

## II.

### NOTICE OF THE PRIORY CHURCH OF ARDCHATTAN AND ITS CARVED STONES. BY ROBERT BRYDALL, F.S.A. Scot.

Of the two great families, *de Insulis* and *de Ergadia*, Reginald or Ranald, son of the great Somerled, and ancestor of all the MacDonalds, possessed the Western Islands and Kintyre, while the mainland portion fell to the other son, Dugald Scrag, both of whom appear in the Norse Sagas under the title of Sudreyan Kings. Ardchattan thus belonged to the family *de Ergadia*.<sup>1</sup> The name of the place signifies the height or promontory of Catan, who was the uncle and preceptor of St Blane, and a contemporary, though not a follower, of St Columba. The parish was at one time known as Balmahaodan or the town of St Modan. On a hill not

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes spelt *Ergalita* and *Ergadia*.

far from the priory there was a chapel of this name ; and near the latter a spring was called St Modan's Well. St Modan or Madan is by some accounts said to have been the father of St Catan. He is commemorated at Cowal, as well as on Loch Etive, and is said to have died at Roseneath.

The church adjoins the priory house, and is situated a few paces back from the shore road on Loch Etive, opposite the railway station of Achnacloich, between Connal Ferry and Taynuilt ; the interior is from 60 to 70 feet in length by about 20 feet in breadth. It was not a cross church, and it possessed a central tower, the walls of which were of unusual thickness. The remains of the prior's house are near the south-west corner of the church, and the other monastic buildings seem to have stood behind it, to the west and north-west of the church. As the loch here lies east and west, the church and the prior's house would look across the loch to the open country to the south.

Of the parts of the walls which are left, the only architectural features remaining are a square aumbry at one of the corners and a piscina ; the latter is placed in the central one of three unequal arches in the Early English style, over which is a round moulded arch with a label-moulding resting on corbels.

It seems that in the year 1230, Dugald Scrag being taken prisoner by the Norwegians, Duncan was the only one of his family who retained any power in the territory. This Duncan was the first to assume the name of MacDougall—the son of Dougall.<sup>1</sup> As Duncan de Lorn, he witnessed a charter of the Earl of Athole ; as Duncan de Ergadia, he signed the famous letter to the Pope from the nobles of Scotland in 1244 ; and to him is credited the foundation of the priory church, in 1230 or 1231, for the monks of the Order of Vallis Caulium, at the same time endowing it with several lands.<sup>2</sup>

The Order of Vallis Caulium was a strict branch of the Benedictines, introduced into Scotland by W. de Malvoisin, Bishop of St Andrews,

<sup>1</sup> MacDowall, MacCoul, MacCowle, etc. The family is a different one from the MacDougalls of Galloway.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Chisholm Batten's *Charters of Beaully Priory*.

about, or some years prior to, the foundation of the church of Ardchattan. Other houses connected with the Order were:—Pluscardine, in Morayshire; Beaully, in Ross-shire; and, possibly, also Lesmahago, in Lanarkshire.

Of the history of the church little is known; it seems, like that of Iona at one time, to have held some dependence upon the bishopric of Dunkeld until the first years of the thirteenth century, having been a religious settlement, as already hinted, previous to the foundation and endowment of Duncan MacDougall. It was perhaps a priory under that of Beaully, as a commission, dated 7th May 1506, was addressed by the general order to the prior of that house, empowering him to visit Ardchattan, and to make such regulations there as should be thought requisite for observing the rules of the Order. In 1296, Peter, the prior of this place, was one of the subscribers to the Ragman Roll. John Campbell, of the house of Cawdor, was commendator for several years, but not continuously, between 1552 and 1564. The priory building was burned by Colkitto in the wars of Montrose and Argyle; and in 1617 the monastery was annexed to the bishopric of the Isles by King James VI.<sup>1</sup>

