

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

FILE No. A.S.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

SUBJECT:

THE MEDIEVAL CARVED STONE FROM AGHADOWEY

MEDIEVAL INCISED TOMB COVER FROM ERRIGAL KEEROGUE CHURCH

BY

AND

REFERENCE No.

FILE No. A.S.

Date April 80 Copyright

tombstone previously noted at Ferrigal, photos taken at home of Mr Cearin Lynch, Ballygarvey primary school teacher. Removed by him from parochial house on death of priest. Removed by him from church site 'for safekeeping'.



Scale of 1 metre.

A MEDIEVAL CARVED STONE FROM ERRIGAL KEEROGUE CHURCH, CO TYRONE

Early in 1980 Mr Peter Harbison, archaeologist with Bord Failte, drew the writer's attention to the existence of an unusual 'tombstone', formerly located at Errigal Keerogue church, Gort townland (O.S. 6 in. Tyrone sheet 59; grid reference H585570). Though seen at the site some years previously, the stone was no longer at this State Care monument and was feared stolen. Local enquiries, however, revealed that the stone had been removed for safekeeping by the parish priest, and, following his death, had been stored by a local schoolteacher. The stone has now been returned to the care of the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch, Department of the Environment (N.I.) and a replica is to be placed at the church.

The stone, approximately 46 cm. wide, 9 cm. deep and with a surviving length of 91 cm., depicts on one face a three-quarter length human figure carved in a very low relief, indeed almost incised. On both long sides are carved two shallow lines which run the full surviving length. There is no corresponding decoration on the probably original lower end, whilst the upper end is damaged. The rear face is entirely rough, without dressing. In one corner of the carved face, against the head outline, is a small rectangular depression, 8 cm. by 3 cm., 0.75 cm. deep. This is not repeated elsewhere on the stone and may not be contemporary with the figure carving. No firm interpretation can be offered for it, though its regular shape suggests a socket for an iron bar, which would have risen perpendicularly from the stone.

The figure lies within a poorly-defined border ^{found} on the longer sides only, most clearly seen in the lower half of the slab, where it has a width of 8-9 cm. Its clarity here appears to be related to the definition of the lower arms, since around the upper arms and shoulders it is barely visible. It is undecorated,

and may have been intended to suggest the outline of a coffin.

An immediate impression of the figure within is that it is meant to portray a knight, but apart from the general posture of the arms there are no features of clothing, armour or sword to support this. The area adjacent to the left arm was closely examined for traces of a sword either under it or parallel to it, but no evidence was found, neither can the shape of the border on this side be taken as such a feature.

The very low relief has led to suggestions that details of clothing have been abraded, but, while damage marks are visible on the carving, abrasion on such an overall scale appears unlikely. Whilst the general smoothing out of 'soft' items of clothing, such as a surcoat or brigandine, or even chain-mail, might be possible, there are no traces of 'hard' items, such as buckles or plates. The line across the right shoulder is not a besagew (protecting plate) but damage to the stone.

The outline of the hands, expressed in quite a severe triangulated form, is suggestive of chain-mail gloves, but there is no accompanying mail delineation on hands or arms. The head of the figure is expressed as a sub-circular hollow, with an average diameter of 17 cm., and 2.5 cm. deep. Though the outline of this feature is fairly well defined, the junction with the shoulders, without a neck, is irregular. Since the feature appears original, it is suggested that some of facial representation, possibly in another medium (e.g., wood, brass, alabaster) was inserted. There are no dowel holes to aid attachment, but this form of embellishment, most commonly on incised figure carving of the 14th and 15th centuries, is not uncommon in a European context (Greenhill, 1976, *passim*).

Taken in all, then, the absence of distinctive apparel, particularly a sword, suggests that although interpretation of the figure as a knight is the likely and conventional one, there is little detail to support this. Assuming such an interpretation for the sake of argument, the absence of plate armour (early 15th-century floruit (Greenhill, 1976, 158)) and the low relief of the carving (later carving has fuller relief (Hunt, 1974, *passim*)) suggests at the latest a 14th-century date for the work.

