

The Bishops of Argyll and the Castle of Achanduin, Lismore, AD 1180–1343

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ABSTRACT

The history of the see of Argyll, its Bishops and its endowments to 1343 is reviewed and the conclusion made that neither the see nor the Bishop could have afforded to build Achanduin Castle. Examination of the published 14th-century documentation shows that the commonly held view that the Bishop was in possession of the castle in 1304 is probably mistaken. The castle is likely to have been built by the MacDougall family in the 1290s and to have remained in their possession throughout the 14th century.

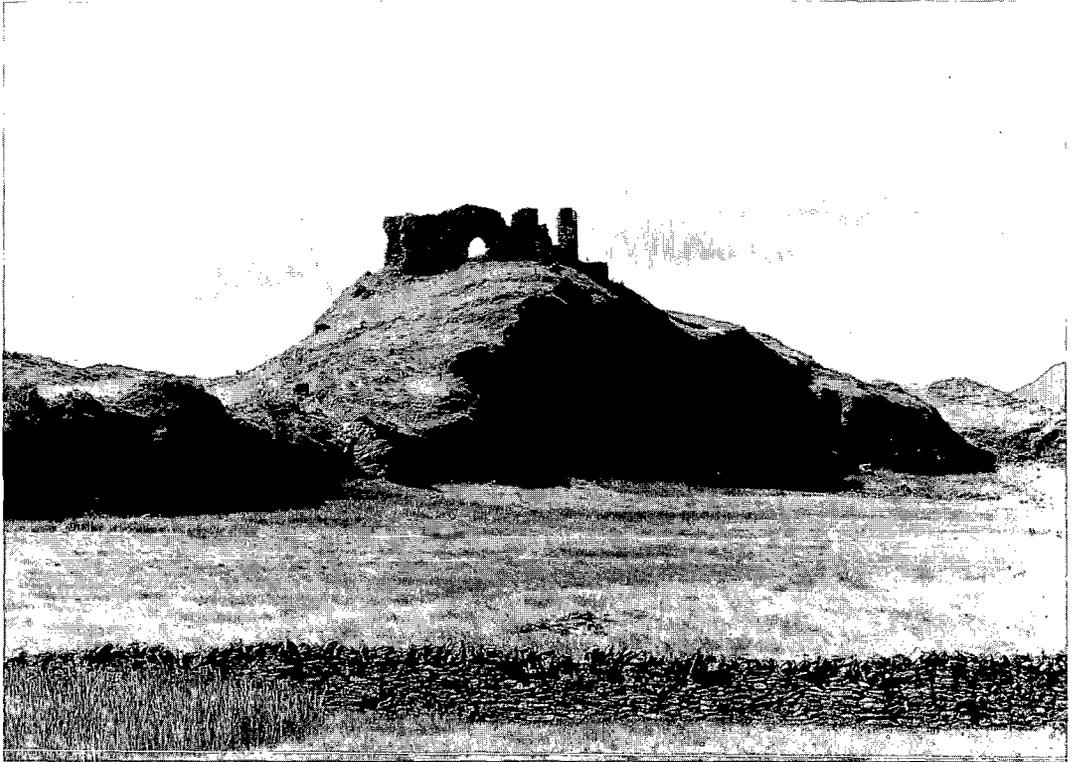
INTRODUCTION

For at least the last century and a half, it has frequently been stated that the castle of Achanduin on Lismore (NGR: NM 804 392) was the residence of the Bishops of Argyll (Anderson & Anderson 1847, 326; *OPS* 2.1, 169; RCAHMS 1974, 171). Following the excavation of the castle between 1970 and 1975 (Turner, in prep), the question arose as to whether the 14th-century documentation and the undoubted (although apparently temporary) occupation of the castle by the Bishop in 1452 (Thomson 1819, 14–15; 1877, 50–1) can realistically support the traditional view that the building was constructed by an early Bishop. In an attempt to resolve this question, the history of the Bishops and see of Argyll down to the death of Bishop Andrew is reviewed and its implications discussed. Only printed sources have been used: re-examination of the primary documents (where they survive) has been left for those competent to do so.

