



August 2016– Issue 25

THE SKYE BOAT SONG

Speed bonnie boat like a bird on the wing
 Onward the sailors cry
 Carry the lad that's born to be king
 Over the sea to Skye

Loud the winds howl
 Loud the waves roar
 Thunderclaps rend the air
 Baffled, our foes
 Stand by the shore
 Follow, they will not dare

Speed bonnie boat like a bird on the wing
 Onward the sailors cry
 Carry the lad that's born to be king
 Over the sea to Skye

Though the waves leap
 Soft shall you sleep
 Ocean's a royal bed
 Rocked in the deep
 Flora will keep
 Watch by your weary head

Speed bonnie boat like a bird on the wing
 Onward the sailors cry
 Carry the lad that's born to be king
 Over the sea to Skye



FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Since our last newsletter, Clan Donald Queensland has been in attendance at various events including, The Clydesdale Spectacular at Boonah, Aberdeen Highland Games NSW, Scotland in the Park, Greenbank Qld and Tartan Day, Brisbane.

The Clan Donald Queensland AGM was held in June and we welcome James Keith Macdonald in his new role as President. Mark Allan was also elected to the committee. The Secretary/Treasurer remains the same as do the other committee members. Thank you all for your commitment.

The Clydesdale Spectacular was once again a great event in beautiful sunshine. We congratulate the Boonah Show Society for once again putting on a great day AND Clan Donald Queensland won "Clan of the Day".

I had the pleasure of attending the Aberdeen Highland Games (NSW) where our High Commissioner for Clan Donald Australia, Lachlan Macdonald, was the Chieftain of the Day. It was a great day and the crowds were certainly out in full force.

Scotland in the Park, a Scottish Clans Congress of Queensland event, was held on the 10th July at the Middle Green Sports Greenbank. The Pipe Band Competition was, as always, a hit with the crowd. Thanks to all the Clan members who came along and helped out in the Clans Congress "Happy Haggis" tent and spent the day cooking and serving haggis and sausages to the hungry crowd honing their skills ready for Tartan Day.

Tartan Day was held in true "Scottish" weather but it did not dampen our spirits. It might have been a tad wet but the day was enjoyed by all. Once again thanks to our team for supporting Judy in the Clan tent and once again cooking the haggis, tattie scones and sausages. This was Clan Donald Queensland's first venture into their own Happy Haggis Tent and despite the weather was a great success. What a brilliant team effort!!

The next meeting will be 10th September – anyone for Haggis, Tattie Scones and Snags – don't want to let your cooking skills go to waste!

Until next time

Moran Taing

Neil Macdonald

NEW MEMBERS

Sharon Coyne – Rosemount Qld
Colin Macdonald – Redland Bay Qld
Carol Chalmers – Springwood Qld
Tim and Nadine Dunstone, St Lucia Qld

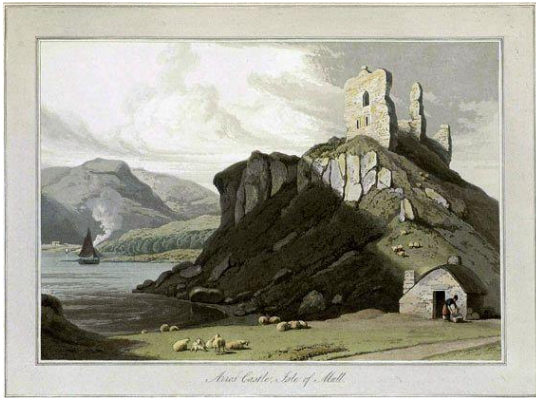
Diary Dates 2016

SCOTS IN THE BUSH (QUEENSLAND)
19 – 21 AUGUST 2016

CLAN DONALD MEETINGS 2016

10 SEPTEMBER 2016
26 NOVEMBER 2016

CLAN DONALD CASTLES



Aros Castle, also known as *Dounarwyse Castle*, is a ruined 13th-century castle near [Salenn](#) on the [Isle of Mull](#), [Scotland](#). The castle overlooks the [Sound of Mull](#).

The ruins of Aros Castle stand on an easily defensible headland on the north side of the mouth of the Aros River, about 1¼ miles north of Salen. It was built as one of a series of castles intended to control both sides of the Sound of Mull in the 1200s: the best known of these was - and remains - Duart Castle 16 miles south-east. .

