

THE LOST LIBRARY OF IONA

A talk given in London by Reverend P.B. Willmot, on 30th March, 1988.

I ought to start by explaining that for 27 years from 1950 I was Chaplain at Winchester College, and among our old boys was a certain George MacLeod, or, to give him his full title, The Rev. Sir George MacLeod. Round about 1960 he was Moderator of the Church of Scotland, a position which corresponds to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Church of England. The Moderator holds office for a fixed number of years, I forget how many, and while he was in office he came down to his old school to tell us about his work on the island of Iona.

Iona is a magic island, about three miles long and a mile wide off the coast of Mull, which is itself off the coast of Scotland. To Iona in the year 597 there came from Ireland a man called St. Columba. He came with eleven companions, settled there, and founded a monastery, which in quite a short time became very famous. Scotland and northern England were converted to Christianity by monks from Iona; many kings of Scotland including Macbeth were buried there, and Iona had a very famous library. The monks brought with them the art of writing and illuminating manuscripts of the Bible.

The monastery was dissolved in 1561, later than the dissolution of the English monasteries, and the buildings fell into decay. In the early 1930s George MacLeod was curate in a slum area of Glasgow where there was much unemployment, which worried him greatly. He conceived the idea of rebuilding the abbey ruins, using young unemployed men on the one hand, and boys from public schools on the other, in the hope that by living and working together for a time they would get to know each other better, and the gap between the two would be bridged. Then, when the work of rebuilding was completed, his idea was that the place would become a centre where employed and unemployed, privileged and unprivileged could meet and discuss their problems.

The work needed money, and it was to tell us about the work and to raise money for it that George MacLeod came back to his old school to tell us what he was doing and ask for our help. As a result of his visit I took boys up to Iona for several successive years when we dug trenches, mixed concrete and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. I can't remember the exact dates, but you can get some idea of when it must have been when I tell you that the fare from London to Iona in those days, together with a sleeper, was £8 6s 8d.

It was on one of these trips that I began to wonder about what had happened to the Iona library. Its fate has never been ascertained. Some say that it was burnt, which is quite possible; but there is a strong

tradition that it was whisked away by the monks before their monastery was dissolved and buried on the island of Cairn na Burgh More, one of the Treshnish group of islands about twelve miles out in the Atlantic from Iona.

There is nothing inherently impossible about this; the monks had originally come from Ireland and had a long tradition of seafaring. They certainly sailed year by year to Coll or Tiree — I forget which — to grow and harvest corn when Iona became too small to support the growing community. If they could bring back a few tons of corn they could just as easily have transported their most valuable books. They would of course have needed some sort of metal container — perhaps lead — and I don't know if they could make lead coffins. If they could, a similar container for books would not be too difficult.

It must have been about this time that I read an article — I forget where — that there were people who could dowse from a map or plan, and this made me wonder if it might not be possible to detect the library by this means. I therefore wrote to Col. Bell the Society's President in those days, and asked if he could put me in touch with someone who could do this. He replied that the best person he knew was a Col. Merrylees, a member of the Society, and to him I accordingly wrote, saying that I was interested in discovering what had happened to the library of Iona, which I had reason to believe had been buried. His reply was more than anyone had the right to expect. He said he was interested; that he had always wanted to see Winchester; would I book a room for himself and his wife in a good hotel, and bring my wife to have dinner with them on Saturday evening in a fortnight's time.

This I duly did, and I remember that when we invited them back to our house, the first thing he did on entering our hall was to pull up one of the legs of his trousers; remove a dowsing rod from his sock; lead us out into a very busy road, and somewhat to our embarrassment, give a public demonstration of dowsing.

We later settled down and I explained my problem. Could his art detect the library? He said that all that he could do was to dowse for a cavity. I told him the tradition that it had been buried on Cairn na Burgh More; gave him a map which he promised to work on at home.

A week or so later he wrote. He could find no cavity on Cairn na Burgh More, but there was one on Lunga.

He drew a ten-fold enlargement of the area involved; there was a line of abandoned huts, and not far off he had placed an exciting red square. The spot was easy to pin-point; it was so many feet from the corner of this hut, and so many feet from that. I got a length of string and tied a piece of coloured cloth at the two places.

I felt the least that I could do was to join the Society, and this brought me into contact with two mysterious people who are relevant to my story. I don't think I had better mention their names since one is dead, and in their day they certainly caused problems to the Society.

At that time the Society published the names and addresses of newly-joined members, and this had the advantage that people living in your area, when they saw your name, could write and make themselves known. Indeed the Society also published from time to time — once a year perhaps — a complete list of the names and addresses of all its members, and this was very convenient if you wanted to communicate with someone who had written an interesting article in the magazine. But there were disadvantages.