No close parallels have been found for the piece, and its context at Errigal Keerogue is unexplained. There is nothing in the surviving church fabric to indicate the presence of a tomb niche, and the stone, a dark reddish-gray sandstone, is not common at the site. Though a full account of the site has yet to be published (Brannon and Hamlin, forthcoming), and despite some historical confusions between it and the nearby Ballynasaggart church (P.S.A.M.N.I., 254), there are no known historical personages associated with the site with whom the carving can be linked.

Acknowledgments Thanks are due to Peter Harbison for preventing the stone's continued 'loss', and to Helen Roe for her comments on the piece.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Greenhill, F.A., Incised Effigial Slabs 2 vols (London, 1976)
- Hunt, J., Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture 1200 1600 2 vols (Dublin, 1974)
- P.S.A.M.N.I., 1940 Preliminary Survey of Ancient Monuments of N. Ireland
(Belfast, 1940)

N.F.BRANNON

Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch, Department of the Environment (N.I

Hunt

pl. 153

St Canice's, Kilkenny
city

effigy of John Grace 1552

cat no. 145 a

pl. 154

" "

Richard Butler 1571 cat 146 a

pl. 155

St John's Priory Kilkenny city

Double Purcell tomb (16)

cat 158 a.

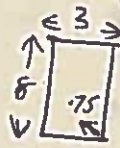
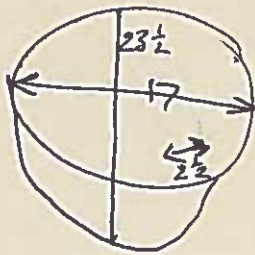
These figures have all emerged from the
stone

Length 91
Breadth 46
Depth 8.5

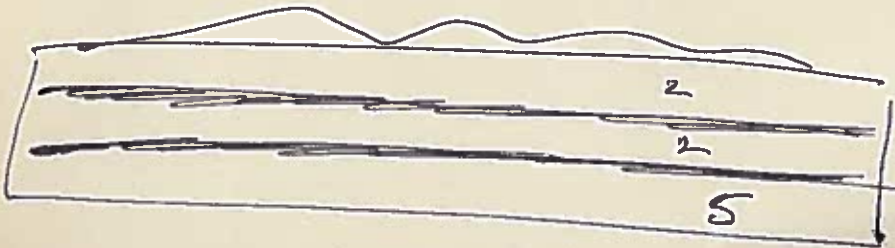
stone type?

dark grey-red
sandstone


lines
both sides
not
bottom



no
sword
evidence



Greenhill FA Mixed Effigial Slabs

93b		Ghent	1570
82a		Torsund Sweden	1462
82b		Cote d'or France	1466
81a		Brading 10W	1441
72a		Chalons sur Marne	1379 1425
61a		Avallon France	1340
58a		Oise France	1352
58b		Liege Belgium	1413
59b		Yvelines France	1363
57a		Luxembourg	1350

etc etc

generally indents for inlays which have been removed.

see vol I, pp 13 - 14 for contracts to include inlays

pp 141 - 1300 - 1320 entirely nail clad + surcoat

1324 bascinet, close to skull, rises slightly to pointed apex and to rim a hood of nail aventail attached, drooping

down to shoulders & hiding hawberk +
surcoat [54 b] 1324

1325 - plate reinforcements

50 b 'traditional' style, hemispherical
steel cap worn over coif.

