

After I have provided you with sound reasons why Somerled is buried in St Oran's Chapel, Iona, you asked me why Clan Donald history itself is ambiguous about where Somerled is buried, saying he is buried at Saddell.

SOMERLED - *"King of the Innse Gall and Kintyre, Regulus of Argyll"*. K.1164.

SOMERLED is buried on 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.]

[See Ch. I. - Somerled](#) is not buried on *insignificant* Saddell (ie, at that time obviously, 1164). I will not repeat all the relevant material in this chapter of my book and [website](#).

1. It's only "ambiguous" if one {not referring to you} relies on a lone, totally unfounded, totally unsupported proposition in the c.1900 *"Clan Donald"* Vols of a hollow, so called *"universal tradition"* with not a single shred of evidence, and which goes against every other piece of evidence, every expert opinion,¹ against both of the clan's only recognised earlier 17th c. "Sennachies" {MacVurich and Hugh of Sleat :- *"the report of 20 writers in Icolmkill"*²} and against all basic common sense, and against all known contemporary ritual, custom, precedent, practice, etc, etc. It gets bandied around and repeated because *"Clan Donald"* is generally seen as the Clan Donald "bible" and some traditionalists have a seemingly misplaced black and white "loyalty" to its every "infallible" word and don't spend a moment looking elsewhere and/or reflect on any different opinions.
2. It is frustrating. These kinds of "historical errors" are very difficult to kill. It is either a concoction to serve someone's self interest, somewhere, a century and a bit ago, or, see my possible alternative of *"Heart Burial"*; Somerled's heart could have been buried or translated to Saddell by *Reginald*. It is all in my book as above. [PS : If you don't even touch on, let alone fully understand medieval burial beliefs, ritual, practice, etc, of this period, then you don't understand medieval Iona at all! I have led the way with this. Prior to my work no one has researched and integrated this essential context for the functioning period paradigm – see [SCARF](#) - Scottish Archaeological Research Framework :- *"With respect to grave monuments, at a practical archaeological level there is little understanding of the relationship of monuments to the people commemorated."*]
3. Why on earth would Somerled, King of the Isles, who [HS agree 'probably built'](#) the Chapel {not Reginald}, then want to be buried somewhere else, let alone Saddell where there was "nothing" {not in comparison to Iona's high status, grandeur, requisite famous Saints – just nothing}. Iona was also the last place on earth "to be left unflooded" :- *"float will Iona of St Columba the cleric", "seven years before the day of doom"*. Where else would a King want to be buried, in fact many, many known Kings – the *"Royal Fellowship of Death"* on *"Iona, the light of the Western World"*. Saddell, at that time, was a virtually 'nothing location'.

¹ Eg. **McDonald, Russell Andrew** . *The Death and Burial of Somerled of Argyll*, West Highland Notes and Queries, ser. 2, no.8, Nov. 1991. [also his : *Scoto-Norse Kings and the Reformed Religious Orders*"; 1995. *The Kingdom of the Isles – Scotland's Western Seaboard c.1100-c.1336*; 1997.

² *"The king sent a boat with the corpse of Sommerled to Icollumkill at his own charges. This is the report of twenty writers in Icollumkill"*. 'FRAGMENT OF A MANUSCRIPT HISTORY OF THE MACDONALDS' by the Sleat Historian, written in the 17th century; contained in:- Skene, W and Gregory, D; 'Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis; Iona Club Transactions; p.286; 1847.

4. There was not a single criteria which would or could have attracted a man of Somerled's standing to the relative back water of Saddell - as a preferred place of burial. A ridiculous notion which contributed to this nonsense is that the warrior slab, south wall of choir, Saddell, is Somerled's but it is clearly 14th century at the earliest and its arched wall recess is more typically late 15th century. Reginald was buried in the same chapel as his father, Somerled, in St Oran's Chapel (see slides attached). That is, neither of their corpses is buried in Saddell, but, maybe their hearts are.
5. Relating to documents from Saddell Abbey itself: - "Reginald is referred to as the founder of Saddell Abbey (The Cistercians, from Airgiolla's Mellifont, Ireland) in a papal mandate of 1393 and in charters of King James IV (1498, 1508 [1507?])." "There are good reasons to believe that he, and not his father, was responsible for its foundation." ³ (A.McKerral, C.I.E., B.Sc., F.S.A. Scot, 1955; and Dr. Andrew MacDonald, 1995).
6. **These documents referred to all previous endowments/grants of land to Saddell and Somerled was never included.**
7. In this "[CONFIRMATION TO BISHOP OF LISMORE BY JAMES IV. OF CHARTERS BY LORDS OF THE ISLES TO THE ABBEY OF SADDLELL](#)". At Edinburgh, 1 Jan 1507 ("CLAN DONALD Vol 1"; p564.) :-
8. The first endower is listed as :- " (1). *Charter of Reginald the son of Somerled , who called himself King of the Isles, and called him Lord of Argyll and Kintyre, dicti monasterii fundatoris* - ie, "**SAID FOUNDER OF THE MONASTERY.**" And endower number (2) is :- "*aliam cartam ejusdem*" - ie, "ANOTHER CHARTER OF THE SAME (PERSON)", that is, Reginald. And on it goes with the three subsequent endowers all being **Reginald the founder's responsible heirs, the Macdonald Lords of the Isles.**⁴ Just as for Iona Abbey :-
 - There is only one founder (Reginald);
 - But there are many endowers (founder's heirs) ;
 - Endowment is not a once only event - it is a continuing process.