The fortunes of the MacDougalls were ruined in the wars between Bruce and Baliol, after which, in the fourteenth century, the lordship of Lorn passed into the possession of the Stewarts of the Darnly branch, one of whom married the heiress of MacDougall. Their descendants continued to hold the land, one of whom, John, was created Lord of Lorn by King James II. in 1445. William Stewart, as heir male to this John, claimed, and was accordingly seised in the lordship on 21st March 1469; and in November of the same year, resigned the lordship to King James III. in favour of Colin, Earl of Argyle, for which the Earl gave him other lands, and the King dignified him with the title of Lord Innermeath.<sup>2</sup> Although not in possession of the lands, the MacDougalls continued to use Ardchattan as a place of interment,

<sup>1</sup> Dean Howson's *Antiquities of Argyleshire*.

<sup>2</sup> Nisbet's *Heraldry*.

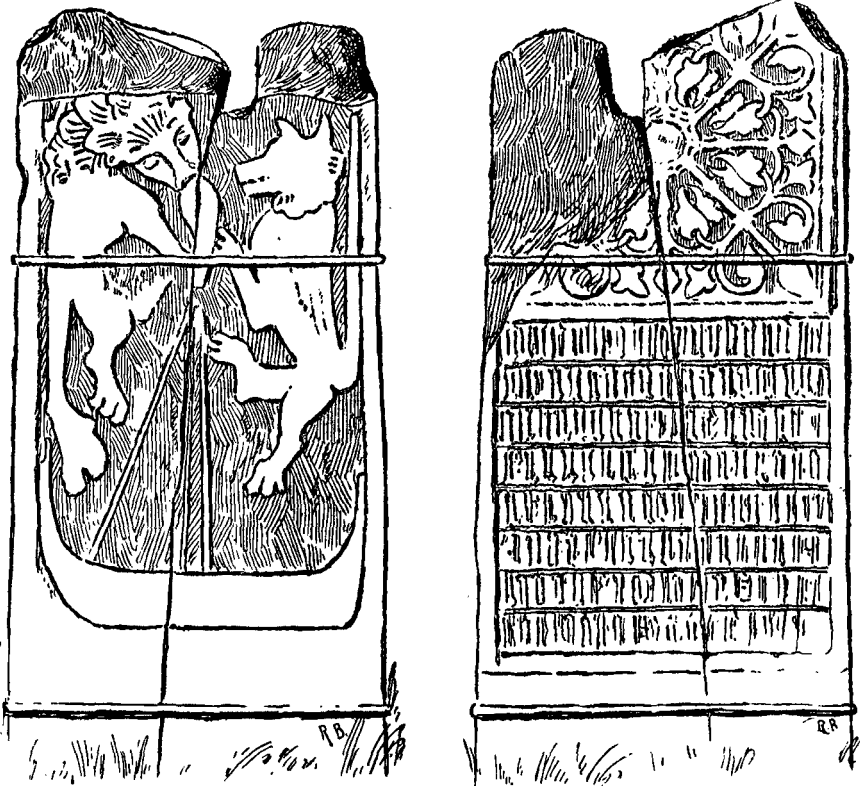
if, indeed, they did not possess the power of nominating the priors, or retain the succession to that office in their own family.<sup>1</sup>

The chief interest of the place, however, is centred in its old carved stones, which, so far as I know, have not hitherto been fully described and drawn, although they have been frequently referred to. In connection with the MacDougalls, the first which catches the eye of the visitor is an upright fragment of what was undoubtedly the shaft of a cross (fig. 1). It measures 3 feet 1 inch above the surface of the ground by 17 inches in width at the top, broadening to 18 inches at the foot, and is 4 inches in thickness; it is broken vertically in two pieces, which are bound together by two iron rods. For some time it lay on the ground, when Dean Howson, who described it as a cross, found one end narrowed, as if for insertion in a socket. It is carved in low relief, and bears a lymphad or one-masted galley, with a flame at the mast-head, a lion on the dexter, and a nondescript animal on the sinister side. A lymphad was borne in their arms by certain families holding possessions on the coast or islands as a mark of feudal service, as in the instances of the Earls of Arran, Orkney, and Caithness. It was borne for the lordship of Lorn, and was quartered by Stewart of Innermeath after the Stewarts came into possession; but in the case of the Stewarts, differenced, by having flames issuing from the stern and prow, as well as from the mast-head. When the lordship passed into the family of Campbell, they also quartered the lymphad, but, it seems, without the flames; it is also quartered in the arms of other families in the west of Scotland, such as, the Macdonalds of the Isles, the MacLeans, MacLachlans, and MacNeils. In these cases it carried oars erect, but in action in the case of the Campbells.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Dean of Lismore gives—"Obitus Duncani M'Cowle qui interfectus fuit anno Domini I<sup>mo</sup> V<sup>o</sup> xii., qui fuit filius et hæres Alexandri M'Cowle de Dunolych: et Duncanus sepultus in Ardhattan xiiii. Julii."

