

ORANSAY MEMORIALS

Graveyard

1. Erected / in memory of / Jane Johnston / wife of Donald Ramsay / who died 23rd December 1865 / aged 43 years / also their son Archibald / who died 29th February 1868 / aged 19 years
- 2 this stone was ... / Campbell who died ...
- 3 Donald McNeill / Private HM 44th Regiment / died at Colonsay 8th July 1888 / aged 61 years / This stone was erected by / Major General Sir John McNeill / proprietor
- 4 1765 / ANDr PIRIE AND / HIS SPOSE PEGGY / McNEAR 1808
[Surmounted by an engraved image of an eight-tined hay-rake lying on its back crossed by a vertical garden spade]
- 5 Here lies / the corpse of Mar- / Bell spouse to / Archd. McAllister / Innkeeper Scal/asaig who died the --r- day of / Jan-y 18[28?] aged 64 / years
- 6 Donald McMillan / died 30th Nov 1880 / aged 28 years
- 7 In memory of / Mary M- / Clug spouse / of John McNeill / who died / 1869 / 18 years
- 8 [Front] In memory of / Donald Stewart / who was born near Doune / and died at Achnaba / Ardchattan 4th June 185- aged 95 years / having lived in / Colonsay about - 4 years his remains / were at his own request / brought here for inter/ment Also of his spouse Sarah Daragh / who died 1867 aged 65 years
[Back] This stone was erected / as hallmark of filial / affection by their son / James Stewart
- 9 --th / May 1791 / Here lies the corpse / of Ketr. Curie sp/ose to Hugh Curie
- 10 HERE IS / DONd / MARTIN'S SE/PULCHRE WHO DI/ED IN MAY 18(88?) / IN THE 77th YEAR / OF HIS AGE
- 11 Erected / by / Charles Darroch / in memory of his father / Hugh Darroch / who died 8th Feb 1899 / aged 70 years / also his brother / Neil Darroch / who died 4th Jun 1909 / aged 44 years / also his daughter / Catherine Darroch / who died 18th Jan 1910 / aged 17 years
- 12 Erected / in memory of / Duncan McNeill shoemaker / who died 7th July 1871 aged 56 years / also his son Neil who died March 187- / aged 20 years
- 13 Erected / by / Duncan Darrach / in memory of his sister / Ann who died 12 July / 1861 aged 18 years

14 1907 [presumably an unknown sailor]

15 MN / A sailor of the / 1939 - 1945 / war / Merchant Navy / Found 10th July 1946 /
Known unto God

16 A.Fisher / Eng Room Artfcr RNR 1523/LA / HMS "VIKNOR" / 13th January
1915

[below] In loving memory of / Alfred Fisher/ E.R.A. / Lost with HMS Viknor / 'Till /
The Day Dawns

17 Claire Gwennlian / Marshall / Abrahams / 9th July 1982 - / 12th January 1986

In MacPhie Chapel

18 In memory of / Niell Bell, Merchant / who died 1805 / aged 40 years

In Chancel

19 John Martin

20 Into the / memory of Hecter / Martin late Innkeeper / Scalasaig who died / October
4th 1840 aged / 41 years

21 Erected / by Saly Bell / in memory of Don/ald Meartin who / was her lawful /
husband and dep/arted this life Mar/ch 21 1838 aged / 41 years

In McNeill Mortuary

22 In memory of / Alexander McNeill / Laird of Colonsay and Oransay / Gigha and
Ardlussa / aged 59 / Anne Elizabeth Carstairs / his wife / fourth daughter and co-
heirress of / John Carstairs Esqre / of Woodhurst and Warboys, Hunts / aged 47 / and
two of their daughters / Cecil Anne / aged 17 / and / Hester Mary / aged 6 / who all
perished / in the wreck of the "Orion" / at Port-Partrick on her passage / from
Liverpool to Glasgow / 18th June 1850 / and are buried in the / Island of Gigha

*[This wreck caused great public concern; one of the results was the development of
purpose-built lifeboats]*

23 In this / chapel are buried / Malcolm McNeill / who succeeded his father / Donald
McNeill of Crear / in 1701 as / Laird of Colonsay and Oransay / his wife / Barbara
Campbell of Dunstaffnage / and two of their sons / Alexander of Oransay / with his
wife / Mary McDougall of McDougall / and / Angus, Captain in the Army / also /
John McNeill / son of Alexander / Laird of Colonsay, Oransay and Ardlussa / died
24th Feby 1846 / his wife / Hester McNeill of Dunmore / died 16th June 1843 / and
his brother / Malcom McNeill / Hon. E[ast] I[ndia] Co's service / died 10th August
1850

24 Margaret Ferooza McNeill / daughter of / the Right Honble. / Sir John McNeill
G.C.B. / wife of / Duncan Stewart R.N. / born in Persia 15th Jan 1834 / died in

Edinburgh 23rd March 1871 / Erected in loving memory / by her six surviving children / 1891

25 Major General / Sir John Carstairs McNeill / G.C.V.O. - K.C.B. - K.C.M.G. - V.C. / Laird of Colonsay and Oransay / and late of / Gigha and Ardlussa / J.P. and D.L. for Argyllshire / 27 years Equerry / to/ HM Queen Victoria / Died 25th May 1904 / aged 73

[Below] Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas / Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please

Prior's Chapel

No inscribed stones visible.