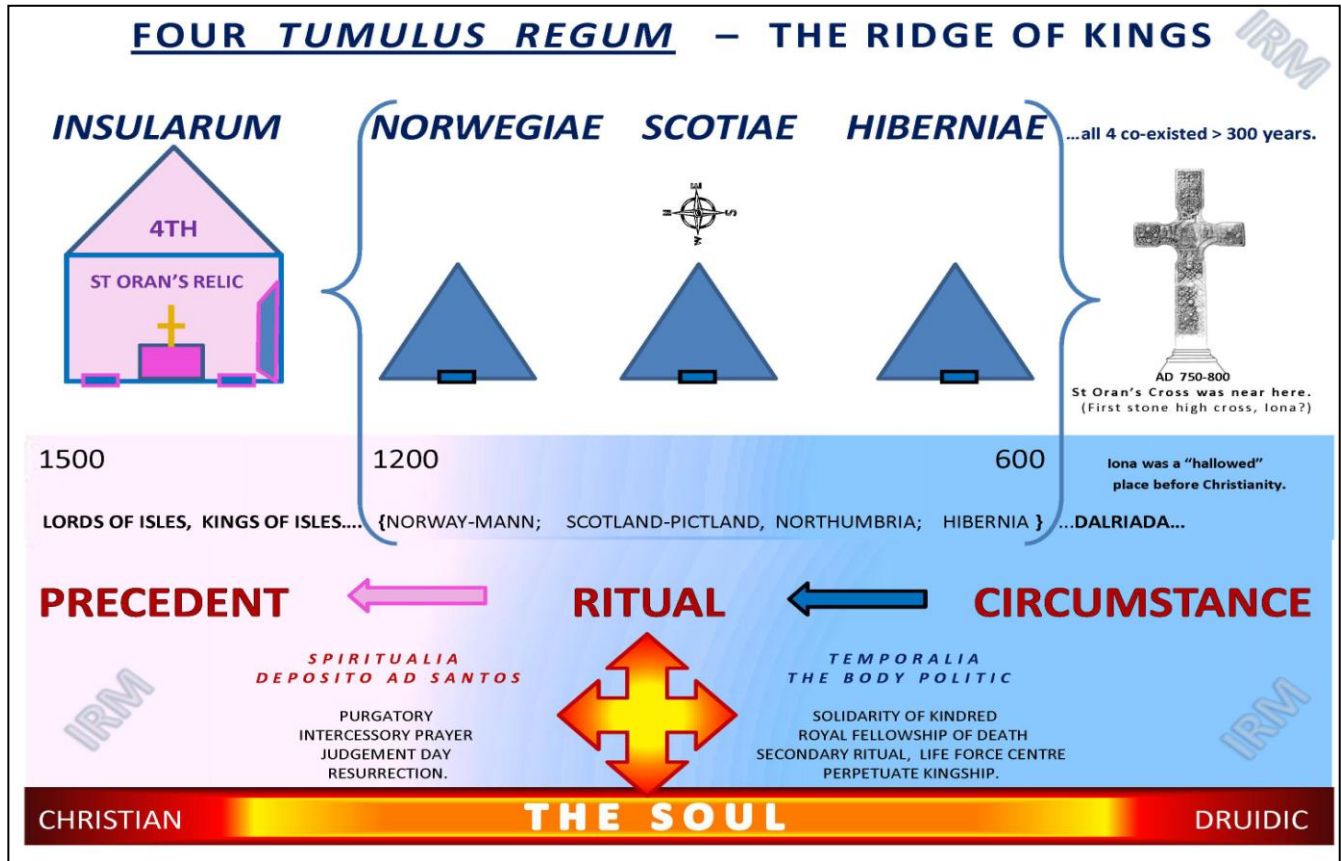
There are not only subsequent additional endowments, but the reciprocal functionality, the "*conditionality of endowment*", is dynamic and all Clan Donald heirs-chiefs had an obligation to regulate and manage it. And they did - continuously for 300 years! [This was so even when Reginald's *Cistercian* foundation was made under the tenure of *frankalmoign* - *perpetual free alms*]. **It is historically wrong to call them plain, common patrons.**