<sup>2</sup> Pennant says that *furled* sails indicate Norwegian origin. They are so represented upon stones in Iona which are attributed to MacLean of Ross of Mull, and MacQuarrie of Ulva; but the galley on the inscribed stone of MacIain of Ardnamurchan on the same island bears a *spread* sail.

With regard to the two animals, they possibly appear here, not so much as heraldic supporters, but, as on many other stones, simply as emblematic or decorative devices. The arms of the MacDowalls or MacDougalls, Lords of Lorn, as given in Nisbet's *Heraldry*, are:—first



Figs. 1, 2. Fragment of Cross Shaft at Ardochattan. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

and fourth *azure*, a lion rampant *argent*, for MacDougall; and second and third a lymphad *sable*, with flames of fire issuing out of the top-mast *proper*. Two lions were old supporters of the MacDougalls.

Upon the other side of the same stone (fig. 2), the upper part is filled in with a panel of interlaced foliated ornament of a type which frequently occurs upon West Highland stones, and rather closely resembles the design of the third panel on the inscribed stone of the four priors in Iona. On the lower part is an illegible inscription in Gothic lettering,

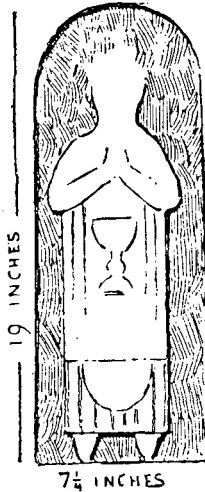


Fig. 3. (Ardochattan).

which Dean Howson, prior to 1842, was unable to decipher, except in two places, where he said, "the provoking words, ARDCHATA and APUD ARDCHATA, protrude themselves." He adds that "the fracture passes near the figures in the date, but it is certainly either 1400 or 1500." The latter has been found to be the correct date. In the *New Statistical Account* it is given as reading FUNALLUS SOMHERLE MACDOUGALLUS, PRIOR DE ARDCHATTAN, MCCCCC. That, however, can only be a portion of the inscription, as there are eight quite distinct lines of lettering upon the stone.

In a corner of the church, lying on the ground in front of the piscina already referred to, is a slab of grey schist, about 6 feet long by 19 inches broad, narrowing to 14 inches.

