

Aghabullogue and surrounds : Those who once walked the fields.

At Ballyhank in Kilnaglory (Cill na Glóire i.e. the Cell of Glory) civil parish to the south of the River Lee and Donoughmore by Desertmore (the great 'Desert' bogland) who were those persons commemorated in the ogham inscriptions from this souterrain? The parish name speaks of a monastic cell (cill) one which was associated with a sense of 'glory' or religious piety (?). The souterrain which contained the ogham stones as capstones in the construction of its roof was situated in a uni-vallate ringfort now erased. The site was visited in the 1840s by Cork antiquarian John Windele, and others, who 'excavated' the souterrain in order to remove its ogham stones to Cork city where antiquarian scholars were trying to decipher them e.g. Fr. Matt Horgan.. The stones carry six inscriptions. Who were the persons over whose's graves these inscription stood? Were the stones erected not above a grave but on a leact platform such as at Gallarus Oratory Co. Kerry Who decided and wrote out what an inscription should say and how its words should be spelt, what thoughts and familiarity and literary conventions of the day applied and informed the person who made the inscription, who carved the inscription and selected the stone slab to be used and what implement was used, where was the stone originally erected? Was it above a grave and was that grave originally in the ringfort? Was the ringfort the place of an early hermitage and a 'preaching' place as was the case with St. Fachtna's lios (and well) by Burgatia/ Bohonagh at Rosscarbery? Was the ringfort the site of Cill na Glóire which gave its name to the parish and if so how did this tpwnland come to be called Ballyhanick in 1588 AD (logainm.ie). Was this a poor anglicisation of Baile Manaigh i.e. the home place of the monks? If so do the six inscriptions name those persons who formed a hermitage group of six persons (a cill teach seisiúr ceann [Kilteseskin?] i.e. a cell house of 6 persons / six heads, and if a cell house was it an underground one i.e. a tig faoi talamh? If so then was this masonry constructed souterrain re-roofed at some point in time so that its original roof slabs could be replaced by ogham inscribed graveslabs from within the lios (ringfort) interior or closeby, or alternatively were they the graveslabs of several local hermits living independently in the surrounding landscape but using the lios as a place of meeting for communal prayer when a priest visited and for storing basic resources

held in common by them e.g. winter foods, herbal medicines, clothing....i.e. the place of a cellarer as mentioned in Benedict's Rule? Further west in Muskerry why were ogham stones, perhaps from Na Cillíní nearby placed beside the well and reputed grave of St Abbán at the Cluain in Ballyvourney to the east of Gobnait's well? Why gather these together and place beside Abbán's grave? Why some ogham stones found at Seemochuda (the Seat/ Hermitage of St. Mochuda of Lismore) a hermitage by a glen in the Knockmaoldowns Mountains of Waterford/ Tipperary? The Knockmaoldowns, the Cnoc Maol Domhnaigh i.e. the Mountain of Maol (St Maol an Faidh i.e. the Prophet) who came from an island situated and causeway entered Dair (Diar, Deir a word for an ancient monastery in Egypt and the Levant and Greece) monastery southwards along the Blackwater River to the sea by Youghal, a monastery where early canon law was written?

What would have led to the placing of the ogham inscribed stones as roof slabs in a souterrain? Was there something symbolic of the beginnings of the faith in this behaviour for those of a subsequent generation of either local people or a later hermit group? A way of sanctifying the souterrain space as a place of prayer for later generations because of the 'saintly' lives of those commemorated by the inscriptions...a means of remembering them, of being close to them, of asking for intercessions or as a protection against raiders (e.g. Vikings) and others who might seek to do harm? Or were they placed in the souterrain because they need to be placed out of sight at some point in time due to major changes such as church reform post-Whitby in 664 AD and the Culdee Revolt, an Anglo-Saxon threat of Roman Christianity? 664 AD is a point in time which coincides with the linguistic dating for the end of the use of ogham inscriptions on stone slabs? Architecturally the souterrain consisted of 3 to 4 'apartments' i.e. cubicles as far as could be determined and the floor plan in outline, according to a sketch by Windele, was in a zigzag linear arrangement. I define this type of souterrain as an A3 type. It is not fully clear if this souterrain had dry-stone built walls or clay-cut walls. In the nearby parish of Aglish the Knockshanawee souterrain had 6 ogham inscriptions also, nearly all used as capstones and the site's walls were clay-cut and not masonry constructed. At Currahaly townland also in Aglish there was a rock tunnelled souterrain very close to Kilcrea Abbey. Its roof was intact when discovered in the 19th century. No slabs, ogham inscribed or not, were associated with the site or its construction. Why? Why were some clay-cut souterrains in Cork roofed with stone slabs while other were not? Was it just a geology and