9. "Reginald is said to have made a pilgrimage to Rome and returned with consecrated dust which was scattered on the (Saddell) foundations and to have lived there for three years during its building '*without coming under a roof*'. This strongly indicates that he superintended the Saddell construction from the start, leaving Donald to do the same for Iona. Reginald's three years living rough at Saddell Abbey's new Cistercian institution (period unknown), daughter-house of Mellifont, might indicate that this was his main love - where *his heart* was - and it's possible that it still is, literally! Did Reginald also translate Somerled's embalmed heart as part of his Saddell Abbey's founding ceremony? ([Read more here on heart burial](#)).

³ "It (Saddell) is not included in the list of Scottish abbeys in Gervase of Canterbury's *Mappa Mundi* (map of world), written between 1205 and 1211". "Saddell appears to have functioned as a religious corporation for a period of 250 years, approximately from 1220 to 1470;" (A. McKerral). "Founded c.1207" – Watt, D. E. R., & Shead, N. F. (eds.); 'The Heads of Religious Houses in Scotland from the 12th to the 16th Centuries'; The Scottish Records Society, New Series, Volume 24, (Edinburgh, 2001).

⁴ And a *Roderici* (Roderick), another son of Reginald (listed first after Reginald).

10. I repeat with the aid of my, might I say, [universally acclaimed graphics](#) :- SOMERLED mac Gillebride: k.1164 - REX INSULARUM, WAS BURIED IN HIS OWN SUPERIOR CHAPEL, TEMPEULL ODHRAIN, SYMBOLISING THE 4TH TOMAIRE NAN RIGH, TUMULUS REGUM INSULARUM. **"THE MOST HONORABLE AND ANCIENT PLACE IN SCOTLAND" - "THE MOST HALLOWED SPOT ON IONA."**