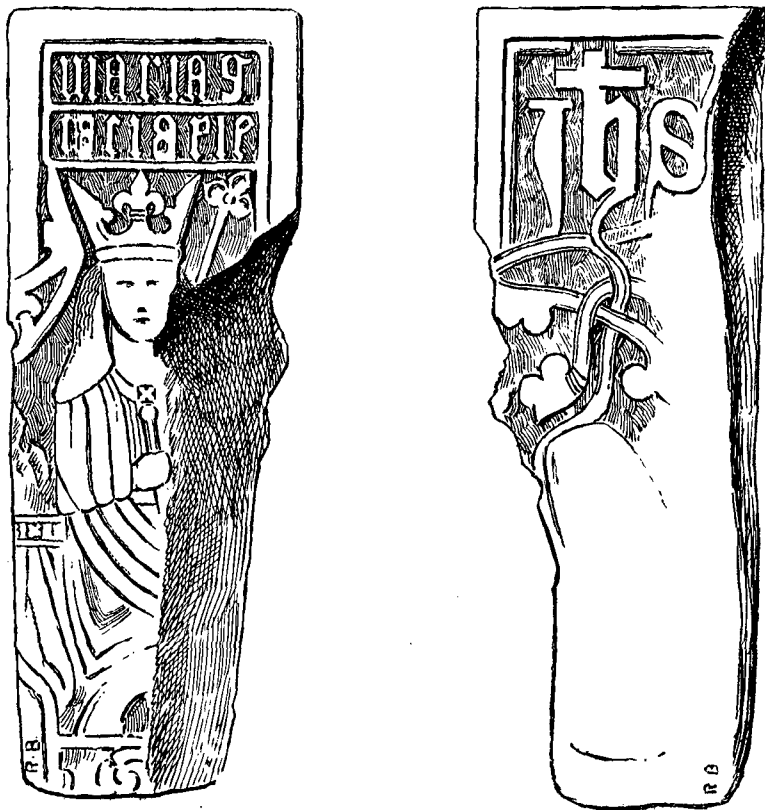
The surface is all plain, with the exception of a marginal inscription in Gothic lettering, and a small figure (fig. 3) carved within a sunk recess near the upper part of the stone. The inscription is:—

HIC JACET VENERABILIS ET SACRATUS RODERICUS ALEXANDRI RECTOR  
QUONDAM FYNANI INSULÆ QUI OBIT ANNO DOM. —

The place indicated as Fynani Insula is in Loch Shiel, Ardnamurchan.

Close to this is a slab of hard grey schist, 3 feet 2 inches in height and 14 inches in width. On one side (fig. 4) is carved in relief a

crowned and enthroned Madonna, with a sceptre at her left side; over the figure is the Gothic inscription—*MARIA GRACIA PLE*. The other side, also carved in relief (fig. 5), has the sacred monogram, *I H S*



Figs. 4, 5. Slab at Ardochattan. (½.)

Fig. 6 is a fragment of a cross, 3 feet 10 inches in height. On the surface, in low relief, is the right arm of the crucified Saviour, with a small portion of drapery below the waist, part of the right leg, and some foliated ornament. It has been carved on the other side, which now

presents nothing of any interest—merely some folds of drapery on the upper part, and on the lower, a morsel of foliated ornament like that given upon the drawing.

Among the other stones lying about within the walls, there are two or three which have apparently been carved—probably with interlaced work, which, in one case, has been confined to a band down the centre; but the designs are quite obliterated. Near the centre of the place lies a fragment of the life-sized effigy of an ecclesiastic in sacerdotal vestments; the upper and lower parts are gone, and it is much defaced. It is mentioned by Dean Howson, but was afterwards overgrown and concealed by sod and grass, and rediscovered a few years ago.

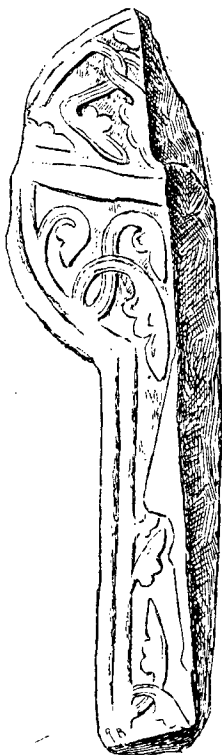


Fig. 6. Fragment of Cross, Ardhattan. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

There is mention of a stone with an inscription, lying in the “middle of the foot-path leading into and through the chapel, broken, and grass growing through the crack.”<sup>1</sup> I was unable to find it, but it is probably overgrown with grass. From a rubbing made by Miss Maclagan, the Rev. Dr Joass read, IAUNE : MEIK · DO(u)LL · M'CANÉ · DUI . The Doctor adds, “I believe the second letter to be a reversed, and think the name IAUNE the Gaelic pronunciation of Ewen. Supplying u where there is a gap, the surname reads MEIK DOULL for Macdougall, in which the Celts drop the g. We are, of course, in the Mac-

dougall country. Then comes M'CANÉ for M'Ane, the c of Mac being often repeated by mistake as in M'Kay, M'Kinlay, for M'Aoi (dh) and M'Fhionulai (dh). Now M'Ane or M'Ean is local phonetic for M'Tain,