Cloister

Two commemorative stones may be seen in the arcade:

CELESTIN/US CANON/ICUS GU/BERNAT/OR / HUIUS / OPERIS

'Canon Celestinus, director of this work'

+MA/ELSEAC/HLA(I)ND / SAER O/CUIND / FECIT I/STUD O/PUS

'Mael-Sechlainn O'Cuinn, mason, made this work'

Steer and Bannerman suggest that this mason originally worked at Iona and transferred to Oransay in the early 16th century to carry out the architectural reconstruction work and also to found the Oransay school of sculpture.

Prior's House

The important collection of Mediaeval gravestones is housed herein; it has been widely described in a number of publications and the following list of the inscribed stones follows the order given in RCAHM "ARGYLL Volume 5". G.H.Collins states that the material used is Calc-chlorite-albite-schist, and his research suggests that the most likely source is an ancient quarry midway between Castle Sween and Kilmory Chapel in Knapdale (on the farm of Doide at NR 704769).

(3) *A three-line inscription, now illegible*

(6) HIC IACET CE/LESTINUS C(ANONICUS)

'Here lies Canon Celestinus'

'Celestinus' is the Latin for 'Gill-easbuig'

(13) *Inscribed border, now illegible*

(15) *Inscribed border, now illegible*

(17) HIC IACET MURCHARDUS MACDUFIE DE CO[LLONSA QUI OBJIIT AN(N)O DO(MINI) MDXXXIX ET MARI/OTA NICILLEAIN ME FI(ERI FECIT)

'Here lies Murchardus MacDuffie of Colonsay who died in the year of Our Lord 1539; and Mariota MacLean caused me to be made

This stone was originally in the McDuffie Chapel. Pennant commented that 'This Murchardus is said to have been a great oppressor, and that he was executed by order of the Lord of the Isles for his tyranny. Near his tomb [was] a long pole placed there in memory of the ensign staff of the family, which had been miraculously preserved for two hundred years; on it (report says) depended the fate of the Macdufien race, and probably the original perished with this Murchardus.' Steer and Bannerman mention that this Murchardus ('Morphe Makphe') was among those chiefs summoned to Parliament in 1531 on a charge of treason in support of Alexander MacDonald of Dunivaig and the Glens.

(19) HIC IACET N/ELANUS CAL/V(US) DONALDI

'Here lies Nelanus Calvus (bald Niallán), son of Donald'

(20) *One line inscription, now obliterated*

(23) [HIC] IACET D(OMI)N(U)S DONALLDUS / MACDUFFIE PRIO[R
(CON)VEN/TUALIS DE O[RR]ANSAY QUI / OBIIT AN(N)O MDL-

'Here lies Sir Donald MacDuffie, Conventual Prior of Oransay, who died in the year 155-'

[This tombstone was originally in the mural recess of the MacPhie chapel, with the foot towards the east. He was appointed Prior by authority of the Pope in April 1538 and died in 1554; he had probably been in ill-health since an application had been made to permit him to retire, and since his gravestone was able to be prepared with confidence in advance.]

(24) HIC IACET BRICIUS / CANONIC(US) MAC/MURICH CUM / SUIS
(CON)FRATRIBUS

'Here lies Canon Bricius (Gilbride) MacMhuirich with his brethren'

This stone was noted by Pennant; locally known as 'Leac nam Ban Saor', it was lost sight of as the debris level rose in the abandoned Priory and eventually almost forgotten until it was fortuitously re-discovered in September 1891, buried a few inches below the surface at the south west corner of the altar. The vestments were taken locally to be those of a female figure and it was supposed that the fourth word was CANONICA

(25) *Marginal label at bottom and sides, now obliterated*

(26) HIC IACET *[the remainder is obliterated]*

(27) HIC IACET CANO(NI)CUS BRICIUS MACDUFFIE / ET PATRICIUS
PATER / SUUS CANONIC(US)

'Here lies Canon Bricius (Gilbride) MacDuffie, and Canon Patrick his father'

(29) *Traces of an illegible inscription*

(30) HIC IACET .../... [MAR]IOTA ALEX/ANDRI IOHA(NN)IS MACEAIN

'Here lies ... Mariota, daughter of Alexander, son of John MacIan'