Soon after my name was published I had a letter from a woman who said her husband was an expert in radiesthesia and dowsing; they would call upon us shortly when they would be in the area. A few days later they arrived and turned out to be an extraordinary couple. He was a man of about 60 though he looked much older, and his story, which I have no reason to doubt, was that as a young man of about 20 he found he had a considerable gift of healing, and decided to become ordained and exercise this ministry within the Church of England. The Bishop whom he approached took fright at the idea and refused to ordain him. Sixty years ago this was very likely. So for about 30 years he lived a very Franciscan sort of life in a caravan, ministering healing to those who came his way, and getting paid in half-crowns and bottles of milk. At some stage he met and married a woman whom he had treated for a serious heart condition. They had a number of children. In some ways she was more remarkable than he was. She terrified me. She told me once that she had periods of profound unconsciousness. She had a few seconds warning, when she would lie down on the floor or sit in a chair. In this state she had very vivid dreams and would find herself, as it were, usually at the scene of a road accident where she would move among the crowd and minister to the injured and dying. When she came to, she could give a very graphic account of where it was and what had happened, though whether this bore any relation to reality I cannot say. In the light of her part in this story I am now inclined to think that it did.

She always carried round with her a large box of tubes. I think they are called 'Turenne Witnesses'. They were two or three inches long, about a quarter of an inch in diameter, and were filled with a chalk-like substance, which represented some human ailment. Between them they represented all the diseases known to man. You put your hand on the table; she put a fistful of tubes about eight inches away, swung a pendulum between them, and according to its movements announced her diagnosis. What with her considerable powers of diagnosis and his considerable powers of healing they were a pretty formidable couple, though I used to wonder somewhat uncharitably, whether it was necessary for him to know so intimately the nature of the illness he was curing. In fairness I ought to add that my wife as a child suffered rheumatic fever which left her with the mitral valve of her heart slightly damaged. Her circulation was affected, and she used to get very bad

chilblains in cold weather. They treated this condition and there is no doubt it did improve very considerably.

To get back to Lunga. My first idea was that when we got to Lunga the following Easter, we would select a day; hire a boat; and confine our operation on Lunga to a few hours. As it turned out a boat was available only on one particular day, and the night before we were due to go a storm blew up which made the project manifestly impossible for that year. Now things always take me longer to do than I think they will, so during the following summer, I decided that next time we would actually camp on the island for a night and give ourselves plenty of time.

There was one serious problem. Had the island got any water? I thought it likely that it did because it had clearly been inhabited at some time in its history. On the other hand I knew that on some islands the inhabitants relied on rain water from their roofs, and though there were plenty of huts on Lunga, their roofs had clearly gone. I got some aerial photographs and showed them to a man who was expert in interpreting them. Could he see any signs of water on it? No, he could not. I got all the maps I could lay my hands on; there was no indication of water on any of them.

While I was wrestling with the problem, the lady I have already introduced you to suddenly appeared. They quite often came to Winchester in those days, and while her husband was administering healing to someone in the neighbourhood she would look in on us. Knowing something of her peculiar gift I said: "Can you tell me if there is water in a particular place."

"Yes", she said, "water's easy. But", she went on, "it's no good asking if there is water outside Westminster Abbey, I must have some sort of map or plan of the place".

I said: "I can give you a one inch to the mile map, or an aerial photograph on roughly the same scale".

She said: "Let me have the map".

I dug out the map and opened it on the coffee table in front of her. It was about 95% Atlantic, and 5% islands.

"Oh dear", she said, "this is very difficult; all this salt water about makes fresh water very hard to find".

I thought, she's going to get out of this one.

She said: "Get me a glass of water".

We got her a glass of water and she settled down in front of the map. I cannot now remember exactly how she managed to hold three things in her two hands, but I think she held a pencil in one hand, and the glass of water and a pendulum in the other. She became immensely concentrated, quite conscious, but I don't think she would have heard if we had spoken. After about 15 seconds she licked her lips as if she was actually tasting water. "Oh", she said, "lovely water, lovely water. There are three springs; one there, one there, and one there". She poked the map with her pencil. "Now", she said, "the island rises to a

hill in the middle". (You could tell that from the contours.) "A spring rises near the top, runs rapidly down the hill and turns left at the bottom. There's a waterfall there". She poked the map again. Nothing of this showed on the map, though you could tell from the contours that if there was water that's where it would run.

Somewhat encouraged, but not wholly convinced I made my way back to Iona the following spring with a small party. I managed to find a local fisherman and said to him: "Can you tell me if there is water on Lunga?" "Yes", he said, "plenty of water on Lunga".

A few days later we were put ashore on its inhospitable coast, and our first care once we were established was to run round the island and make certain of our water supply. There were three springs; one there, one there, and one there. We scampered up the hill and sure enough near the top was a spring which bubbled out, ran down the hill, turned left at the bottom and tumbled in a waterfall over the cliff. She can't conceivably have been there, and even supposing that she had, who would remember the position of three springs? And if she was right when she said: "There's a spring there, there and there", is she equally right when she comes out of her trance-like state and says: "There's been a bad accident outside Hull!"

Our next care was to find the cavity. There was no doubt where it was. On the exact spot indicated by Col. Merrylees was a tumulus, between two and three feet high. I took a photograph of it, but foolishly put nothing by it to indicate scale. It was covered with tall, dry grass, which covered all the land round it as well.