Aros castle was originally built by the MacDougalls, but it passed to the MacDonalds in the 1300s and during the 1400s was used as an occasional base by the Lords of the Isles, at which time it was known as Dounarwyse Castle and in the late 17th century, it was garrisoned by Argyll's troops. In 1688 the castle was described as, 'ruinous, old, useless and never of any strength'. (The house is buried by masonry to first floor level and projecting from the north wall, are the remaining walls of a turret. To the west and south, are the overgrown walls of the courtyard, along with turf-covered foundations of an eastern rectangular building and traces of other buildings to the north-west and south-west. (Ref Canmore ID 22272)

With the castle went punishment for wrong doings, and standing tall within the old castle bounds is the hanging rock. The castle became a ruin, but the land around was farmed. 1756 saw a Duncan Campbell renting the farm for £110 yearly. A head count held in 1779 showed 57 people living around the area now known as Aros Mains.

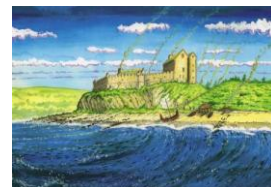
The Georgian part of the present house was built between 1770 and 1780 for James Maxwell. Maxwell moved into the "new house" in 1789 along with his wife and family.

This following text article has been copied from the Clan Donald Society of Edinburgh's newsletter, written by Norman MacDonald FRSA, FSA Scot, their Historian and Archivist.

The word aros, in Gaelic can be translated as a house, mansion, palace, or merely an abode, dwelling or habitation. According to the renowned Gaelic scholar, Alexander MacBain, however, it is derived from the Norse a (water) and ass (mouth) and he therefore concludes that Aros means 'river mouth.' Aros Castle, however, may well have been named from the river near the mouth of which it is situated, about 2km north-west of Salen, on the east side of the Sound of Mull.

It occupies a high baltic plateau which forms a promontory, sheltering a natural harbour and commands a clear view of the channel in both directions. The site was one of considerable strategic importance and the castle formed the principal centre of communication between Mull and the mainland district of Morvern and its castle of Ardtornish. The principal remains are of a hall-house and bailey defended on the landward side by a ditch and bank. The hall-house is situated on the north-west section of the rock summit, the remainder of which was enclosed by a stone curtain-wall forming a more or less square bailey approximately half an acre in extent. The principal approach seems to have been by means of a causeway across the north section of the ditch, passing below the south-west corner of the hall-house and through a gateway in the west wall of the bailey. Another path probably of more recent construction can be traced westwards from the gateway across the bottom of the ditch and through the outer bank. The hall-house is approximately oblong, measuring around 25m from north to south by 12.510 transversely over walls varying from 1.7m to 3m in thickness and a small square latrine tower projects from the north-west pamer. The walls on the west and south sides of the building which were vulnerable to assault, were strengthened by a high steeply splayed plinth. The structure seems to have been composed of two principal storeys and a part attic, all wooden floored. Many of the doorway and window embrasures seem to have been 'ceiled' with wooden lintels, a construction method frequently used in 13th century West Highland castles. No fireplaces remain within the buildings and it may well be that the hall was heated by means of an open hearth. The ground-floor probably consisted of two separate rooms. The first floor dimensions are 21.410 by 7.910 but it is unclear whether this area was occupied by an unusually large hall or a hall and adjoining apartment. Only the north part of the building seems to have contained a chamber at second-floor level. The wall-head was probably surmounted by an open parapet-walk, the roof being gable-ended. The curtain-wall which formerly enclosed the bailey survives only along parts of the west and south sides.

The castle was probably built by the MacDougalls Of Lorn who possessed Mull from after the death of Somerled until their forfeiture by Robert I (the Bruce) early in the 14th century. Thereafter Aros became one of the principal seats of the Lords of the Isles, chiefs of Clan Donald. Both Donald, 2nd Lord of the Isles and his grandson John, 4th and last Lord issued charters from Aros and its significance as a place of importance was recognised when Angus MacDonald, 9th Chief of Glengarry was raised to the peerage by Charles II for services rendered to the Royal House of Stuart and became Aeneas, Lord MacDonell and Aros. After the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles, the ownership of Aros passed to the MacLeans of Duart and it was there that Lord Ochiltree, King James VI's Lieutenant, in 1608, entertained the principal Island chiefs on board his flag ship, the Moon, after which he announced to them that they were the King's prisoners and sailed with them to the south where they were imprisoned in the castles of Blackness, Dumbarton and Stirling until they promised to yield to His Majesty's demands. When the land grasoinn Archibald, Earl of Argyll succeeded in acquiring the MacLean lands in Mull, circa 1674, Aros fell into the hands of the Campbells who eventually, after 1690, allowed the castle to fall into a state of decay. (Sources include: The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century by D.MacGibbon and T.Ross (1889); RCAHMS, Argyll, Vol 3 (1980); The Castles of Western and Northern Scotland, by M.Stalker (1995).