engineering issue or something else? Why were ogham inscribed slabs used in souterrains located considerable geographical distances from each other, as well as in the case of some which are in close proximity e.g. in the same civil parish area? Also as seen in a conjectural drawing by M.J. O'Kelly the the souterrain at Ballyknock North in East Cork, which produced 15 ogham inscribed slabs nearly all capstones, was clay-cut but roofed with the ogham stones.

So, who were the people in the inscriptions? Who were their ancestors as commonly stated in such inscriptions - though not all, and where had these ancestors live? How many of the persons, of each of those persons given the status of being commemorated by an inscription, were locally born and bred? How many had origins elsewhere in Ireland or abroad - and if abroad then where were they from...Mediterranean regions? How did they live their lives prior to death? Who did they interact with? Were they persons known to larger more centralised monastic groups e.g. at Donaghmore or Aghabullogue? Were they like the hermit known as Faima who lived in Desertmore but attended the death of his old friend Finbarr (Saint Finbarr of the great Corcach monastery of Gill Abbey at and above the cliff cave by the Cork marsh returning in old age from a visit to his early hermitage at Gougán Barra) at Kilnaclúna (Cill na Cluainne) later to become a lost subdenomination of Ballineadig townland. When young and once upon a time at Donoughmore and Aghabullogue did Faima and Finbarr become friends? Did they each have a personal cell place there within the demesne of the monastery of the Domhnach Mór? Did they travel south often to Inniscarra and along by the Dysart (desert hermitage land) of Dripsey and cross the river there to Inis Luinge of Senan at Cronody and his 50 scholars and then cross the Lee again going south and into AGLISH parish and into this parish lands which contains Knockshanawee and Roosvemore and Currahaly (by the monastery named for the Cell of Ciara, Kilcrea) and then on to Ballyhank and the boglands of Desertmore?

So, who were the 6 persons of the ogham stone inscriptions in the souterrain of the uni-vallate lios [ringfort] at Ballyhank (Ballhanick, Baile na Manaigh?) in the cell lands of Cill na Glóire? They were:

1. -- **LL Maqi Vurrtigurn** .(??? who was the son of Vortigurn)
2. **Diobi** . This inscription was placed over the son of Vortigurn inscription above which remained as a palimpsest on the stone. Why re-use an older inscription like this? Why not just use a fresh slab? Why?]

3. **Corbagni koi maqi moccoi Corotani.** Corbagni the son of the ancestor Corotani. [Does this instead refer to the Corotani tribe rather than a person of this name as the ancestor?]
4. **Scattini - - -**
5. **Ab Ulccagni .** [Does the word **Ab** signify Abba or Abbot or Father of a hermit group of 6 e.g. a **skete** group as in the Greek Orthodox church?]
6. **Maqi - Esea Maqi Domaneqi .** [Son of Esea who was the son of Domaneqi]

How many of these names were in common use by local Gaelic families of that time i.e. that time when these inscriptions were written / drafted for carving onto stone slabs perhaps by another person who may not have been literate? How many are personal names which had their origin in Roman Britain or elsewhere within the Empire of ancient Rome? How many were Gaelic and local people in origin, how many were new to the locality in a hereditary sense? How many were secular persons, how many were hermits, how many had come to the religious life later in their lives how many were born to it? How many travelled from across the sea to live and die locally in the locality which would become the great Muskerry demesne lands of Donoghmore and its Desertmore nearby?