

# Killadeas Church, Graveyard and Carved Stones

## Fact Sheet



### Background

Killadeas or Cill Chéile Dé “church of the Culdee.” Killadeas sits close to the eastern shore of Rosslare Bay in Lower Lough Erne. It is a key site illustrating the reuse of ancient sites revered for old associations, often found in the midst of great beauty.

### History

The name, Killadeas, suggest a link with the Culdees. A Culdee was a member of a group of monastic reformers with its origins in the eighth century. The modern Church of Ireland in the townland of Rockfield occupies the site of an early church, known as the Yellow Church, which belonged to the Culdees of Devenish Island. In 1774 it is described as: “ye ruins of Yellow Church ..it is of rude sculpture and built like a barn.” The 1834 OS Memoirs recorded that the site of the old church or abbey may be traced at the north extremity of Rockfield townland, inside an old graveyard. Presently, there are no traces of the church. Rogers suggests the St. Ninnidh’s Church, 1881, incorporated stones from the Yellow Church.

### Carved Stones

Within the modern graveyard there sits an older one, here there are many 18th century gravestones and four carved stones. The graveyard contains several interesting stones, probably the most noted is the bishop stone. The stone was unearthed by Dorothy Lowry Corry in the 1930s. The northern and eastern sides of the stone are undecorated. On the southern side is a carving of an ecclesiastical figure carrying a bell and crozier, here we find a bishop or abbot carved in stone, perhaps the figure of a travelling ecclesiastic. At the top of the western face of the stone is a carving of a chubby face, with mouth open, puffy cheeks and round wide-open eyes. Below this the stone is decorated with wide-banded interlacing. Lanigan Wood considers that both carvings date to the 9-11th centuries, though it has been suggested the carving on the western face is earlier.

**Pillar Stone:** Thought to have been part of a cross, there is no decoration on the pillar.

**A Holed Stone:** A large circular boulder with an oval hole at its centre, the base of the stone is buried. This is probably the only true prehistoric relic, there are numerous superstitions associated with such hole stones.

**A cross inscribed stone,** now unlocated: The stone was described as having a small Greek cross inscribed on it with two lines cut underneath it. Attempts to locate this stone by the museum in 1987 proved unsuccessful.





# LOUGH ERNE — PILGRIM WAY —



St Patrick's  
Purgatory,  
Lough Derg

Caldrough

Kenagh

White Island  
Davy's Island

Killaodcas

Inishmaean

Devenish Island

Old Rossory

Temperushin

Cleenish

Derryvulliam

Balleisic

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.