<sup>1</sup> *Transactions of the Stirling Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.*, 1891-92.



son of John, and *dui* is genitive of *du* (*bh*), *black*, so we have 'Ewen Macdougall, son of Black John.' Perhaps Ewen is John. . . . In 1507 Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenurquhay appointed Inveraray as the place where *Dugall M'Dugall M'Ane* should pay his rent."

Fig. 7 is by far the most important and interesting carving inside the church; it is a slab of hard bluish-grey schist covering what is evidently a stone coffin, placed close against the wall and built up, for the most part, at each end. It measures 6 feet 8½ inches in length by 2 feet 9 inches across the top and 2 feet 5½ inches at the foot; it is 2 inches in thickness, projecting slightly over the stone coffin upon which it lies, and is about 10 inches above the ground. The resemblance to some of the stones in Iona is very noticeable, more particularly to the slab of John MacIan inside the cathedral there, some of the architectural detail being almost identical. On this stone, however, there is a very marked degree of superiority in the carving of the human figures, which are unusually well designed and executed in comparison with those on other stones in the west of Scotland, and there is every probability that the figures, at least, are not the work of a local carver, but rather that of one of those who travelled from place to place wherever their services were in demand. The effigy of Abbot MacKinnon in Iona Cathedral is a very notable instance of this,<sup>1</sup> on which, by the way, the style of lettering is the same as that on this monument. The upper and lower halves of the surface contain in each three figures under canopies, the whole surrounded by a border 3¾ inches broad, containing an inscription, which crosses the middle of the stone, with three remaining of the original six circles, bearing symbols of the evangelists—a lion, a bull, and, probably, an eagle. The central one of the three upper panels contains a skeleton, or *cadaver*, surrounded by, as if emerging from, the grave-clothes

<sup>1</sup> A careful examination of this effigy is convincing; on the side of the mitre, which has been protected by its proximity to the wall, the carved ornamentation is evidently the work of a craftsman familiar with pure Gothic detail. On the edge of that stone there is a blank space left after 1500, suggestive of the monument having been carved between that date and the Abbot's death.

