

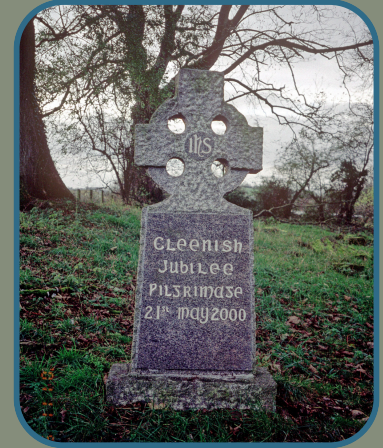
# Cleenish Island Fact Sheet



## Background

The beautiful island of Cleenish was where St Sinell, founded his famous monastery school. Having first served and studied under St. Finnian of Clonard. He travelled all the way from the midlands of Ireland with his noble band of 12 monks.

These men were workers, scholars and teachers. They set about erecting and possibly repairing former Druid buildings. These buildings were thought by some to be on the hilltop towards the centre of the island. The walls of the monks and student's individual huts were built using wattles and clay from the Island shoreline. The roof would have been made from rushes and grass. A main central building would have been built of stone. It would have been initially used as a chapel. All would have been protected from the elements of Lough Erne by inner and outer raths, the famous monastery was beginning to take shape.



## St Sinell

St Sinell himself was noted for his holiness and his understanding of all sacred teachings. He became the first Abbot of Cleenish around the year 550. Young educated Christian men wishing to become monks were arriving on the island frequently from all over Ireland. The reputation of this new monastery was gaining momentum throughout the country. St Sinell along with his masters were exceptional men, scholars and teachers who were passing on their many very special gifts in Philosophy, Religion and Scriptural Studies, History, Poetry, Mathematics, Grammar, Rhetoric, Psalms, Geometry, Music, Astronomy, Latin, Greek, Hebrew along with other ancient languages.

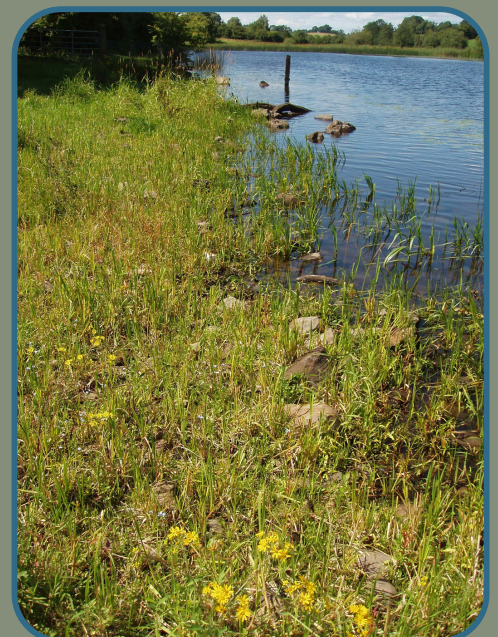


## Records

The Annals of Ulster show a record from 1100 A.D. showing the foundation of the Church of St. Sinell at Cleenish. This church was also later under the control of the Maguire family of Fermanagh who were leaders of religion within the county. Throughout the 1400's and 1500's this family were Bishop's, Archdeacons, Parsons, Vicars and Herenach of Cleenish.

After the Confiscation and Plantation of Fermanagh a map of 1609 shows the Cleenish island church in ruins. Spotiswood's report of 1622 records the church as ruinous. On the 1657 map the church is shown as an absolute ruin.

Today the only traces of the ancient church are a few sculptured stones lying in the much-neglected cemetery. One shows a clearly visible ringed cross. The second is a finely sculptured female head corbel stone. These along with a few rough stones are all that remains from the robbed-out church and headstones of the ancient graveyard. There are also two carved heads said to be from Cleenish Church on display in Fermanagh County Museum. Originally stored by the Parish Priest they were passed on to Mount Lourdes Grammar School Enniskillen. They in turn presented them to Fermanagh County Museum.







St Patrick's  
Purgatory,  
Lough Derg

# LOUGH ERNE — PILGRIM WAY —



Keenaghan

Caldragh



White Island  
Davy's Island



Killadeas



Decemish Island



Inishmasain

Temperushab



Old Rosory

Derryvullan



Cleemish

Belleisle



Aghaturcher



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.