THE FLANNAN ISLES

In December 1900 three lighthouse-keepers, Thomas Marshall, James Ducat and Donald McArthur, on the lonely outcrop of the Flannan Isles, approx 20 miles from the Outer Hebrides, western Scotland, disappeared without trace. No solution to their disappearance has ever been found, and for over a 100 years now this case has been of endless fascination to those of us who love unsolved mysteries. The riddle of the Flannan Isles has inspired stories, poems, songs, even an opera. Endless speculations about their fate have been imaginative in the extreme. Something about the mystery of these 3 men, isolated at the edge of the world, surrounded by the hostile Atlantic Ocean, gets under our skin.

The Flannan Isles (also known as the Seven Hunters) are named after a 7th century Irish priest called St Flannan. Apart from the 70 years when the lighthouse was manned, the windswept islands have always largely been uninhabited. The only other structure on the islands, apart from the lighthouse, is a tiny ruined chapel, dedicated to St Flannan. The islands were always viewed with great superstition by the Hebrideans, and although they used the islands to graze sheep, believed it was unlucky to spend a night there. They observed such practices as removing your hat and upper clothing, and turning in a sunwise direction, when arriving there.

The lighthouse was constructed in the 1890s on the island known as Eilean Mor (Big Isle). It took 4 years, and building work was continually hampered by the difficulties of safely landing supplies on the island, and the tempestuousness of the wild Atlantic Ocean. The lighthouse first went into operation on 7 December 1899. It had no wireless communication, and its only communication with the outside world was a series of semaphore-style balls on posts, which could be seen by the Hebrides on a good day.

The mystery begins on the night of 15 December 1900, when a squall broke out in the vicinity of the islands. The crew of a passing ship, the Fairwind, were angry and disturbed that no guiding light from the newly-built Flannan Isles lighthouse appeared to be in operation. Likewise the steamer Archtor (or Archer as I've also seen it recorded), when it docked at Oban, reported that the light was not operating. Nothing appears to have been done about it. Perhaps the authorities felt that it was best to wait a few days, as the relief ship, the Hesperus, was due to sail out to the islands on the 20th December.

Bad weather delayed the sailing though, and the Hesperus didn't set out until dawn on Boxing Day, carrying fresh supplies for the lighthouse, and Joseph Moore, who was due to relieve one of the other keepers on watch duty. Moore was anxious about the mystery of the dead light. He knew that it was virtually unheard of for lighthouse-keepers to allow a light to go out like that. It was said that during the short voyage to the islands he was restless, filled with foreboding, pacing the deck and refusing any breakfast.

Things were eerie on the lighthouse island from the moment they arrived. There was no welcoming committee from the three men, (who would normally have been outside to greet them), no provisions boxes had been put out to be re-stocked, and the flag wasn't up on the flagstaff. The Hesperus moored in silence, and Joseph Moore headed for the lighthouse, calling out as he headed towards it.

Inside the lighthouse nothing looked out of order. The lamps were trimmed, the beds were tumbled, as if they men had just got up, the washing-up done, cold ashes in the grate. Other reports have it that a chair was overturned in the kitchen, (although some observers believe this was a later, journalistic, embellishment),

and the clocks had all stopped. What is agreed is that two sets of outdoor gear were missing, and only one set of oilskins remained. Which meant one of the men had gone out without his protective weather gear on. Something that would have been virtually unheard of. Not only was this wholly impractical, but for all 3 men to leave the light unattended at once went against the rules laid down by the Northern Lighthouse Board. The only set of outdoor clothing which remained belonged to Donald McArthur.

So much myth and folklore has grown up over the Flannan Isles mystery, that some have reported that when Joseph Moore first opened the main door, three strange birds flew out, and, as the lighthouse tower was searched, odd strands of seaweed were found on the stairs, and in the little cubby-hole where the lighthouse logbook was kept.

A comprehensive search was also made of the island itself. At the west landing stage they found extraordinary damage. Iron railings were bent out of shape, and the iron railway by the path was completely wrenched out of the concrete. The conclusion was that the damage had been caused during a terrible storm.

Captain Garvie sent a telegram to the Northern Lighthouse Board, saying that "a dreadful accident" had happened at Flannan. He concluded the "poor fellows must have blown over the cliffs or drowned trying to rescue a crane or something like that".

When the logbook was perused, it made for disturbing reading. Keeper Thomas Marshall recorded as follows:

"December 12. Gale north by northwest. Sea lashed to fury. Never seen such a storm. Waves very high. Tearing at lighthouse. Everything shipshape. James Ducat irritable".

Later that day: "Storm still raging, wind steady. Stormbound. Cannot go out. Ship passing sounding foghorn. Could see lights of cabins. Ducat quiet. Donald McArthur crying".

"December 13. Storm continued through night. Wind shifted west by north. Ducat quiet. McArthur praying". Later: "Noon, grey daylight. Me, Ducat and McArthur prayed".