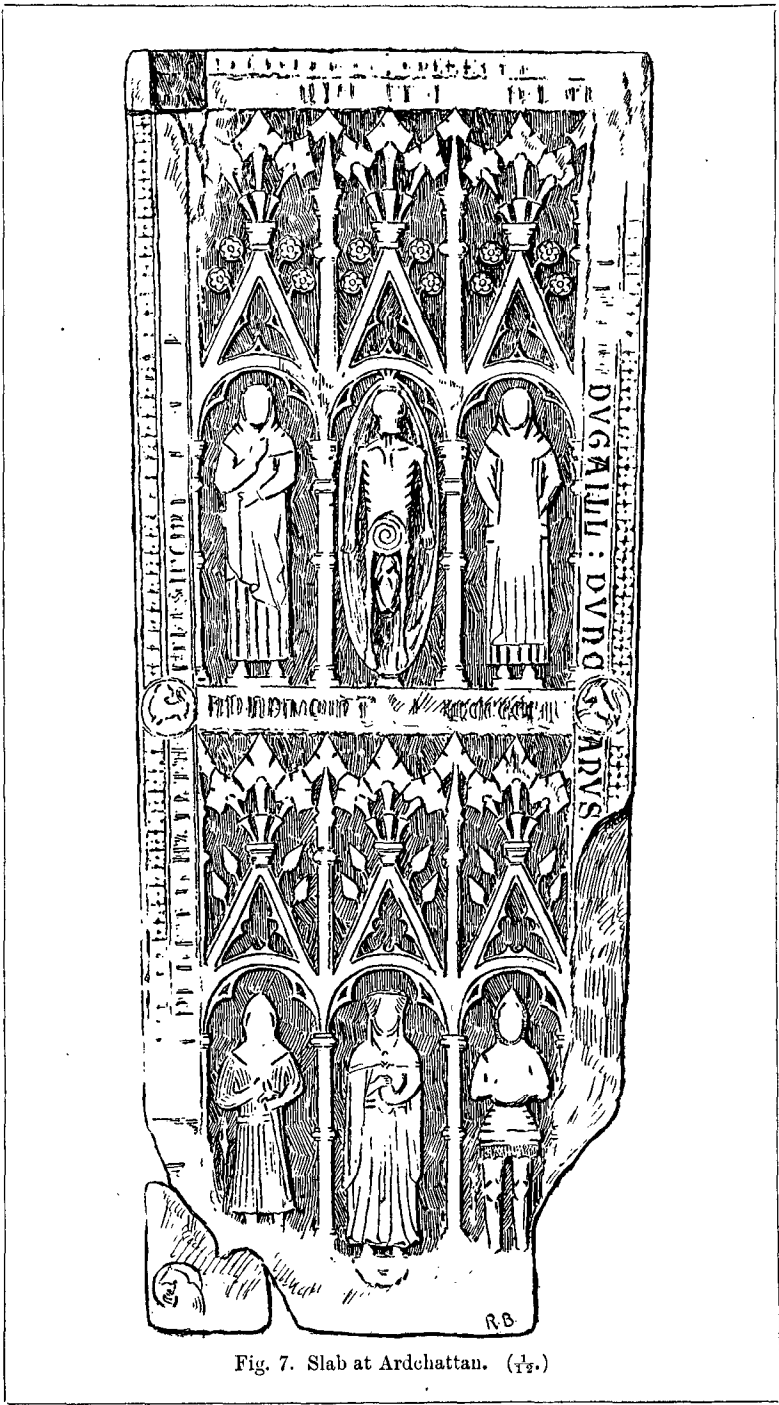


Fig. 7. Slab at Ardchattan. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

arranged in the form of an ellipse. A remarkable feature is the clearly-cut figure of a toad between the femoral bones.<sup>1</sup> At each side of this is a figure habited in the dress of a religious Order, not with the hands pressed together on the breast in the usual manner, but rather in attitudes of grief.<sup>2</sup> Upon the three lower panels, the first figure is that of a man holding a claymore and wearing a pointed bascinet with a camail, or tippet of mail, and a quilted surcoat; it is very similar to many of the larger effigies in the islands of Iona and Islay and other western localities. In the centre is the figure of a lady

<sup>1</sup> Dr Christison, who examined the stone when in better condition, points out that the toad is represented in the act of nibbling at, or swallowing, the lower extremity of the bowel; he also refers to Lockhart's ballad, *The Penitence of Don Roderick*, where Rodrigo, for penance, is enclosed in a tomb "with a black and living snake," which is to prey upon the most sinful part of his body. On the fourth day of the penance, Rodrigo says—

" . . . . . Oh, Father Eremite,  
It eats me now, it eats me now, I feel the adder's bite!  
The part that was most sinning, my bedfellow doth rend,  
There had my curse beginning, God grant it there may end!"

It will be remembered that the Spanish historians ascribe the invasion of the Moors to the violation by Rodrigo of Florinda, Count Julian's daughter.

In *Notes and Queries* of November and December 1886, there is mentioned a cross-legged effigy of a thirteenth-century knight in the church of Bainton in East Yorkshire, where a lizard is represented biting the point of the shield, and the point of the sword terminated by a toad, with its head turned towards the handle. A gilt or gold frog appears hanging on to the right ear of the effigy of Sir John Poley in Boxted Church in Suffolk, which is repeated upon a portrait of the same knight in Boxted Hall. In a recent publication (*The Black Forester*) there is mentioned a cross in a burying-ground in the vicinity of Friburg-in-Breisgau, at the foot of which is represented a skull pierced by a nail, with a frog under the jaw. The local explanation given is, that a skull pierced by a nail was thrown out from the ground by a man digging a grave, whose attention was attracted to it by a frog under its jaw causing it to move. Long before this a man had died suddenly, immediately after which his widow married again, and both having confessed to the murder of the first husband on the evidence of the skull, were executed.

