare ecclesiastical power symbol – motif, a rare pilgrim staff (like one in tomb of West Minster founder “Edward the Confessor”). It is sandstone [usually earlier material] same as original alter base and this patron would normally be beside the alter. It is the right period, right designs ‘right’ material for Reginald mac Somerled, the founder.

[B] Why is the position beside the alter right for founder? *Deposito ad Sanctos*; and “founder standard position” = **Status** – custom; contemporary Irish ritual precedent, King and son each side of alter. [C] Why isn’t the slab beside the alter? It was uplifted, with no detail or plans made, for 66 years [no ‘memory’] and then “re-instated” by Public Works in the wrong location. D] IS THERE A ‘MATCH’? A COMMON DENOMINATOR? 161 is the **only** non-tapered [rectangular] slab in the chapel. **This utter ‘blank’** beside altar “3” is **extremely close** to rectangular {3b}. [rectangular is by far the much less common shape in Reilig Odhrain]. Both are bevelled edged. RCAHMS : Only ‘a few cases appear’ not to be ornamented {p.219; most sandstone}; St Oran’s Chapel “7 set graveslabs only 2 decorated”. A ridiculous proportion not ornamented – and all in one spot, **AND the least likely spot of all!** “Founder/Kings/Lords of Isles having undecorated slabs? Never!” 13th century flat slabs were ornamented; no Iona School “Class” was undecorated. **They are simply not medieval slabs!** And far too many. Why was a totally blank ‘replica’ bevel edged? Slab 161 and the “blank” next to the altar are almost the same unique shape within the chapel, have the same edge treatment,

are very close to the same size.

3 b.

altar relics

Somerled

altar relics

Somerled

1. 1207 : REGINALD – ABBEY FOUNDER {with his pilgrim staff?}

“Depositio ad sanctos” – proximity to saints relics = status.

The Gospel side - *"This came to be the standard position for the burial of founding patrons."* Irish ritual precedent, eg, of contemporary O'Connor Kings; *the father, the son, "Solidarity of kindred" – other side Somerled [Epistle].*

2. 1860, 1st uplift. Slab {only} by Iona Club and displayed in a position N-S along north wall on "blocks" {pic 2}.

8 UPLIFTED – BUT NO PLANS MADE OF EACH SLAB'S LOCATION.

Graham's 1850 'record', pl. 6, through the door is useless.

1977 uplift – 5 good condition graveslabs. {3 “*much worn*” are left.} Floor openings replaced by ordinary floor pavers, not replica slab “blanks”, because they were not marking exact original graves. These 5 taken to the cloister. 4 returned to Nth wall. 150, Angus Og’s, was left there, wrongly attributed, and a “ring-in” replaced it.

Tapered blank.
Ends 390
and 350mm.
Is "match" to
slab No. 126
[\[see my p.139,](#)
and App. 1 a.]

NB : When [3] is done, the 5th side is being "re-instated" first. No. 161 is put in the soil backfilled 1860 disturbed location. After 2 others re-laid, the large concrete blocks are removed and Nth side (yellowed) begun, revealing intact floor opening [1] near altar, matching 161's near parallel shape? 'Blank' marker made for it and west one –both very slightly tapered. No. 167 and 3 other graveslabs [3,4,5] 'reinstated' Nth side.

3a. 1921-5, No. 161 is “*Re-instated*”, with no plans, not in original position by Public Works [under Trustees] and the paved floor relaid [5th side first]. Why 161 in this high wear area with nothing to indicate it should go there? Possibly because it was the half {done 1860?} and being sandstone and 2nd earliest was likely already very worn {1977 because it was by then worse and already deemed ‘beyond conservation’. [S proposed ‘original position’ for it as per ‘1’ on this RCAHMS plan on p.246, ARGVLL VC sealers/blanks?} are “161 and 167”, ie, as denoted by a border, “set into the floor”. On the ‘blank’, ie, denoted by **not** having a border, eventhough it has faint decoration and is missing but that alone is not unusual or prescriptive. {No 185, “*much worn, decorated*”, NB : Question? Is there any such thing as an original undecorated, flat medieval graveslab?

3 b. 1926, RELACEMENT BLANK REPLICA - A marker "*GRAVESLAB*" {Does not appear to be medieval}.

INSERTED IN 1926 AFTER MOVEMENT **3a** is complete, and after the concrete blocks {2} are destroyed.

It is not worn smooth at all. It has a uniformly "rough" flat finish (so 19th c?; 1926?) slightly smaller size to fit inside the space left – not overlap on top?) These blanks exactly? EXCEED number of known burials + ornamented slabs of Lords of Isles in chapel. The 5 "undecorated" so-called graveslabs end up matching in number the 5 real ones removed – co-incidence???