On 14 December there was no entry in the log.

The final entry was made on a slate, which (under normal circumstances) would have been transferred to the logbook proper later on:

"December 15. 1pm. Storm ended, sea calm. God is over all".

It was on the evening of the 15th that it was observed that the light hadn't been lit. So the men must have disappeared sometime in the few hours between the last log entry and night-fall, which at that time of year, and in that area would have occurred at around 4 PM.

There is much controversy over the log entries. Most particularly, the highly emotive quality of the entries. This was an official log-book, the entries would ordinarily have been the bare bones of the daily running of the light. It wasn't a private diary, there for the men to record their feelings. Take the entry where Marshall records "James Ducat irritable". It has been pointed out that Ducat was Marshall's superior. This would be akin to someone writing on the office messageboard that the boss was in a bad mood. If the men had lived, The Northern Lighthouse Board would have asked Marshall to explain why he

had made such a personal entry. Also Ducat was reputed to have normally been a very good-natured man. Such irritability would have been out-of-character (although I have to say that even the most good-natured of men might have suffered irritability in those trying circumstances).

The “McArthur crying” entry is also extraordinary. It makes McArthur sound like a snivelling boy, when by all accounts he was a tough old sea-dog, of many years experience. On the mainland he was known as a bit of a brawler. He must have endured his fair share of violent storms over the years, so why did this one reduce him to a pulp?

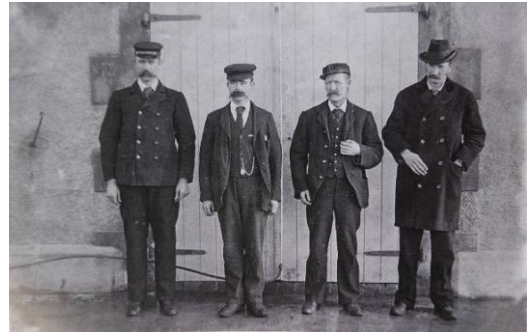
The final entry also aroused some surprise. Superintendent Muirhead, who was part of the official investigation into the disappearances, knew all the men personally, and said he had never thought of any of them as particularly God-fearing, or prone to prayer.

Writer Mike Dash has suggested that the logbook entries may in fact have been a hoax, that they were written after the 15th December. It's unlikely we'll ever know the truth to that, but if the entries were faked, then WHY?? After I first blogged about this case, I was contacted by Mike Dash, who said that the logbook entries had been invented by an American pulp fiction magazine, who had invented that angle to jazz the story up for their readers. Some things never change I guess.

The Northern Lighthouse Board carried out an official investigation into the disappearances, and concluded that it was most likely that the men had been swept away by a freak wave as they were trying to secure things on the west landing area. That two of the men had got into trouble, and that McArthur had dashed outside in his shirt-sleeves to help them.

There have of course been much more dramatic explanations for the mystery, such as sea monsters and aliens. It has even been speculated that a long-boat full of ghosts were seen heading to the islands on the night the light went dark. Some have said that the long-boat full of ghosts may in fact have been the three lighthouse-keepers rowing furiously away.

I'll close with the words of Superintendent Muirhead, who, in his official report of 8 January 1901, said “I visited them as lately as 7th December and have the melancholy recollection that I was the last person to shake hands with them and bid them adieu”



STRANGE AFFAIR AT A LIGHTHOUSE.

Three Keepers Disappear.

[P. A. TELEGRAM]

Intimation has been received at the Northern Lighthouse Board, Edinburgh, of the loss of the lighthouse staff at the Flannan Islands lighthouse.

The station was established in December last year, and was staffed by four men, three taking duty and the other having relief.

When the Board's steamer yesterday went to the islands to land the relieving keeper, it was found that the three men last on duty had disappeared, leaving no trace behind. They are the principal keeper (James Ducat) and Thomas Marshall and Donald McArthur. The latter was an occasional keeper on duty in place of a sick member of the regular staff.

It is surmised that they were swept away during the storm of last week, either when attempting to save a crane or when trying to render assistance to some vessel in distress.

The relieving keeper and three other men have been temporarily left on the island.

No such incident has ever happened in the history of the Lighthouse Board, and it is provident that it did not result in disaster to any passing vessel.

The Flannan Islands are a group of seven isles, seventeen miles west of Lewis, in the Hebrides.



CLAN DONALD PHOTOS

Boonah



Scotland in the Park



Tartan Day



WHO RESOURCED AND BUILT THE IONA "CATHEDRAL OF THE ISLES"? (Part 1)

Ian Ross Macdonnell, Australia.

"It was the founder of a house and his heirs who provided the impetus to build or rebuild, who might contribute ideas, and who furnished resources to finance the project" ('Monastic and Religious Orders'; p.152; Burton, J., 1994.)