The church of Lismore incorporates remains of the one-time cathedral dedicated to St Moloc or Moluag, who is recorded in later sources as having founded a community on the island in the sixth century (*OPS* 2.1, 159; Scott 1912; Brown & Duncan 1957, 41; RCAHMS 1974, 156–61). It is said that, at the instance of the saint, the King of Dalriada endowed the island and church of Lismore with various possessions free of every exaction (*OPS* 2.1, 159). The subsequent history of the church before it became the cathedral of Argyll is unknown, but it can be deduced that the site was remembered in the 12th century and that a building may have survived.

As with other Scottish dioceses, the see was directly subject to the Pope in the 13th and 14th centuries; the situation prevailed until it was placed under the metropolitan authority of St Andrew in 1472 and then transferred to Glasgow in 1492 (*Vet Mon* 466, no 852 & 505–6, no 889; Watt 1969, 26).

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ILLUS 1 Achanduin Castle, Lismore, viewed from NNE (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)

THE BISHOPS AND THE SEE BEFORE 1240

That the diocese of Argyll was founded by the subdivision of Dunkeld is well known. Forensic reviews by Cowan (1980, 20–1) and Somerville (1982, App III, 163–5) have established that the division took place after 1183, the date of consecration of John Scot as Bishop of Dunkeld, and before the production of the *Liber Censuum* (Fabre & Duchesne 1889–1910), which was itself compiled between early 1192 and early 1193.

Keith (1755, 169) claimed that the see was on Lismore from the outset and noted that the Bishops of Argyll were generally styled *Episcopi Lismorenses*, a point taken up by Cosmo Innes (*OPS* 2.1, 159). The see was certainly located on Lismore by 1225 and it is probable that the island was the site of the see from the time of its formation (Brown & Duncan 1957, 41; Duncan & Brown 1959, 209: in both papers the authors expressed their hope of ‘publishing elsewhere’ a discussion of the early history of the diocese of Argyll but, unfortunately, this intention has not been fulfilled). Cowan & Easson (1976, 210) emphasized the slender nature of the evidence which Skene (1877, 408) had used as the basis of his theory that the see was initially located near Muckairn on the south side of Loch Etive; they concluded that this view was ‘entirely conjectural’ and based only on ‘the interpretation of the place-name Killespeckerrill as the church of the bishop’, an interpretation which they implicitly reject. Part of the sixth-century monastery may have survived on Lismore in the 12th century but it is unlikely that the remains of the medieval

cathedral as they exist today date from much before 1300 (Brown & Duncan 1957; RCAHMS 1974, 156–61).

Endowments at the time of foundation are not recorded but, on 17 August 1228, Alexander II granted to *Haraldo, episcopo de Argothyl* and his successors three davochs of land at *Culkeffoch* 'whereof we will that the said Bishop and his successors *in ecclesia Lismorensis* should hold' (*Moray Reg* 25, no 32).

Harold, still alive in 1228, died before 1232 (*Paisley Reg* 342; Dowden 1912, 378). The see of Lismore was committed by the Pope to the care of the Bishop of Sodor who appears as *ecclesie Lesmorensis per dominum Papam cure gestor* between 1230 and 1236 (*Paisley Reg*, 135–6; Dowden 1912, 378; Anderson 1922, vol 2, 529, n.3 — cit *CDS* 1, 178, apparently in error; Watt 1969, 26). On 7 July 1236, Pope Gregory IX wrote to the Bishop of Moray that, because of the poverty of the see of Lismore, it had been committed to the charge of the Bishop of Sodor who had prayed to be released of his charge on account of his infirmities. The Bishop of Moray was instructed to release him and to cause the see to be filled by canonical election (Dowden 1912, 378; Watt 1969, 26).