p 158 1410 - 1460 complete plate

2

11

Errigal Keerogue tombstone

points + queries made by Helen Roe

carve effigy with wet sponge ^{2nd letter}

- 1/ Faint suggestion of a ~~mail~~ ^{mail} pisanne over the neck + shoulders? ^{see 10} different stone surface
- 2/ A besagow to protect the right shoulder? - no - a later crack
- 3/ Original length a $\frac{3}{4}$ figure yes, probably, discuss
- 4/ Assuming knight and not a civilian could a trace of a sword be found under the left bent forearm? Hanging close to the body near the margin? ~ only a line visible - enough?
- 5/ Buckle between inner elbows? - no trace ?
- 6/ Fingers visible, or are they enclosed in mail glove of 14? ?
- 7/ Inset face concept? Any drilled holes? NO
- 8/ helt faces on brasses + incised tombs, alabaster composition, only Continental instances of
- 9/ Trim - remains of a badly shaled slab once inland in part by a demi figure in brass, but ruinous condition
2nd letter
- 10/ May have been shown in a plain surcoat or perhaps a simple brigandine of shallowly indented overlapping ^{lines} ~~lines~~ rows ^{discuss surface text - see 1/}
- 11/ Over his shoulders there might have been a pisanne of banded mail with an attached hood - the existing stone rim would have been the edge ??? ^{see ↓}
- 12/ Position of hands on thighs seems similar to some of Rory O'Tunnays work in Kilkenny + neighbourhood check
- 13/ In St Canice's cathedral there is John Grace ob 1552 + R. Butler 1571. Grace's sword under left arm + has left no mark on his body though Roe suspects the grip + pommel broken off leaving forearm damaged. Butler's sword under his hand, save the thumb check
- 14/ Odd sort of knight without a sword - comment see 4

Hunt
1974

II
153 154


15 ^{check} FA Greenhill Incised Effigial Slabs ('76)

16 earlier than the (6) Kilkenny, and at the stage of carving when the figure is shown emerging from the stone instead of lying on it ^{well}

17 If he wore a nail coif instead of a basinet it would conform to such an earlier presentation say ≈ 1340 ^{well}

Lord Walter Fitzgerald - Mems Dead XI 1921

18 316 on margin ?

Greenhill

Inscribed Effigial Slabs

139

(14) not interesting of all in the depth of armour, transition from full mail harness to one in which steel plate predominates, though climax not attained until c. 1420

139) A few cases are found where the sword is not attached to the body, but lies separate & parallel to it.

141) bascinet makes first appearance 1324. Adhering closely to the shape of the skull, it rises slightly to a pointed apex and a hood of mail is attached to its rim, dropping down to the shoulders and completely hiding the top of the surcoat.

[Since relief is plain suggests mail under surcoat]

196) Lawyers - "brotherhood of the coif"

199) Civil dress - male p 1046 (12)

4 from Holland, early, all exhibited in coffin like niche, very low skill. Costume of extreme simplicity tunic and/or surtunic and hose. Generally a belt with surtunic.

201) the coif ~~was~~ worn tight to the head - lasted as ordinary civilian wear until c. 1360 and appropriated by lawyers.

169 Arund Sture 1462 Swedish knight
" the face is left blank, presumably for painting pl 82a

170 Louis de la Trémouille Comte de Joigny (1466) face blank
in red marble
pl 82b

6. 11. 81

TEL:
378537

"COOLFIN",
SANTRY,
DUBLIN 9.

Dear Mr Brennan

I know it is customary to begin a letter by thanking one's correspondent for his letter but truly I can't feel any gratitude some-
for you of hastily suggestion that I'd write formal accounts of either the original K. effigy or the cruelly ruined payments from Aphrodasey ex Carnus(?) you yourself know as much as I do about them and I suspect probably more.

Have you ever wiped over the ~~original~~ effigy with a wet sponge? Sometimes it brings up a detail. Is it imagination that there is a

faint suggestion of a mail purse over
the neck & shoulders? or that there
may have been a besagou to protect
the right shoulder? The slab
appears to be squared off across
the bottom; could one think of
as originally a $\frac{3}{4}$ length figure?
Assuming that it was a knight &
not a civilian could any trace be
found of a sword coming from under
the bent left forearm & hanging close
to the body between the 90th &
margin? Any teeny-weeny
indication of a buckle about midway
between the inner elbows?
Any trace of fingers on these curiously
passive hands or are they enclosed
in the mail muffle type ^{gloves} ~~gloves~~
14th C. in date? About the inset
face if your surmise is right I would
have expected a dorsal hole or something

of the sort: there is a faceless knight
the Gorman Whelkeney (if I remember
rightly) with the last remains of the
edge of a slightly pointed basinet
but he appears to have suffered
an oblique slashing stroke while
this final business simply appears
as a socket. Inset faces of
alabaster/composition are known
on brasses & raised tombs though
again if I remember rightly, only
on continental instances & not
noted in English work. I don't
recall any stone at Trice which
is at all comparable - maybe you
could shake a photograph of
whatever he thinks might be so
out of Peter Harbison. There is
I think the very last remains ^{here} of
a badly shaked slab once inlaid
in fact by a dome-figure in brass
but this was so ruinous when
I saw it that it was impossible

to be sure of the nature of the original,
you must excuse all these probably
'idiotic' queries but trying to decipher
from photographs is liable to
produce illusions. Please ^{let me} hear
further from you as I'd be only
too pleased if I can help
in your attempt to recover the
original nature of this piece.