Let's put some authentic ancestral bones and a bit of flesh on that academically sound, authoritative statement above. And we have

"It was .. Reginald mac Somerled.. the founder of.. Iona Abbey.. and his heirs .. the MacDonald Lords of the Isles... who provided the impetus to build or rebuild, who might contribute ideas ...like their rebuilding, enlarging and raising of St Mary's church to the Cathedral of the Isles ... and who furnished resources to finance the project."

But will the Scottish authorities acknowledge this truth? No. They continue to maintain it was the Iona abbot who financed and rebuilt St Mary's church.

They are plain wrong. Just like they were wrong in emphatically stating it was "inconceivable" for the Iona graveslab No. 150 to be the monument of Bannockburn famous, Lord Angus Og MacDonald, d.1318. It took seven years for me to prove them wrong and receive official acknowledgement in 2013.

See here :-

<http://www.ionaabbeyandclandonald.com/angus-ogs-graveslab-no-150---savior-of-the-bruce.html>

And they will be proved wrong again. Historic Scotland acknowledged in writing in 2012 that:-

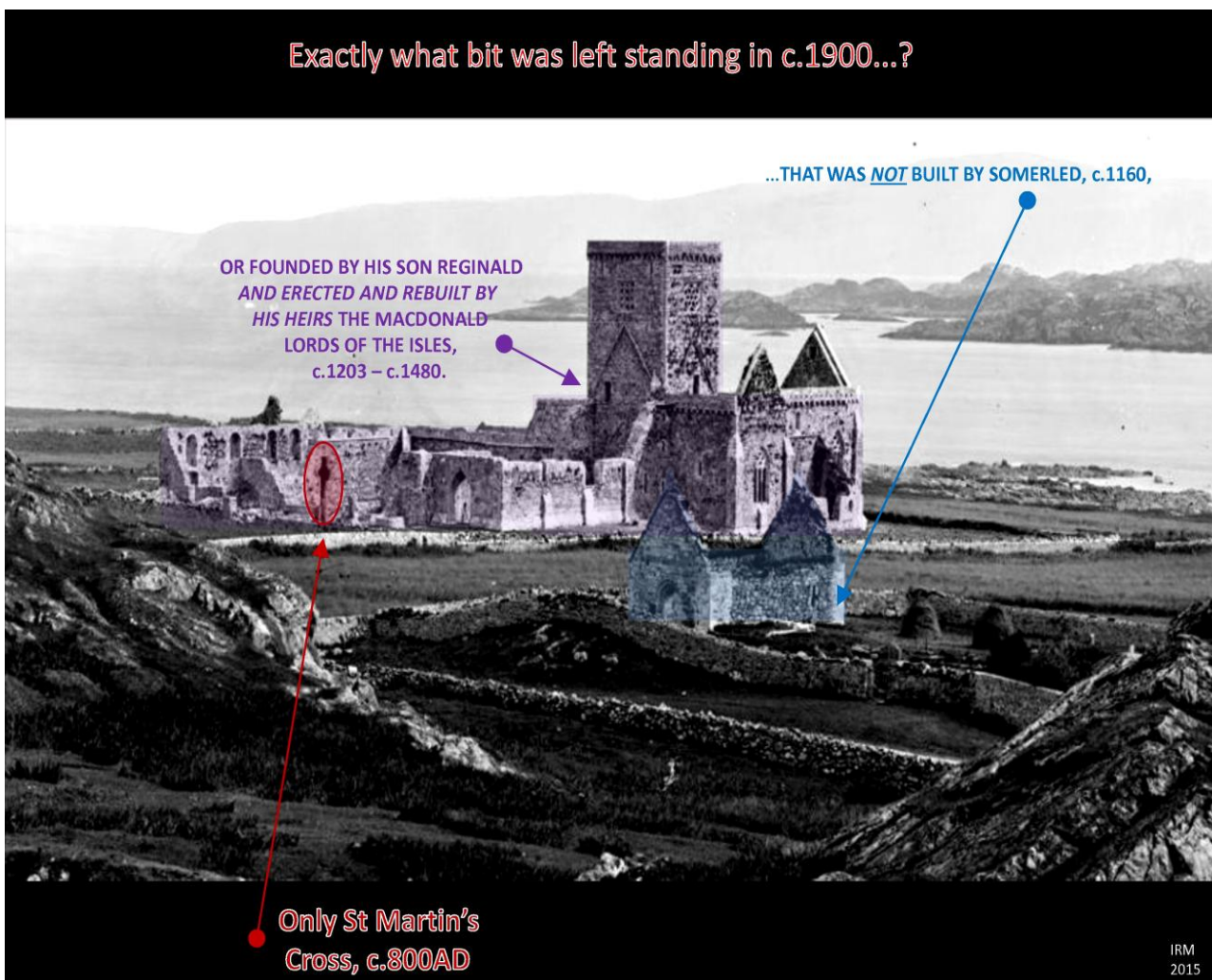
"In the later medieval period, control by one of the most prominent forces in Scottish politics, the Lord of the Isles is likely to have had a strong impact on the island and its monuments but the role of the Lordship on the architectural, ecclesiastical and political landscape of Iona is poorly understood."



