

## HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



### DRUMHALLAGH CROSS SLAB

The townland of Drumhallagh Lower lies along Lough Swilly, 3 miles north of Rathmullan, Co. Donegal. In local folklore the beautifully carved Drumhallagh cross slab is associated with St. Garvan. It is also called St. Garvan's Cross.

Killygarvan (*Cill Uí Gharbháin*: the church of Garvan) is a townland two miles from Drumhallagh Lower and gave its name to the early ecclesiastical parish and later to the civil parish. Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig in *Donegal History & Society* (Eds. William Nolan, Liam Ronayne, Mairead Dunleavy, Dublin 1995) places a St. Garvan (listed in the Martyrology of Tallaght) and his monastic foundation in the area of present-day Killygarvan. There were monastic foundations on both sides of Lough Swilly from the 6th to the 9th centuries. In the **Archaeological Survey of County Donegal** (Eds. Brian Lacy et al, Donegal 1983), Brian Lacey suggests that the Drumhallagh cross slab is one of a group of cross slabs, including those at Fahan and Carndonagh, which were developed during the course of the 7th century and associated with monastic foundations.

The cross slab stands on a stony base and has a cross on the two broader faces. The stone or slab is 1.2 m high, .57m at the top, widening to .7m where the arms of the cross are carved and is .65m at the base. It is .17m wide. The east-facing surface is finely and ornately carved, showing a bishop in one and an abbot in the other lower quadrant of the interlaced knotwork cross. A crouched figure is depicted in each of the top quadrants.

Truly a Hidden Gem.

**Áine Ní Dhuibhne**