From your letter of 23rd Jan
I am congratulating on promotion
are in order. All the best.

Sincerely

Helen K. Roe

P.S. Is there a font of somewhat
unusual nature at Orizaba?

TEL:
378537

29. V. 80

"COOLFIN",
SANTRY,
DUBLIN 9.

Dear Mr Braanon,

If you go on sending me
problems I can't solve you will
rapidly become my least favourite
correspondent,

Nevertheless many thanks for
sending the photographs of
the Prigal Kerogue effigy.
So far as I can see (or think I can)
this character may have been shown
in a plain surcoat or perhaps
a simple brigandine of shallowly
indicated over-lapping lames now
worn down to invisibility - over ^{this}
shoulders there might have been
a piece of banded mail which

had attached ^{to it,} a hood of mail of
which the existing "rim" of stone
was the edge — query, query, query.
The position of the hands on the thighs
seems similar to some of Roy
O'Malley's work in Kilkenny,
& neighbourhood. In St Carice's
Cathedral there is John Grace ob.,
1552 & R. Butler 1571: Grace's
sword seems to have been under
his left arm & has left no mark
on his body though I suspect
the grip & pommel ~~was~~ broken off &
has left the forearm damaged —
Butler's sword is under his hand
except for his thumb } Hunt J. Irish
Med., Fig. Sculpt. 1974, II Pls. 153, 154 }
At Kilkenny Co. Tipp. Piers the O'G. Butler's
left hand over his the sword without
holding it as on the Grace effigy
[Hunt ibid II Pl. 157] Of course one cannot

2

Say if this chap were had
a sword though he'd be
an odd sort of knight without
one.

Your suggestion of an
inset face is very interesting -
I've never seen such an
expedient but I think
F. A. Greenhill in his big
Survey of Incised Effigial
Slabs (1976) mentions one
or two instances where the
face was of a different material
inset on the effigy. In any
case the incised carving
suggests to me that it would
be earlier than the 16th c.
Kilkenney works & at the

stage of carving when the figure is shown barely emerging from the stone instead of lying on it - if moreover he wore a mail coif instead a basinet it would conform to such an earlier presentation say Ca. 1340. Again query, query, query.

I tried to contact Mr Nabison about his parallel at St Patrick's Trim but he is away until some time in June. I'd be interested to know what stone he had in mind as I can't recall anything comparable

to your example, of course
that is not to say that one
isn't lurking there unob-
served by me. There is shown
an awfully decayed inscribed
slab with the matrix for
a half figure under a crocketed
canopy but except for the
circular blank for the
head there is no resemblance
to the knight. [illus. mens. Decell
XI (1921) ^{Lord Walter}
_{H. G. E. d.}]

Can you say if this ~~figure~~
~~figure~~ is broken off at
the knees of the figure or
or if slab is complete except
for the broken dexter edge?
And what is the slot like
mark high on sinister margin?

I am sorry this should
be so lengthy & useless
a reply - If I come across
anything that might be
helpful I'll let you know.

Every good wish
from

Helmut R.

London 1976

Incised Slabs in Ireland

c. 1320. A mailed arm holding sword, with shield and spear, for Gronow ap Jorwerth ap David: Gresford, Denbigh. [PLATE 54a]

CIVIL DRESS, MALE

?c. 1550. Civilian, ?of Lloyd family; ?half effigy; flat relief; lower part lost: St. Peter's, Carmarthen.

CIVIL DRESS, FEMALE

c. 1300. Lady; lower part lost: Cilcain, Flint.
c. 1330. Married ferch Ierwerth, half effigy: Cilcain, Flint.
c. 1380. Eva, wife of . . . anwel (c), with rosary: flat relief, slightly modelled in places; *borderline case*; lower part lost: Bangor Cathedral, Caernarvon. [PLATE 138b]

MISCELLANEOUS

n.d. The Crucifixion: Llanhamlach, Brecknock.