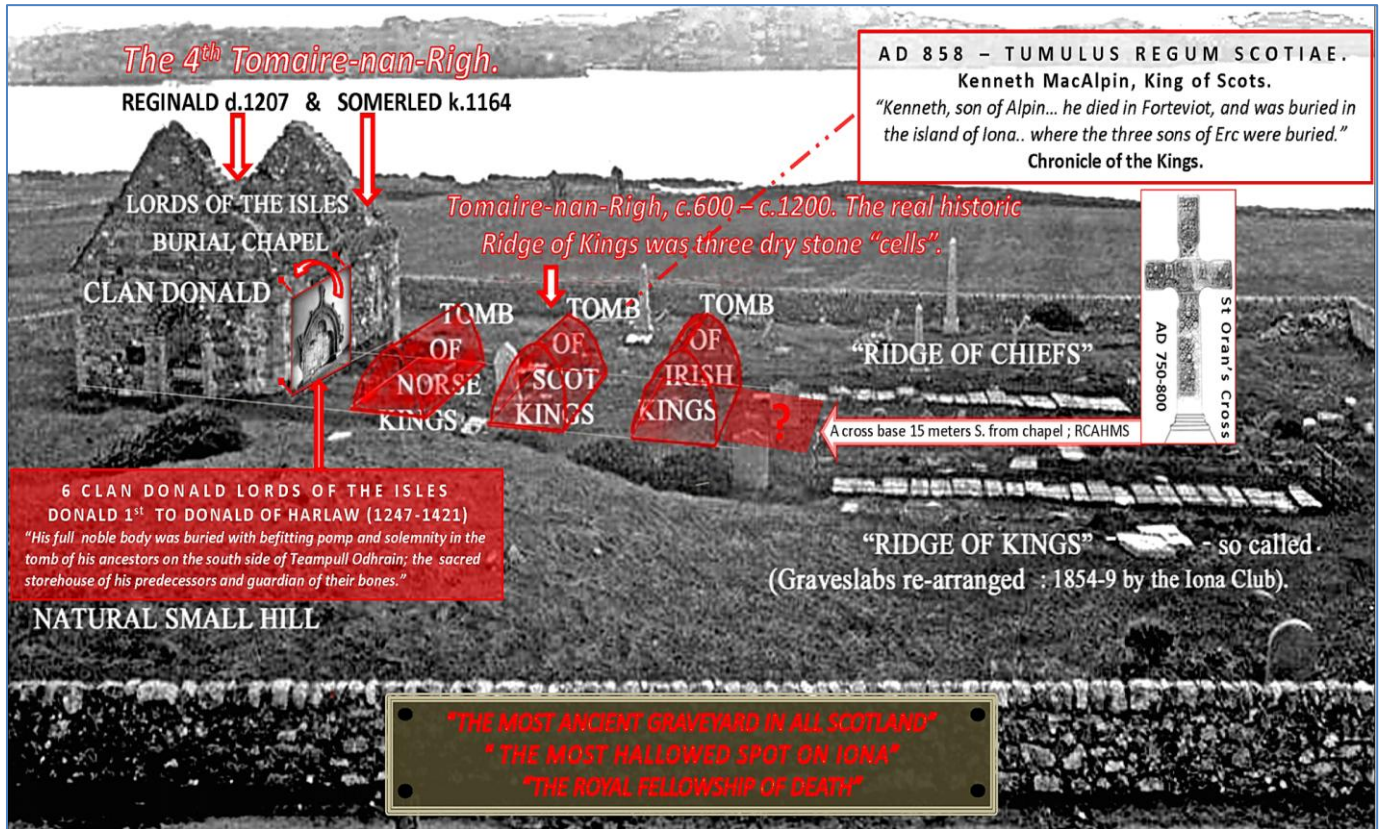


SUMMARY

If we can knock the nonsense about Somerled and Saddell on the head, then we will be doing everyone, including Clan Donald, a huge favour.

Somerled was RI INNSE-GALL, King of The Isles, and would demand nothing less than to be buried with the 40 (at least) other Gaelic/Celtic/Norse Kings (or 'sub-kings') of Ireland, Scotland and 'Norway' in Reilig Odhrain, the most ancient graveyard in all Scotland - in a "Celtic Church" cemetery. And buried right next to the relics of a revered saint (Oran) whose earthly remains were forever in direct contact with his soul in heaven! **Proximity to relics = Relative status in medieval society and also for 'liturgical' reasons** "Deposito ad Santos" was paramount, essential for Somerled. Who was the famous Saint with relics at Saddell? There was none. And who were the "ancestors" including his father buried there that might under "solidarity of kinship," but without any chance of taking precedence over Iona's colossal drawcards, attract him otherwise? There was none that we know about.

IAN R. MACDONNELL, JULY 2013.



THE FOUNDER OF IONA ABBEY AND NUNNERY

REGINALD MAC SOMERLED, REX INSULARUM (d. 1207).

GRAVESLAB No. 161 – AUTHOR'S ORIGINAL ATTRIBUTION SUMMARY.

A - THE POSITION IN ST ORAN'S CHAPEL

1. Reginald as the accepted founder:- the standard or popular position for abbey founders was the Gospel side or the north of an altar. The new Abbey church was barely started and St Oran's was preferred in any case – the "most hallowed spot", "most ancient", "Royal fellowship", etc. Also note alter burials of St Bridget and Archbishop Conleod, Kildare;
2. *Solidarity of kindred* customary burial as proved in contemporary Ireland:- buried near his father, Somerled, who had prime position in his chapel, on the other side of the altar (eg, as per Clonmacnoise c.1200 for the O'Connor "royal" dynasty;
3. "*Depositio ad sanctos*". A Cult of Saint's ritual:- buried near St Oran's relics/altar;

B - THE GRAVESLAB.

1. Slab has a pilgrim's staff ('3' - RCAHMS) :- Reginald was a known pilgrim to Rome, Jerusalem and the Abbey Founder; "a (staff) symbol referring to the rank or status of the deceased."
2. Slab has an "aristocrat's" sword:- Reginald was "the greatest warrior"; King of the Western Isles – nobilis Rex Insularum;
3. Slab is the right design age, earlier 13th c. :- stands out as pre-Iona School.



KINGS AND SONS BURIED EACH SIDE OF ALTAR & ITS SAINT'S RELICS

'The solidarity of kindred and tradition.'

*"Torredelbach on the southern side of it,
Ruaidhri on the other lofty side"*

"depositio ad sanctos"

- † **1156** – *Torredelbach Ua Conchobair*, over king of Connaught, *Ard Rí na hÉireann*, was buried "*beside St Ciaran's altar*" at Clonmacnoise, and
- † **1198** – his son and successor *Ruaidhri*, was buried on the **north** side of the altar (Annals of Four Masters).

Annals of Connaught, 1224: "*the King who built most monasteries and houses for religious communities*" - ob. Cathal O'Conner (Conchobair).

ST ORAN'S ALTAR and RELICS.

- † **1164** - **SOMERLED** buried on the *Epistle Side* (south)
- † **1207** - **REGINALD** buried on the *Gospel Side* (north)

"This came to be the standard position for the burial of founding patrons."

"depositio ad sanctos"