

Inishmacsaint Fact Sheet



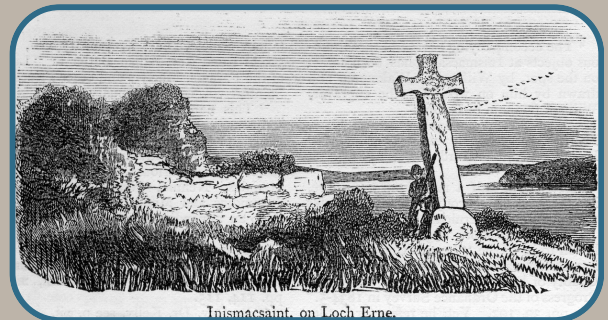
Background

Inishmacsaint has long been a place of worship and burial. The island, Inis-maige-samh, or 'Island of the Sorrel Plain' has an unrivalled beauty and sense of spirituality. The unusually large, plain sandstone cross dominates the landscape. Measuring four metres high, local legend tells of the cross rotating three times on Easter Monday. The cross is thought to date to the 12th Century. The very presence of this cross and its height, which made it visible from a considerable distance, suggests that the island was place of pilgrimage.



Monastic Site

The monastic site on Inishmacsaint Island was founded in 530AD by St Ninnidh, grandson of Laoghaire, High King of Ireland. St. Ninnidh is known to have travelled the shores of Lough Erne in a hollowed-out boat visiting local churches with his priests and monks to spread the gospel. The stone building, we see can see today dates to the 12th century, by 1306 it was in use as a parish church. It was used up until the 18th century. The remains show a combination of building styles. Thus, the church was adapted and extended throughout centuries of use as a place of worship for the local community.



Discoveries

A 16th-century pewter bottle was uncovered in the old graveyard. The bottle is only 10cm high and has two handles and a screw cap. This would have been used for communion wine or holy water. This is now held in the Fermanagh County Museum and can be seen in Lakelands Gallery 2. Inishmacsaint was an important burial site. The graveyard next to the church has burials dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. It is likely that there are much earlier burials on the island, these graves are now unmarked. A rectangular enclosure of about 60 metres from the church is believed to be a cillín (killeen), a burial ground for unbaptised children.





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.

Galloon

Aghalurcher

Belleisle

Derryvulliam

Old Rossory

Cleenish

Decenish Island

White Island
Davy's Island

Killadeas

Inishmacsaigh

Templurshin

Kenagh

Caltragh