<sup>2</sup> The faces are quite worn away, but the figures are more suggestive of females than males, although Mr Chisholm Batten (*Charters of Beaulieu Priory*) claims them as priors. The dress has some resemblance, especially at the sides, to that of a nun of the Carthusian Order, as engraved in the *Ordinum Religiosorum Catalogus*, Rome, 1723, part 2, plate 35.

in the costume worn in the Lowlands and England by the upper classes about the fifteenth century. She wears a caul-like head-dress, from which drapery falls down to her shoulders, and is habited in a long dress with a girdle; a short mantle falling from a tippet is fastened on the breast by a clasp or jewel. The last figure—that of a knight at her left side—is clad in the armour appearing on Lowland effigies of about the middle of the fifteenth century; to the bascinet is attached mail, covering the sides of the lower part of the head, and showing under the chin; elbow pieces are indicated; the plates of the tassets below the waist are distinctly marked on the sides where the surface is not defaced; a knight's belt is worn round the loins, under which are seen three rows of the rings of a mail hauberk with a scalloped edge; and the feet are gone from the ankles.

Figures in the Lowland costume are not very frequent in the western districts and islands. In the already-mentioned MacIan slab in Iona Cathedral, the dexter figure is in this armour, and the sinister figure, which I take to be that of a female, is in Highland costume.<sup>1</sup> A large stone matrix, in the same cathedral, of what has probably been a brass inlay, attributed to a MacLeod, and two or three effigies, also of MacLeods, in the Church of Rodil in the island of Harris, are the only other examples which I know of where Lowland armour is indicated—these being all of about the same period as this Ardchattan stone.

With regard to the inscription, now in great part quite illegible, in the *New Statistical Account*, after giving a rather inaccurate description of some of the figures, the writer says:—"The inscription on its sides and margin is in the old Irish characters, and, in so far as it can now be traced, is as follows—HIC JACET (sic) NATI SOMERLEDI MACDOUGALL DUNCANUS ET DUGALLUS, HUIUS MONASTERII SUCCESSIVE PRIORES, UNA CUM EORUNDUM PATRE, MATRE ET FRATRE ALANO QUORUM DUGALLUS HUIUS MONUMENTI FABRICATOR OBIIT ANNO DOMINI MCCCCCII." The inscription is also so given in Roger's *Monuments and Monumental*

<sup>1</sup> The late Mr Drummond, *Sculptured Monuments of Iona, etc.*, refers to this as a male figure. The carving is still tolerably clear.

*Inscriptions*, and is practically the same as read by Rev. Dr Joass from a more recent rubbing of the lettering, the differences consisting of *jacet* instead of *jacet*, and the spelling of one or two of the words, such as, *istius* for *huius*, etc. Although much defaced and partly broken away, I was able to verify this reading so far as it exists; it begins at the top in the usual way, goes all along the back and front border (the part being broken away at the foot), and terminates with the date 1502 across the middle. Along the *vertical edge* on the front of the slab, very sharply and beautifully cut in the same characters, but sunk in the stone, are repeated the words, FRE ALLANO QUORU DUGALLUS ISTIUS MONIMENTI FABRICA . . . OBIT. There are no contraction marks. At the end of *fabrica*, where the stone is broken, is part of a q; and the line is terminated by a small oblong containing a lozenge, as if to fill up a space too small for the succeeding word. The corresponding edges at the top and bottom, so far as they are exposed, bear no lettering, and, as already said, the back is built close up to the wall. The probability, therefore, is that the monument originally stood apart from the wall, and that the inscription on the upper surface was repeated all round the vertical edge.

