

Aghalurcher, 'Achadh-Urchair'

"The field of the cast or throw"

Fact Sheet



Background

This is a complex site, used for over 1000 years as a place of worship, pilgrimage and burial associated with St. Ronan, possibly in the 7th Century.

Surviving stonework indicates that the present medieval ruined church was preceded by a 12th century Romanesque church, with further construction carried out in the 13th century. By the medieval period, it was a large, important parish. The church is shown on the 1609-10 Baronial map as roofed & with a tower, yet by 1622, it is in ruins. These remains now stand quietly in a crowded graveyard.



Maguires

The graveyard is one of the oldest in Fermanagh and was the chief burial place of the Maguire clan.

There was substantial rebuilding in 1447, when the Annals of Ulster record that King Thomas Óg Maguire put a 'French roof' on the church and built the east gable. It is thought that this followed his pilgrimage to Italy where he was inspired by the continental architecture.

The Maguire family were patrons of the parish and they contributed to many modifications to the church up until the 16th century.

Internal feuds within the Maguire clan led to a number of atrocities being carried out here. In 1484, Gilla Patrick Maguire was killed by his five brothers on the church altar, and two years later in 1486 Don Maguire was killed by his uncles and cousins.



Artefacts

Today, you can see many examples of intricately carved stones and headstones. The carved stones in the entrance gateposts are thought to have been part of the original 12th century parish church. One of these shows the scene of the crucifixion on a ringed cross, and the other shows two figures, one tall figure with a beard and large ears and a shorter figure with wide eyes and a gaping mouth.

The small vault in the north wall of the church is a later addition. It was added to the church in the post medieval period and houses 17th century recumbent graveslabs in memory of the Galbraith and Balfour families.

Two important carved stones from the site are now on display in Fermanagh County Museum. These include a male figure with an expressive face and acrobatic body style, a replica of this stone can be seen above. Secondly, the Bishop's Stone depicting a bishop holding a crozier and book shrine; this can be seen in Lakelands Gallery 2.



St Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg



LOUGH ERNE — PILGRIM WAY



Lough Erne is home to many religious sites, places of gathering, learning, worship, and burial. Today, we can trace these places along the lough as they quietly sit as timely reminders of a once thriving early Christian community.