Yet, even understanding that weakness, they still maintain that the Lords of the Isles (unnamed) were only 'generous benefactors throughout or patrons' for Iona abbey. This is about as completely inadequate and insulting as saying that Bill Gates is a prolific, high profile programmer for Microsoft!

Historic Scotland's flawed, inadequate account leaves the Clan Donald Lords of the Isles forfeit of any due recognition, outside of the minimalist role of being called mere benefactors or patrons for Iona Abbey/Cathedral. This is a gross understatement of their fundamental contribution to this infrastructure, the resulting macroeconomics of the region and the truly EXTRAORDINARY three centuries long existence of the late medieval Iona Abbey and its Cathedral of the Isles - under the one family. In many respects, they are sidelined, what's more anonymously, to St Oran's Chapel which I have already begun to successfully rectify. At the moment a further eight graveslab attributions by me are being assessed by Dr Nicki Scott, Historic Scotland. Identifying individual and well known MacDonald Lords/Chiefs with significant Iona monuments is an essential element in my strategy to reclaim ("personalise", legitimise) and publicise the fact that medieval Iona Abbey and Cathedral of the Isles is the true legacy of various Clan Donald Chiefs.

For the general public to be misinformed that the Lords of the Isles were just patrons (and with limited modern meaning) or benefactors of Iona Abbey and Cathedral is substantively misleading in terms of a proper interpretation of the history of the site's extant architecture.



If you'd like to fully appreciate why, and I'm sure many of you do, it will take just a bit of further reading. Here is the first part of a 'short' 5000 word essay and I've made it as engaging and compelling as I can for you within the bounds of an academic environment. I'd like you to be enthused - to join the just cause!

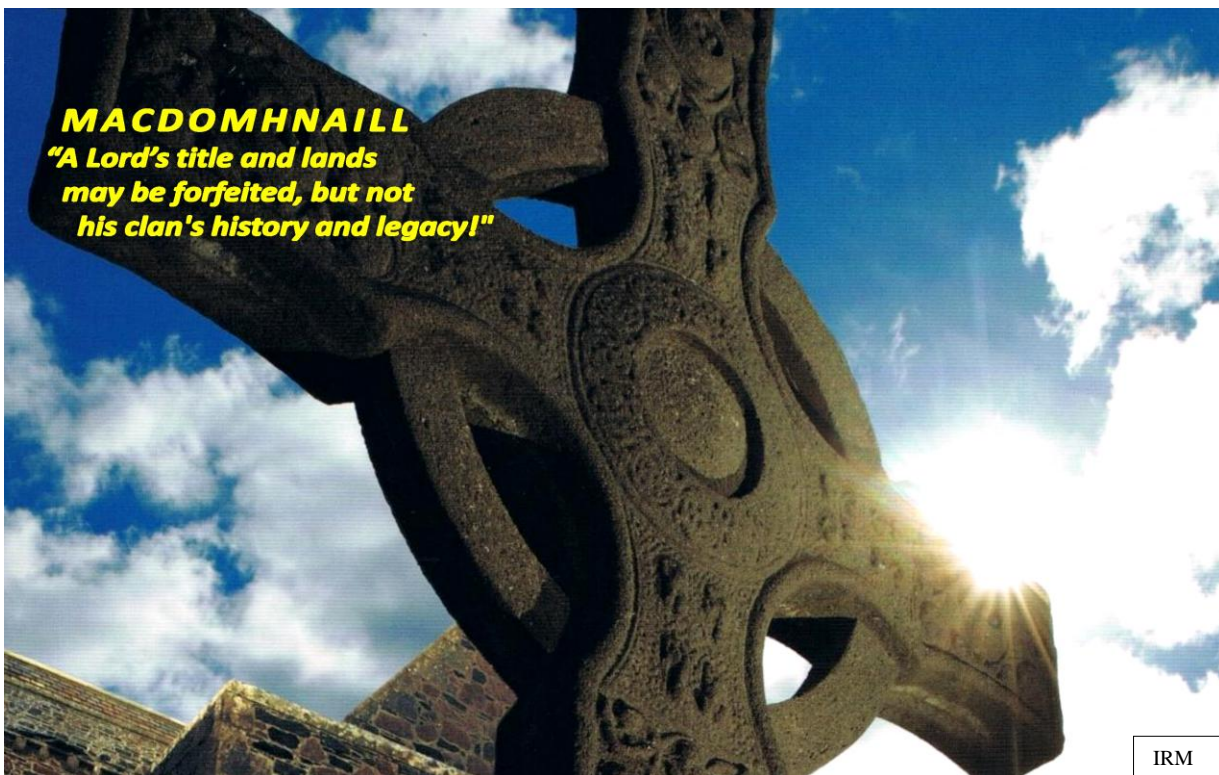
My website has various papers and pages on this which explain in more detail and with full references and footnotes, etc, eg :- <http://www.ionaabbeyandclandonald.com/introduction.html>