[This lady is thought to have been the wife of Malcolm MacDuffie ('dominus de Dunevin in Colvunsay') and to have been involved in the betrayal of Sir Alexander MacDonald of Lochalsh, murdered by her brother in this very room; Sir Alexander's effigy is one of the two recumbant figures, but has no inscription. Mariota's husband was the "promoter and patron of the Oransay school of stone-carving", and she is remembered for the very fine stone that she commissioned for her brother Ian, to be seen at Iona]

The Oransay Cross

+HEC EST CR/UX COLINI F/ILII CRISTI/NI M(EIC)DUFACI

'This is the cross of Colinus (Malcolm), son of Christinus MacDuffie

Commonly, although in error, known as "The Prior's Cross"; this arose from a confusion in the translation. Steer and Bannerman have shewn that the cross was carved for Malcolm MacDuffie, lord of Colonsay, after 1472 and before 1509. They suggest that it was probably erected shortly before 1500

+MAELSEACHL[AI]ND SAER / [OCUIN]N FECIT IST[AM C]RUCE[M]

'Mael-Sechlainn O'Cuinn, mason, made this cross

Memorial at An Lonach

(south) I W COLBURN / ARCHITECT / 1924 - 1992

(north) The Soul is known by its acts

Eilean nan Ron

A simple wooden cross marks the resting-place of **Edmondo Armando**

Sottocarnola, born 2 April 1897, a native of Gargallo; he was lost in the tragedy of "Arandora Star" July 1940.

Funerary Sites without inscription

During work on the farm steadings in the 19th century, a cist grave was discovered but not disturbed

Excavation at Cárn a'Bharraich (*'Cairn of the Barra man'*) uncovered three burials from the Viking period, an elderly lady, a man and a younger woman; there was also indication that a boat had been burned at the site, and that at some time two upright stones had been mounted on the summit.

Rivets and nails were found close to Druim Arstail in 1912, together with artifacts of Viking date, suggesting a possible ship-burial.

Teeth, rivets and various fragments are preserved in the National Museum labelled "From Viking Burial Lochan Kill Mhor Oronsay 1891".

Cairns

There are more than 107 funeral cairns to be seen at An Aird, centred upon Druim Mór but with another concentration close to Lochan a' Chealtaire (*'The small loch near the Burial Ground'*); it has been suggested by John Gray, sometime farmer of Oronsay, that these graves may commemorate periods of plague.

There is the remnant of a very large cairn to the south of the road near Eilean Fhionnlaidh; this was said to be a traditional resting site for biers en route to the Priory and it is recorded that every mourner added a stone, some people even bringing them across in their pocket as they crossed An Fhaoghail (*'The Strand'*). This cairn was badly damaged in the latter 19th century, during the construction of the modern road.

Funeral Cross

A field-name, Páirc na Croise, commemorates the site of "McDuffie's Cross"; the cross stood just outside the field, on its south side and a little to the east of the disused runway which led to the removal of part of the wall of the adjoining field. This spot was beside the old route to the Priory and, following Cille Mhoire, was the final resting-point for the funeral parties. Within living memory, the site was regarded as sacred and was never ploughed or cultivated. A persistent tradition has it that the cross itself was taken down and buried nearby; another story, that it is the cross now known as the Campeltown Cross although wrong, might suggest that the McDuffie Cross was of comparable style or quality.

Graves

There is a gravestone beside Cill Mhoire.; in 1880, Stevenson mentions that there was a cairn at the same site

There are seventeen monumental mediaeval gravestones at the Prior's House, without inscription; and perhaps two dozen more modest unmarked stones in the graveyard. At one time, various dressed stones from the cloister arcades were used as gravestones and many of these markers were necessarily re-appropriated for the restoration work of the late 19th century.

Many graves were discovered during improvements to Oransay House at the same period; it was found that the graveyard had extended south, beyond the limit of the gravel carriage-roundel that was then created, and north beyond the kitchen garden, including the whole of the farmyard. Human remains have been noted within the same area in recent years and carefully re-interred.

There is an unmarked grave on the crest of the raised beach to the east of the kelper's cottage on Eilean nan Rón; this was the grave of an Italian internee (a sous-chef at the Savoy) who was drowned in WWII when a submarine sank the vessel on which he was being transported. The grave was marked by a wooden cross which has now decayed.

Placenames

Bogha Dell ("*Dale*" Reef) commemorates a shipwreck, Bogha nan Diúrach (*Reef of the Jura men*) is said to recall a tragedy, and Bogha Cubaig perhaps recalls a family name (e.g. "Nellanus Cuboig", listed in 1625). Eilean nan Corp (*Corpse Island*) is said to be where a body was washed ashore.