See also
46 c

72 a

81 a

82 b

93 b

113 c

137 b

Incised Slabs in Ireland

Introductory Note

Very little has been done in this country. Owing to the ill-effects of the climate during my enforced stay in the south-west as a serviceman from October 1916 to June 1917 I have never, despite its many charms, felt tempted to return. During this short sojourn, I saw no incised slabs, though finding several low-relief ones and noting a previously unrecorded brass at Bandon.

A number of friends who have visited the country from time to time since then have kept their eyes open for incised effigies. In 1931, the late R. H. Edleston found four rather fragmentary ones in Kilkenny Cathedral. An interesting figure of a bishop, probably thirteenth century, was found more recently at Kilfenora, Co. Clare, and in 1967 a short trip of exploration by Malcolm Norris produced, among several other items, the two knights (c. 1270) at Jerpoint Abbey, Co. Kilkenny, and part of a good civilian and wife from Athassel Abbey, Co. Tipperary.

A search through the early volumes of the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland has yielded hardly anything, and a letter to the Secretary of that distinguished Society brought the reply that none were known beyond the two or three I then already knew of, and that none of the Fellows, to his knowledge, was specially interested in or had made any study of incised slabs bearing

Incised Slabs in Ireland

effigies, and that the only source of information would be a detailed audit of the journals of the various county societies.

The country is without doubt very rich in incised cross-slabs, witness the splendid collection of over 200 at Clonmacnois, Offaly, but it seems probable that comparatively few incised figure-slabs will have survived to the present day; they were, in all likelihood, never very numerous, owing in large measure to the grinding poverty of the land—save for the Anglo-Norman settlers in the 'Pale'—during most of its history since the ill-omened landing of Strongbow.

An extensive area of virgin territory thus awaits some dedicated antiquaries for whom an enervating climate holds no terrors. A complete list of its incised figure-slabs, based on a full and systematic exploration, would be a highly valuable addition to antiquarian knowledge.

Summary

Clergy:	
Mitred clergy	1
Monks and nuns	1
Priests in mass vestments	2
Military	1
<hr/>	
Civil dress, male	6
Civil dress, female	2
Shrouds, skeletons, etc.	1
Miscellaneous	1
<hr/>	
TOTAL	15
<hr/>	

(1) *Bishops and mitred abbots*

?c. 13 cent. A bishop, shown full-face, but with feet turned to dexter; no sign of amice, stole or maniple; very wide apparel on alb skirt in front; very plain crosier: Kilfenora, Co. Clare. Possibly either Christian (1255), Maurice (1273) or Florence O'Tierney (1281). *too early*

(2) *Monks and nuns*

?c. 1300. An abbot; hands upraised, palms outward; curious: Jerpoint Abbey, Co. Kilkenny. *too early*

(3) *Priests in mass vestments*

?c. 1300. A priest; upper four-fifths lost: Cashel Cathedral, Co. Tipperary. *too early*

c. 1300. A priest; head, foot and whole of inscription lost: Kilkenny Cathedral.

MILITARY

c. 1270. Two knights wearing complete mail with surcoat, and holding their drawn swords erect; the dexter one wears a curious pot-helm; heads on cushions; the swords have lobed

Incised Slabs in Ireland

pommels and quillons upcurved at the ends; no sign of inscr; *very curious*; a piece at lower dexter corner lost: Jerpoint Abbey, Co. Kilkenny.

[PLATE 44C]

CIVIL DRESS, MALE

- ?c. 1280. A civilian and lady (to dexter) with a cross botonnée (held near top by the lady): lower part and sinister side lost; *curious and possibly unique*: Athassel Abbey, Co. Tipperary.
- c. 1330. A civilian; head, lower part and dexter half of trunk, as well as inscr., lost: Kilkenny Cathedral.
- c. 1340. A civilian, head on cushion; flat relief; *very borderline case*: Gowran, Co. Kilkenny.
- * ?c. 1470. A civilian; upper part lost: Kilkenny Cathedral.
- * c. 1480. A civilian, with bag, holding scroll; flat relief; *borderline case*: Jerpoint Abbey, Co. Kilkenny.
- * c. 1600. Richard (surname not decipherable), kneeling before a priest in hat and ruff; very crude and curious: Kilhooly Abbey, Co. Kilkenny.