What are we up against? Dr. Iain MacDonald, Glasgow University; 2013 :- **"The Highlander has never enjoyed a good press, and has been usually characterised as peripheral and barbaric in comparison to his Lowland neighbour, more inclined to fighting than serving God"**. In his *"Clerics and Clansmen - The Diocese of Argyll between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Centuries"*; 2013.

BUT, FOR EFFECTIVELY ITS ENTIRE EXISTENCE OVER THE WHOLE LATER MEDIEVAL PERIOD OF 300 YEARS, IONA ABBEY WAS RECREATED, PROSPERED AND GREW UNDER THE ONE CONTINUOUS FAMILY OF FOUNDER AND HIS HEIRS, THE BUILDERS, PATRONS, BENEFACTORS, PROTECTORS, REBUILDERS AND CONTINUOUS ENDOWERS – FROM FOUNDATION TO PRE-DISSOLUTION.¹

THIS IS CERTAINLY RARE. THIS MACDONALD FAMILY OUGHT TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED PUBLICLY AND PROMINENTLY AS SUCH ON THE ABBEY.²

(cont. next edition....)



¹ After the MacDonald Lordship fell, **BETWEEN 1494 AND 1534, THE ABBEY WAS BUT AN UNWORTHY, PATHETIC PASTICHE – A SLUSH FUND** for the "capacious greedy craws" of the Campbell Earls of Argyll and their agents, the many Campbell Iona Abbey Commendators (stripped Abbey's assets!). **In 1534** King Henry broke with the Pope and by the Act of Supremacy made himself the supreme head of the church in his lands. The 1535 *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (church valuation) was not done in Scotland.

² As used to be :- **"an inauguration stone, which stood beside the door of a newly built church, recording the name of the aristocratic donor"** (founder and heirs). *"Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland"*, p.35; Dr. Peter Yeoman.

COOKERY CORNER

Tablet : Tablet is a traditional sweet confection which, if you like sugary things, is irresistible! You can add some flavouring from essence/extract as well, if you wish.



Ingredients (for 4 pounds/1.8kg tablet):

Butter or margarine - half pound (225g)
Sweetened condensed milk - one pound (450g)
Castor sugar - 4 pounds (1.8kg)
Water - 1 pint (half litre)

Method

Using a non-stick pan, put the water on a low heat and melt in the butter. Add the sugar and bring to the boil. It is important to keep stirring all the time. Once it is boiling, stir in the condensed milk and simmer for 20 minutes. Again, keep stirring to avoid it sticking/burning. Take off the heat and beat vigorously for five minutes, adding the flavouring of your choice. Pour into a rectangular greased tin and once it is partly cooled, cut into bars (roughly 5 inches long by 1/2 inches wide). Once the tablet is cold, wrap the bars in waxed paper and store in an airtight jar or tin.

The Gathering Stone



Is a block of grit, since 1840 enclosed in an iron cage, where the standard of the Scottish clans is said to have been placed. It is in reality a much earlier standing stone but one which has gained traditional association with the battle.

The iron ribs protect a fallen and broken pillar known as the Gathering Stone. According to legend The Duke of Argyll, commanding the Hanoverian army, watched the course of the battle of Sheriffmuir from here on the 13th November 1715. The Jacobite army was commanded by the Earl of Mar and several large mounds adjacent to the stone are believed to be mass graves of those Jacobites who were killed.

However, the battle was inconclusive, "Some say that we won, and some say that they won, and some say that none won at all." The stone is a focal point on the battlefield.

MERCAT CROSS

A **mercat cross** is the Scots name for the market cross found frequently in Scottish cities, towns and villages where historically the right to hold a regular market or fair was granted by the monarch, a bishop or a baron. It therefore served a secular purpose as a symbol of authority, and was an indication of a burgh's relative prosperity. Historically, the term dates from the period before 1707 when Scotland was an independent kingdom, but it has been applied loosely to later structures built in the traditional architectural style of crosses or structures fulfilling the function of marking a settlement's focal point.

