

III.

NOTICE OF A GROUP OF CARVED STONES ON INISHAIL, LOCH AWE,
ARGYLESHIRE. BY ROBERT BRYDALL, F.S.A. SCOT.

Among the group of islets near the head of Loch Awe, the one which is known as Inishail is conspicuous by its grassy surface, on account of which it is sometimes called the Green Isle, the others being more densely wooded. It is situated between the wild and romantic Pass of Brander at the one side of the loch, and the village of Cladich on the other. On a slight eminence are the fragments of the walls of a small building, enclosing a space choked up with stones and a rank growth of nettles and other weeds; a larger space, including this, is protected from the intrusion of cattle by an iron fence. This was, till the year 1736, the church of the old parish of Inishail, which included some of the adjacent islands, as well as part of the mainland on each side of the loch. The parish church is mentioned by Fordun about 1400, and the island is also said to have been the site of a Cistercian nunnery.¹

About the centre of the area enclosed by the remains of the walls is an early cross carved with a similar design on the other side (fig. 1). The surface is very much weathered, but it does not seem ever to have borne any carving beyond what is shown on my drawing. Exclusive of the base into which it is socketed, it measures 5 feet 3 inches in height, 1 foot 3 inches across the top, and 1 foot 8 inches at the broadest part where the cross occurs. The carving at the parts most highly relieved is about an inch, the sharpest cutting being at the inner edges of the small circles, which are slightly convex on the sunken surface.

the frontispiece to the *Vesp. A i Psalter* in the British Museum (see Westwood's *Miniatures*). The scene also seems to be capable of explanation by the description of Heaven given in the Revelations.

Dean Howson mentions this stone in 1841 as then lying in the Lochnell enclosure. I have here to acknowledge assistance given me by rubbings of parts of this stone, particularly by Dr Macnaughton, F.S.A. Scot., of Taynult, and the Rev. Mr MacLachlan of Ardochattan.

¹ *Origines Parochiales.*

Outside of the ruin, but within the fenced enclosure, there are several stones which may be assigned to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries :

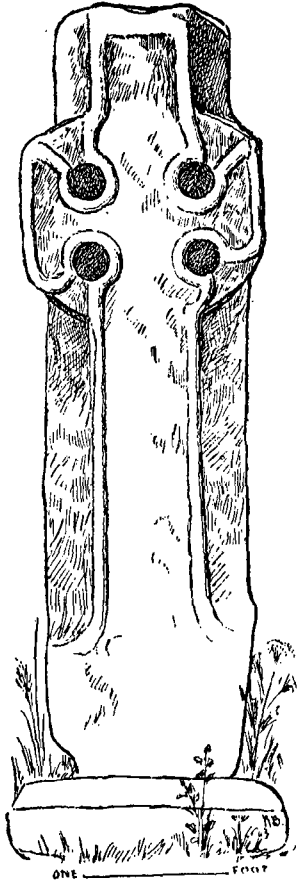


Fig. 1. At Inishail.

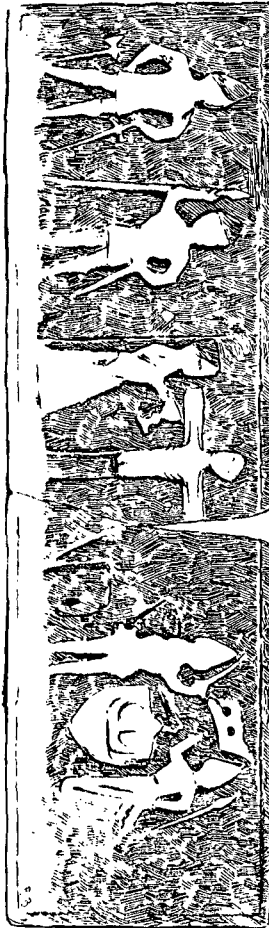


Fig. 2. Slab at Inishail.



Fig. 3. At Inishail.

some of them are so defaced that only the faintest indications of carving are visible. The one which is perhaps the most curious of these (fig. 2)

owes its better condition to the deeper cutting. It is now lying flat like a grave-stone, but it probably originally served another purpose, perhaps an altar frontal or door lintel. As nearly as it could be measured, owing to the overgrowing sod, it is 6 feet $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by 1 foot 11 inches in breadth. The first figure, that to the left, is an armed man with a battle-axe at his right side and a sword at his left; he wears the pointed bascinet common to the West Highland figures, and a surcoat, with the legs showing knee-pieces of armour, is suggestive of fifteenth-century work. The second figure is also that of an armed man, leaning with his right hand on a spear, and his left on the handle of a sword, indications of armour appearing also on his left leg. About the centre is the crucified Saviour, with a figure at his right side holding up a chalice; this figure, though so rudely executed and defaced, is doubtless the personification of the Church receiving the Saviour's blood in the chalice, which was so commonly included among the accessories of the Crucifixion in the Middle Ages.¹ The remainder of the stone is evidently heraldic, showing a shield bearing a one-masted galley, over which is what has probably been meant for a crest, and bearing some faint resemblance to a boar's head. Two armed men appear as supporters. The stone is probably connected with the Campbells of Lochow, which family, at a later date, have for supporters an armed man holding a spear on the dexter side, and a lady holding a missive letter on the sinister; they bear as their arms a galley with oars in action for Lorn, with a boar's head for crest.

