

As a son of Reginald, the founder of the reendowed Iona Abbey (who buried his father Somerled in St Oran’s Chapel) it is almost certain that Ruari would also be buried in the “MacSommerled burial chapel” as was his brother Donald (I). (Eventhough playing no known part in the Abbey’s building or endowment.)



Possibly his slab No. 167. In the floor of St Oran’s Chapel – near centre of North wall. “*Probably Iona School*”.

Very worn. Similar to No. 167 is No. 163 which is shown here, but 167 has an interlaced cross (not foliage).

**“A DEAD MAN AT BALLYSHANNON”;**

WOOLF, A. Woolf has argued that Ruaidhri was the Mac Somhairle who died in a 1247 battle, fighting the Fitzgeralds at Ballyshannon, Ireland.<sup>1</sup> WDH Sellar also thought, for other reasons, that he was Ruaidhri.<sup>2</sup>

RA McDonald believed that it referred to Donnchadh mac Dubhghaill.<sup>3</sup> (*MacDougall*)

**S. Duffy,<sup>4</sup> O. Bergin,<sup>5</sup> and Donald Schlegel<sup>6</sup> believe it was Domhnall mac Raghnaill** (the eponymous Donald).

The identity of this “Dead Man” remains contested.

After only five years from the Irish razing of the emerging Benedictine Iona Abbey, it was plundered in 1210 by the King of Mann. Or, it was a 12 galley party under a Hebridean named Óspakr who R. Power says might have been a member of the Somerled family.<sup>7</sup>

*Ruari mac Reginald* raided Derry Abbey in 1212 and 1214 taking much of their treasures. Why? To replenish Iona, to restore the prestige/status of Iona, or just plain plundering for personal gain? Power says (p.31) :- “While Iona itself was plundered in 1210 by Norwegians without retribution being possible (Eirspennill 465; AU, s.a. 1210, where the origins of the perpetrators are not given), punishment was merely delayed for those who had attempted to prevent the Benedictine foundation on Iona. In 1212 the two sons of Reginald, together with Alan of Galloway, led a ferocious raid on Derry and its hinterland, and two years later Ruaidhri (Ruairi), son of Reginald, and Alan again attacked Derry and took away many of the church’s prize possessions (AU 1212, 1214).”

More analysis required to answer this, especially because of the close and continuous relationship between Reginald, Donald and descendants with the very influential O’Broilchans of Derry. As Power then explains, p.41 : “The members of this branch (Donald I) turned early to Ireland and rarely if ever went to Norway.” And this was to Derry and not Antrim which then was under firm Burke control. (In the 12th century, Flaithbertach Ua Broilcháin, Abbot of Derry (d. 1175), the comarba (“successor”) of Colum Cille, relocated from Kells to Derry.)

Competition between Abbots for status was always an issue and the kings who patronised them did raid others to diminish them and make their own the more prominent and prestigious. They also competed for royal or noble bodies to bury, for the their own self importance, ecclesiastical status, revenue. For example, a *chantry* – endowments, sometimes perpetual, for one’s own chapel/ alter and for priest/s (a *college* even) to sing personal daily mass/s’ to reduce the “patron’s” time in purgatory – a “*mass machine*”!

<sup>1</sup> *The World of the Galloglass*; p. 77-85; Sean Duffy Editor, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *Hebridean Sea-Kings in “ALBA: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages”*. Ed. EJ Cowan and R A McDonald. 2000. p 201

<sup>3</sup> *The Kingdom of The Isles, Scotland’s Western Seaboard 1100-1336*; R. A McDonald; 1997; Chapter 3, pps 94-96.

<sup>4</sup> “*The Bruce Brothers and the Irish Sea World, 1306-29*”. Duffy, Seán (2002),

<sup>5</sup> *Irish Bardic Poetry*; Osborn Bergin; p.169. (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970),

<sup>6</sup> *The MacDonnells of Tyrone and Armagh – A Genealogy Study*”; Seanchas Ardmhacha (Journal of Armagh Diocesan

<sup>7</sup> (Power, Rosemary (2005), “*Meeting in Norway: Norse- Gaelic relations in the kingdom of Man and the Isles, 1090–1270*” (pdf), *Saga-Book* (Viking Society for Northern Research) 38: 5–66.