We removed the turf and uncovered a large boulder deposited there by a passing glacier at the end of the Ice Age. It had split, so there was a "V" shaped channel running right through it. Working from above we soon uncovered a flat stone, roughly rectangular, about the size of a foolscap sheet of paper. Whether it had been deliberately put there or accidentally wedged I cannot say. We prized it up recklessly. There was nothing underneath except a few stones. But Col. Merrylees had been absolutely right when he said there was a cavity at that spot.

When I got home I wrote to him to report on what had happened. In his reply he said:

"I have had another shot at the island site . . . may I put forward with all reservations about wishful thinking, that there may be one or even two burials (not coffin-shaped) near the divided boulder, and that the split may have been 'a sighting groove' to enable something buried to the north to be found again".

Notice that he mentions two possible burials. This was interesting, but I was discouraged by the fact that the split did not run north and south as he said, but rather east and west. I made no further move.

But then, later in the summer, the Society held a reception and supper at Farnham Castle, just over the Hampshire border in Surrey. My wife and I went over and by chance during the reception a woman came over and sat down next to me. We got talking and she asked me

my name. When I asked for hers she said it was Evelyn Penrose. She was arguably the most gifted dowser of her day. She lived in Australia, and was professionally employed by the government of (I think) Western Australia to dowse for oil. I was astonished to find her in England, but here she was. We got on well. I told her about Iona and its library, and finally plucked up courage to ask if she could help. She said that she could only work from a map, and that there was a man who worked in an advertising agency in Perth, who always prepared her maps for her. If I would pay for him to prepare one she would work on it and let me know what she could discover. I readily agreed and we parted. Some months later I had this letter.

. . . I rang up the advertising agents who have enlarged my maps for many years, and was told that the junior partner, who took a great interest in my work had died while I was on a long visit to Ceylon and I had not heard of it and which is very worrying, as there seems to be no one else in little Perth who can do my map enlargements for me. However, with regard to your problem, I hope you will approve of what I have done. I have an old friend here in Australia (old in years and in length of friendship), a Mr. H. O. Busby, who is the most fantastically wonderful diviner that I have ever known anywhere in the world . . . He does not use a map! People write to him and tell him their problems. Sometimes they send him a sketch and any measurements they can. He then goes out to a small piece of land near the homestead which he calls his 'MAGIC CARPET' and which he keeps for this purpose, and marks the problem on it by means of stones, blocks of wood and stumps of trees, based on the information he has received, and works on that. It sounds too fantastic to be believed, but he has the most astounding success, even to finding and marking streams of water which of course are not there at all . . .

I have sent your sketch and photos and also the correspondence to Mr. Busby and asked him to correspond straight to you if he will undertake it. I know he likes tackling unusual problems so I think he will.

A few weeks later Mr. Busby himself wrote:—

. . . There appears to be nothing at the tumulus, but twelve feet east from it there appears to be a grave. The dimensions of the indications suggest that it is a grave, also that there are human remains therein, the skull lying at the northern end, the grave itself running roughly north and south. There appears to be something else buried with the body, possibly a record of some kind.

Both authorities seemed to agree that there was something buried in line with the slit in the rock. Col. Merrylees spoke of "one, possibly two burials" . . . Mr. Busby mentioned "a skull and something else, possibly a record of some kind". Could this be a book?

I felt I had to go again, and next year I did. I am sorry to report that I found nothing, but it did raise a question in my mind on which I should value an opinion. If a dowser works on a site and thinks he has

found something; could a second dowser working on the same site pick up something of the first dowser's work? Could Mr. Busby have picked up something of Col. Merrylees?

I have some copies of the map which Col. Merrylees originally made. I have wiped out his marks, and if anyone would like to take a copy away and work over it I should be interested to hear of your reactions.

There is no doubt that the mysterious woman and Col. Merrylees were both right when they said: "There is a cavity; there is water". I am sorry I cannot report a major discovery, but at least you cannot say I have not tried.

NOXIOUS ENERGIES AND HEALTH

by R. J. Pope

Introduction

Recently, there has been much concern as to the positioning of beds and other regularly used furniture with respect to health problems and to what I shall loosely classify as noxious rays. Various papers have been given by people showing possible links between health and noxious rays in recent months to organisations such as the British Society of Dowsers.^{1,2} These have not caught the public attention but a new book entitled "Are You Sleeping In A Safe Place"³ has, and has caused considerable concern and fear in the public who seem to have taken the attitude that if it is published then it must be true. Of particular concern are those people who are convinced that their bed lies in a bad position but who are unable to do anything about it due to modern cramped conditions. This article attempts to examine various different viewpoints from around the world that practitioners have and to try and draw some conclusions that can give hope to these people.

Noxious Rays

Noxious rays are apparently the root cause of some of the troubles that people suffer from. The general idea is that the sufferer has located their bed over one or more noxious rays. These noxious rays then cause a degradation of health. These rays are similar to earth energies, ley lines, energy lines, magnetic fields, etc. To date dowsers have reported on a number of different types of energy that make up noxious rays. Some of the better known dowsable energies are:

Dragon Energies. These come from the Chinese system of feng shui.^{4,5} This is a complex subject where energies are divided into yin and yang forms (female and male or negative or positive). Feng shui