Close to the latter stone is a slab (fig. 3), measuring 6 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches broad at the top and $12\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the foot; it is in low relief, almost quite defaced, and partly covered with lichen. It bears an old form of claymore: the handle measures $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the upper angle of the leaf-shaped pommel to the upper angle of the guard; the blade is 2 feet 6 inches in length and 3 inches broad at the handle. The edge of the stone is slightly bevelled and carved with a simple pattern, while the rest of the surface has been filled with an interlaced pattern.

¹ As on the Bamberg ivory, and the miniature of the Sacramentaire de Metz; see the article L'Eglise et la Synagogue in Cahier and Martin's *Melanges D'Archéologie*, vol. ii. (1851), p. 50.

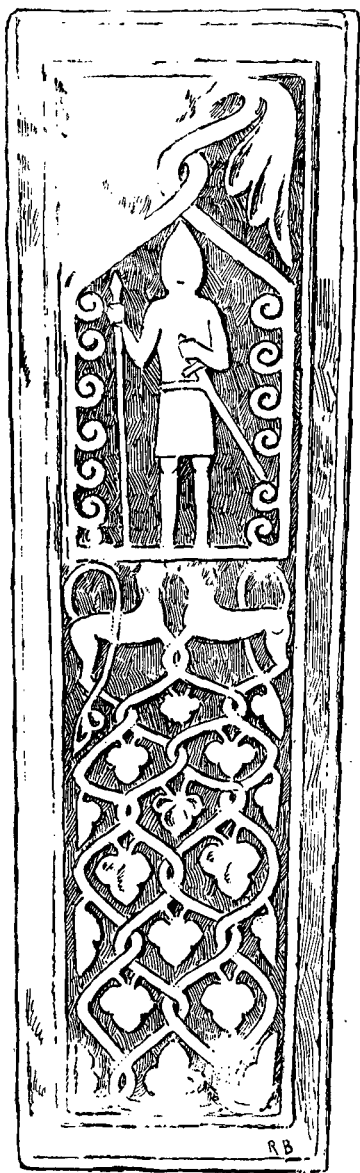


Fig. 4. Slab at Inishail.

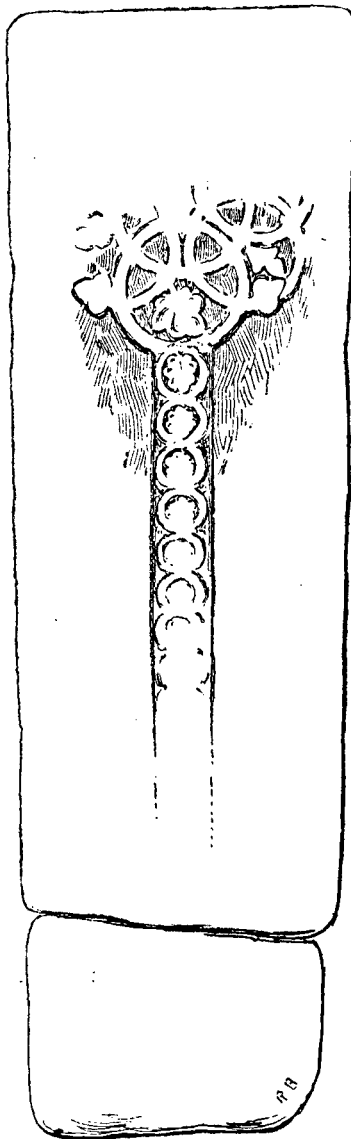


Fig. 5. Slab at Inishail.

On the left-hand side, after entering by the gate, is the stone (fig. 4), in fairly good condition. It is of the same type as two of those at Dalmally,¹ and still more closely resembles one of those at Kilmartin.² It bears, near the top, a man armed with a sword and spear, under which are two animals, their feet rolling away in interlaced foliated ornament. It is 6 feet in length by 22 inches at the top, narrowing slightly downwards.

Close beside this is a slab (fig. 5), bearing vestiges of a cross formed of interlaced circles with suggestions of a little foliage—all very much worn away. The shaft, which has been decorated, is $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and the stone measures 5 feet 10 inches in length, 22 inches across the top, and 19 inches at the foot, near to which it is broken.

Close to this is another decorated stone, but so defaced that I have only been able, with the help of a rubbing, to give a small portion of the carving (fig. 6). The design seems to have been formed by a series

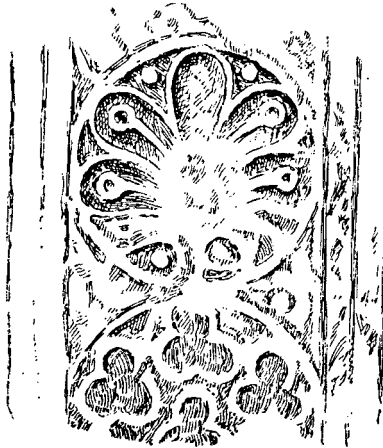


Fig. 6. From a Slab at Inishail.

of decorated circles, and must have been very beautiful, and executed with exceptional freedom—in fact, more suggestive of sixteenth century Italian, than late Celtic, work.

¹ Given in the *Proceedings* for 1896-97. ² Drummond's *Carved Stones of Iona, etc.*