Historical documents often refer simply to "the cross" of whichever town or village is mentioned. Today, there are around 126 known examples of extant crosses in Scotland, though the number rises if later imitations are added.

The earliest documentary reference occurs in the reign of William the Lion (1165-1214), when it was decreed that "all merchandises sal be presentit at the mercat and mercat croce of burghis". Early town crosses may have continued the tradition of church crosses used to mark consecrated land or sanctuary boundaries, and functioned similarly to early ecclesiastical crosses, from before the building of stone churches, in marking a communal gathering place. They are thought to have been originally pillars of wood, possibly placed on stone bases, changing to stone pillars in later centuries. Some, as at Inverkeithing, incorporate sundials (the pillar of each cross itself acts as a primitive sundial).

The cross was the place around which market stalls would be arranged, and where 'merchants' (Scots for shopkeepers as well as wholesale traders) would gather to discuss business. It was also the spot where state and civic proclamations would be publicly read by the "bellman" (town crier). For example, in 1682 a town guild in Stirling was accorded the privilege of making a proclamation, to be "intimat at the Mercat Croce that no person pretend ignorance." To this day, royal proclamations are still ceremonially read in public at the Mercat Cross in Edinburgh, including the calling of a general election and succession of a new monarch.

The cross was also the communal focal point of public events such as civic ceremonials, official rejoicings, and public shamings and punishments, including executions. Some crosses still incorporate the iron staples to which jougs and branks were once attached. Communal gatherings still take place at crosses, as at Galashiels on "Braw Lads Day" or Peebles at the start of the Beltane Festival. Crosses are often the place to mark the start or end of Common Ridings as at Musselburgh or events such as the Stonehaven fireball ceremony.



Cross House at Prestonpans, East Lothian



Kinrossie Cross



Linlithgo



Dunbar

Descriptions

Despite the name, the typical mercat cross is not usually *cruciform*, or at least has not been since the iconoclasm of the Scottish Reformation. The cross atop the shaft may have been replaced with a small statue, such as a royal unicorn or lion, symbols of the Scottish monarchy, or a carved stone displaying the arms of the royal burgh, or, in the cases of ecclesiastical burghs or burghs of barony, the bishop's or feudal superior's coat-of-arms. These are often painted. Another finial commonly seen is a stone ball as at Clackmannan and Newton Stewart. The shaft is usually surmounted by a plain or decorated capital. A variety of decorative designs are employed, including foliage, emblems like thistles and roses, armorial shields, and mouldings of the egg-and-dart type.

Five crosses: at Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth, Aberdeen and Preston (modern Prestonpans) were supported by a drum-shaped understructure, known as a cross-house, with a platform reached by internal steps or ladder. In the case of Aberdeen's late 17th-century cross the platform is supported by a series of open semi-circular arcades. The Preston Cross, built in the early 17th century, is the only one of the type still existing on its original site. This traditional design has been replicated approximately with added Scots baronial elements in Victorian reconstructions at Edinburgh and Perth. A plainer understructure faintly echoing the design was adopted for Glasgow's cross when a replacement was erected on or near the site of the original in 1921; and simpler versions exist elsewhere, as at Elgin and Selkirk. Most crosses, however, stand on stepped, often octagonal stone bases and are of an average height of between 9 and 13 feet. In some cases, as at Musselburgh (see gallery image) and Kirkcudbright, the pillar is secured within or stands upon a solid stone structure.

Some mercat crosses of today are replicas from the Victorian period, as at Dunfermline and Scone, though they often incorporate one or more original elements, particularly the shaft or a section thereof. Some crosses, as at Linlithgow and St. Andrews, were replaced with public drinking fountains substituting for older, demolished crosses, and some were adapted as war memorials after the Great War of 1914-18. A war memorial may incorporate a part of the original cross, as at Renfrew or Bowden, or have been built deliberately in the style of a mercat cross, as at Lauder and Moffat. The war memorials at Abernethy, North Berwick and Portree also closely resemble mercat crosses and are known as such. The last, of course, lies geographically well outside the historic area of Scottish Lowland burghs. Another example of what might be termed an imitation cross is the war memorial at Dalmeny. It provides the village with a customary focal point and gives the impression that it is much older than its 19th-century origin, but is not indicative of a historical market.

Taken for granted as a normal part of the street scene, crosses have in the main been poorly documented in the past regarding their dates of erection, relocation and remodelling, and they often suffer from neglect in the present. Many no longer stand in their original position. Some, such as Forfar's, and Queensferry's have disappeared, and some, such as Cupar's and Banff's, have been moved to a location outside the burgh but later retrieved and re-erected.^[9]

Scottish emigrants to countries such as Canada and especially Australia took the idea of the mercat cross with them, and several cities in the New World have or once had them in the town centre.

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