

Belleisle and the Annals of Ulster Fact Sheet



Background

The Annals of Ulster are one of the most important historical sources for medieval Ireland. Few other countries have such comprehensive medieval vernacular chronicles. The Annals were compiled in Fermanagh in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries under the patronage of the Maguires, lords of Fermanagh.



MacManuses

Belleisle, formerly called Shanid (synod) was the ancient territory of the Mac Manuses, whose land lay to the east of the Upper Lake. The Annals of Ulster were compiled under the patronage of Cathal Óg Mac Maghnusa who was a leading cleric here in Fermanagh, parish priest of Inishkeen, a canon and vicar general of Clogher and Dean of Lough Erne.

He commissioned Ruaidhri Ó Luinín, a local scholar, to compile the annals from earlier annals which already existed, some of which only covered periods of 50 or 100 years.

So, the great achievement of the Annals of Ulster was that all the material was gathered together in one volume. Ó Luinín worked on the original manuscript at Ballymacmanus Island (Belleisle), south-east of Enniskillen, in the civil parish of Cleenish and Islands, County Fermanagh.



Monastery

As noted in the Archaeological Survey of Fermanagh, the site of a possible monastery in Belleisle, could not be located. McKenna in 1900 reported: “what appeared to me unmistakable traces of bee-hives” at Belleisle. McKenna’s assertion for a monastery on this site is based on the placename: Bally MacManus “Senagh-Mic-Maghusa” and the ancient tradition of an extensive monastery and school on the site; for which he concluded, somewhat ironically, there was no written authority.



LOUGH ERNE — PILGRIM WAY —



St Patrick's
Purgatory,
Lough Derg



Caldragh



Keenaghan



White Island

Dauy's Island



Killadeas



Decenish Island



Inishmaeainn



Old Rossory

Cleamish



Belleisle

Derryvullan

Aghalurcher



Galloon

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.