CIVIL DRESS, FEMALE

- c. 1300. A lady, head on cushion; flat relief; *very borderline case*: Gowran, Co. Kilkenny.
- c. 1330. A lady; lower part lost: Kilkenny Cathedral.

SHROUDS, SKELETONS, ETC

1626. Jacob ?Healy, shown as a shrouded skeleton; badly worn; on one side of tomb, (1) The Crucifixion, (2) St. Peter, with key: Gowran, Co. Kilkenny.

MISCELLANEOUS

- ?c. 1500. ?The Resurrection, or ?the Mass of St. Gregory; badly worn; Jerpoint Abbey, Co. Kilkenny.

Helen M Roe
Coolfin
Santry
DUBLIN 9

23 January 1981

Dear Miss Roe

You may recall that on two occasions I sent photographs of carved stones from Ulster, inviting comment from you. You most kindly replied in some detail. The stones were a medieval effigy in shallow carving, from Errigal Keerogue Church, Co Tyrone, and a Crucifixion scene from Aghadowey, Co Derry, of late medieval date.

Conservation work at Errigal Church has now reached the stage where we are considering mounting a replica of the effigy at the site, and this would need some kind of explanatory text. I therefore thought it appropriate to re-open correspondence with you, and would like to ask you whether you might consider formalising your comments on both stones with a view to publication in the Ulster Journal of Archaeology? Carved stone finds are quite rare up here and published even less.

I appreciate that your descriptions are based upon photographic appearance only, but doubt that you would wish to visit the stones. More photographs could be sent if necessary. If you have any interest in this please let me know, when I would be more specific.

Yours sincerely

NFB

N F Brannon
Senior Inspector



Bord Fáilte

Irish Tourist Board

Baggot Street Bridge, Dublin 2, Ireland. Telephone: Dublin 765871. Telegrams: Failte, Dublin. Telex: Dublin 5367.

PH/JS

Mr Nick Brannon
Department of the Environment
for Northern Ireland
Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch
Archaeological Survey
66 Balmoral Avenue
Belfast BT9 6NY

19 May 1980

Dear Nick

Many thanks for your letter of 21 April. I am delighted to hear of your success in locating the 'lost' tombstone from Errigal. It is a very rare specimen of a type, and I am glad it has been located. It is a pity that Tom Delaney did not live long enough to do a note on it, as I think he had planned.

I have been trying to locate any literature on the Trim tombstone that I mentioned to you. It is in the grounds of St Patrick's Protestant Cathedral in Trim, and placed, as far as I can remember, against the wall of a fragment of a medieval church behind the existing church. If you are ever in Trim, do go along and have a look at it. If I come across any reference to this stone, I will tell you, but I think I have looked up most of the relevant literature and have not been able to find anything for you.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Peter Harbison
Archaeologist

*photo + slide sent
22.5.80*



Bord Fáilte

Irish Tourist Board

Baggot Street Bridge, Dublin 2, Ireland. Telephone: Dublin 765871. Telegrams: Fáilte, Dublin. Telex: Dublin 5367

PH/BW

Mr Nick Brannan
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland
Archaeological Survey
66 Balmoral Avenue
Belfast
Co Antrim

27 March 1980

Dear Nick

Thank you for your letter of 18 March. I am grateful to you that you take an interest in this lost tombstone. Yes, I am absolutely certain that it was at Errigal Keerogue. The stone I saw leaning up against a wall about four or five years ago, and it has since disappeared. I took a slide of it at the time, and because Tom was interested in the mediaeval period, I gave him the slide because I thought he could possibly do something with it, and might even have been interested in writing it up. I do not think that I took a black and white photograph of it, so that the slide remains the only record. I do not know if I put the provenance on the slide. If, however, anyone is going through Tom's slides with Maire, I would be happy to help in identifying it. It is not a figure in relief, but the figure of a man (not necessarily a knight) which is sunk into the surface of (I think) a wedge-shaped tombstone to a depth of about one or two inches. If I remember correctly, the feet of the figure, that is the bottom part of the slab, had been broken off in times past.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Peter Harbison
Archaeologist

