

The Early Church in Ireland



**By Douglas S.
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Part 1 - Paul and James in Ireland

IN THE ARTICLE "THE EARLY CHURCH IN BRITAIN" OF 30 SEPTEMBER 1992, on pages 6 and 7, the author referred to the report by Frederick Haberman, (Ref 1 p. 141), which tells of the twenty ninth chapter of Acts which is in the Turkish Archives at Istanbul.

Several paragraphs from the twenty ninth chapter of Acts give indications that St. Paul went to Britain. These are quoted below for conveniences:-

"And Paul, full of the blessings of Christ, and abounding in the Spirit, departed out of Rome, determining to go into Spain; for he had a long time purposed to journey thitherwards, and he was minded to go from thence into Britain. For he had heard in Phoenicia that certain of the children of Israel, about the time of the Assyrian captivity, had escaped by sea to the "isles afar off" as spoken by the prophet, and called by the Romans Britain".

"And they departed out of Spain, and Paul and his company finding a ship in Armorica sailing into Britain, they went therein and passing along the south coast, they reached a port called Raphinus".

"And on the morrow he came and stood on Mount Lud; and the people thronged at the gate, and assembled in the Broadway, and he preached Christ unto them, and many believed the word and the testimony of Jesus Christ".

The writer of "The Early Church in Britain" indicated that he had been unable to trace a port called "Raphinus" on maps of Roman Britain. Recently he found a geographical reference to Ireland in the times of the Roman by Richard of Cirencester, (Ref 2 p. 460 para. 13). This reference reads as follows:-

"13. The southern side of the island, (i.e. of Ireland), stretched from the promontorium Austriacum, or southern promontory to the Sacred promontory. Here lived the Ibernii, whose metropolis was Rhufina. Next was the river Dobona, and the people called Vodiae, whose promontory of the same name lies opposite to the Promontorium Antivestaeum in England, at about the distance of one hundred and forty five miles. Not far from there is the River Dabrona, the boundary of the Brigantes who have also the river Briga for their limit and whose chief town is called Brigantia".

A footnote on p. 441 of Ref 2, explains that the Promontories Bolerium and Antivestaeum are Lands End and Lizards Point, (of Cornwall), respectively. In the Atlas of the Classical World, map 65 of Roman Britain, Lands End is shown as Belerium Promontory. (Ref 3 p. 164). The Southern Promontory appears to be "Toe Head" and the Sacred Promontory appears to be "Carnsore Point". The distance from Lands End to Carnsore Point is "about 145 miles"!

The Vodiae must be a Roman name for an Irish clan but the Ibernii were the people named after Eber who was allocated the southern part of Ireland at the time of the Milesian conquest, Erimhon taking Northern Ireland. Eber, son of Ir was allocated Ulster, and Lugaidh, son of Ith, was allocated Corea Luighe.(part of Cork).(Ref 4 Vol 1 p. 207). The Brigantes were the people of Lugaidh who later moved from the Cork area to the east in the area which became known as the Kingdom of Meath and Bregia. (Ref 4 Vol 3 p. 719). The plains of the Brigantes became known as "Campus Brigantium" in Latin.

Dr Hoeh, (Ref 5 Vol 2 p. 284), points out that the Epistle of James, (KJV), is addressed to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad. Chapter 4 v1

queries- "From whence come wars and fighting among you?" Dr Hoeh states that "James wrote this book about 60 AD. (he was martyred about two years later according to Josephus). The world was temporarily at peace cowed by the fear of Roman military might. Just prior to AD 60 only two areas of the world were torn by war and civil fightings". "These two lands were the British Isles and the Parthian Empire".

Ireland was not taken over by Rome nor was there war between Ireland and Rome at that time. However, a violent civil war had broken out in Ireland. The Athach - Tuatha (Latinised to Attacoti), who were believed to be the descendants of the Firbolg and others treated as servile and helot classes, had rebelled and overthrown the ruling Gaels.(Ref 4 Vol 1 p. 292). Such was the chaos during this war that even the dates of the early Christian period are in confusion, Keating's dates being very different than those of the Four Masters. (Ref 4 Vol 1 p. 290/293 & p 294/297). Dr Hoeh comes to the rescue again by showing that Roderic O'Flaherty, who has the most reliable dates for Irish History, records the "interregnum" of the rebellion during 60-65 AD.(Ref 5 Vol 1 p. 434)

James, son of Alphaeus, left Palestine twelve years after Christ's death. This was after James, the brother of John, had been martyred by Herod. (Acts 12 v2. Cave (on page 14B of the History of The Apostles) states that James came to the Western parts of Europe and particularly into Spain (some add Briton and Ireland).(Ref 5 Vol 2 p. 300/301).

It has already been seen that Peter, Paul, Simon Zelotes, Joseph of Aramathea and Aristobolis went to preach to the lost tribes in Britain.(See "***The Early Church in Britain***"). In fact, the twenty ninth chapter of Acts appeared to give Biblical confirmation of Paul's arrival in London but it was not possible to find "Raphinus". It now appears that this port is the Rhufina on the southern coast of Ireland reported by Cirencester.

According to Keating, the first recorded Christian in Ireland was Conco-bar MacNessa, King of Ulster. (Ref 4 Vol 1 p. 287 and P. 356). The second was Moran MacMaen, son of the Rebel King, Carbri Kincaid. (Ref 4 Vol 1 p. 292 8c p. 356). In AD 213, Cormac Ul-Fada, (of the house

of Erimhon), became King of Ireland and ruled for forty years. He is listed as the third Christian in Ireland. (Ref 4 Vol 1 p. 328 8c p. 356)

It is now apparent that "The Early Church in Britain" requires to be modified to take into the account the information revealed in this article. It is also apparent further research is necessary to ascertain whether there is or was a Mount Lud near Rhufina and whether the rivers mentioned by Cirencester can be identified. Obviously, it is also necessary to more specifically identify "Rhufina" with its Irish name

Publication References

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3. *Atlas of the Classical World* edited by AAM van der Heyden and H H Seul lard. (Published by Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1967 - First printed 1959).
4. *The History of Ireland from the earliest period to the English Invasion* by Geoffrey Keating -1629- Translated from the original Gaelic by John O'Mahony -1857 (Published by Irish Genealogical Foundation).
5. Compendium of World History by Herman L Hoeh. (Published 1962/63).

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St. Kevin's Church Glendalough, County Wicklow

One of the most important early Christian sites in Ireland, this is a place that can be visited without any charge and it offers a great sight and the road Glendalough Monastic Site is in fact a pleasure for anyone.



Taghadoe Round Tower & Church Co Kildare

In the Town land South of Maynooth lies the ancient Round tower of Taghadoe. There existed a monastic site here which dated back to the 6th century and is thought to have been founded by St. Tua. The Monastery became known in Gaelic as Teach Tua and this through the subsequent years formed the name Taghadoe. The Tower is all that remains of the Monastic site and it's sole purpose was to act as a defence against marauding invaders out to pillage the sacred possessions that the Monks held. The entrance door is 12 feet above ground and was accessible by ladder. The Monks would then raise the ladder and defend themselves through the one portal. The Tower remained in use for over 1000 years until it fell into ruin in the 17th century. Today it stands solidly 20 metres high but without it's conical top.

The nearby Church was constructed on the site in 1831 but most unusually remained in use for only 40 years. The Round Tower was used during this period as as a large coal bunker and a small door at the base was made to facilitate this and then later bricked up. The Tower was declared a National Monument in 1886.



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