Omitting the duplicated words on the front, the inscription may be read as, "Here lie the sons of Somerled MacDougall, Duncan and Dugall, successive priors of this monastery, together with their father, mother, and brother Allan, the fabricator of whose monument, Dougall, died in the year of our Lord 1502." The conclusion I arrive at is that the three lower figures represent the father, mother, and brother Allan, and that, following a not uncommon custom, Dougall caused the monument to be made in his own lifetime, the date to be added after his death; or that he left instructions in his will to have the stone carved.

Regarding these figures, Mr Chisholm Batten<sup>1</sup> satisfied himself that the figures at each side of the skeleton, which have always been described as females, are "priors in their cowls and monks' hoods." With this note in my mind, a second visit and examination revealed no more than I have suggested in my drawing and description; but, notwithstanding

<sup>1</sup> *Charters of Beaully Priory.*




Fig 8. Cross Slab at Ardchattan. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

this, they *may* be priors. Associating them with the shaft of the cross of Somerled already described, and dated 1500, Mr Batten adds:—"The prior who died in 1500 could hardly be the father of two priors, the elder of whom died in 1502, without some special notice of such a mortality. But taking the first of the two brothers who were priors, and the five figures on the other tomb, to commemorate the five persons mentioned in the inscription, the *story is plain enough.*"

The interesting stone shown on fig. 8 now lies within the burial-place of the Campbells of Loch-nell—a walled enclosure entering from the outside of the church, still used as a place of interment. It measures 6 feet  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length by 2 feet 3 inches across the broadest part, and is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick; it has been chipped on all the edges, chiefly on the left side, to fit another grave. The shaft of the cross is  $14\frac{1}{2}$  inches in width, and the carving is in low relief. On the upper part is a rudely formed figure of a man wearing a tall kind of crown, probably meant for the Saviour or God the Father, the lower part of which is wrought

into interlaced bands in the arms and shaft of the cross. In the centre is a circle with the trumpet pattern or divergent spiral, which is repeated in a different treatment in a square panel lower down, which at once suggest as having for their origin the earlier designs in the Books of Kells and Durrow and other early work. Divergent spirals, more or less resembling these, occur on the pillar at Glenferness, on the banks of the Findhorn. On the stone at Hilton of Cadboll the lowest panel contains spirals under a V in crescent, and a figure within a border of intertwined animals. At Shandwick, in the parish of Nigg, about a mile west from the Hilton stone, is one with a profusion of spirals at the top, with elephantine and other animals, interlaced serpents, etc. ; while there are suggestions of spirals on the Crieff and Dunfallandy stones. The slab in Rothesay Castle bears a cross of a different form from this, but decorated with divergent spirals, interlaced bands, and lattice-work, with curious figures on the surface at the sides of the cross. The trumpet pattern seems absent from the Welsh stones, and in England its presence on a font in Deerhurst Church is the solitary instance;<sup>1</sup> while it appears on the fine Goodrich Court shield, found in the bed of the river Witham, and on other early metal-work. The lowest panel, which, like the two above it, is about 12 inches square, is filled in with zigzag cut or lattice-work ; and the spaces outside of the cross have very much worn traces of carvings of a horse, a griffin-like animal, figures, etc. The other side of the slab has no carving, and the work belongs to a period earlier than the foundation of the church by the Macdougalls, probably about the eleventh century.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*.

<sup>2</sup> Mr J. Romilly Allen, while showing a photograph from a rubbing of this slab, adds the following remarks on the ornament:—*Interlaced* ; the triple beading of the bands thus  is a very unusual feature. *Key-pattern* ; made of Z's placed as on stones at Nigg and Eilean Mor. *Spiral-work* ; very well designed. *Figure-subjects* down the space on the right side of shaft of cross ; three figures with peaked hoods or cowls—(1) playing harp, (2) playing pipes, and (3) holding crown. Compare with three horsemen on stone at St Madoes. Warrior with shield : this is of the same shape as the one on the sarcophagus at St Andrews. Perhaps the warrior may here also be King David, and the figures playing musical instruments, his assistants, as in