By 1236, the Bishop of Argyll appears to have been granted a quarter of the revenues of some (at least) of the parish churches of his diocese, probably by papal grant designed to remedy the poverty of the see (*Paisley Reg*, 129, 134–5; Cowan 1980, 19). These, presumably modest, payments must have constituted a staple part of the income of the Bishop and were still being paid at the Reformation (*ibid*).

William, Chancellor of Moray, was postulated to the see of Argyll, probably at the close of 1238. On 16 February 1238/9, Pope Gregory IX sent a mandate to the Bishops of Moray, Ross and Caithness, to enquire into the mode of postulation of William to the Bishopric of Lismore, valued at only 25 marks (Dowden 1912, 378; Watt 1969, 26).

In May 1240, Bishop William was granted 14 pennylands in *Lesmor* by *Eugenius*, son of Duncan of Argyll (grant transcribed by Duncan & Brown 1959, App IV; misdated 1251 in *OPS* 2.1, 164 and *RMS*, 2, no 3136(5), where the document is calendared). The lands granted were [one pennyland of] *Barmaray* (possibly Bernera off the south-west of Lismore opposite Achanduin), 2½ pennylands of *Achacendune*, 5 pennylands of *Tyrchulen*, 2 pennylands of *Tyrknanen*, 3 half-pennylands of *Tenga*, 1 pennyland of *Drumchulochir* and 1 pennyland of *Craganas* (names follow Duncan & Brown 1959). There is no mention of a castle or manor at *Achacendune*.

THE BISHOPS AND THE SEE, 1241–99

In 1241, Bishop William was drowned at sea (Dowden 1912, 378; Anderson 1922, vol 2, 529: *Chron Melrose*; Watt 1969, 26). The Bishopric remained vacant for the next 70 years and Duncan & Brown (1959, 209–10) stressed that the long vacancy of the see must have been associated with the attitude of the local Lords of Lorn, the MacDougalls, as patrons of the see. The poverty of the see is undeniable — and is given as the reason for its vacancy — but this should not have been insuperable and lay interference must also have been a factor. The grant of 1240 shows that Ewen of Lorn was not indifferent to the affairs of the diocese which covered so much of his lordship and, in 1243, Alexander II of Scotland granted the church of *Kilican* (Killean) in Kintyre with all its lands and other pertinents to the Bishop of Argyll in response to the poverty of the see (Duncan & Brown 1959, App I: calendared *RMS*, 2, no 3136(1)). That church had, before 1222, been granted lands by Roderick, then Lord of Kintyre, but Roderick or his descendants appear

to have subsequently lost their Kintyre lands (Duncan & Brown 1959, 199–200, App III: calendared *RMS*, 2, no 3136(4)).

Duncan & Brown argued convincingly that, when the Scots fleet sailed into Kerrera Sound in 1249, it was not only to attack the power of Ewen, but also to restore the see of Argyll. Clement, Bishop of Dunblane, was with the King and it can be accepted that the misfortunes of the see were in some way bound up with the intransigence of the lords of Lorn.

During the last part of the vacancy of the see from 1241, it had been under the charge of Clement, Bishop of Dunblane, from 1233 to 1258. A charter of Inchaffray Abbey of c 1247 was sealed with the seal of C[lement] *tempore hujus collacionis curam episcopatus argadie optinentis* (*Inchaffray Charters*, 65). Bishop Clement was presumably at least partly responsible for the action taken about the problems of Lismore at the turn of 1249. On 23 December 1248, Pope Innocent IV sent a mandate to the Bishops of Glasgow and Dunblane stating that he had been informed that the church of Argyll had been suffering the grief of widowhood ‘for seven years or more’. The Pope ordered the Bishops to quash any election they might find to have been attempted contrary to canonical form and to prescribe a fixed time before which the canons of the church of Argyll should provide a Bishop by canonical and concordant election; failing this, the two Bishops were themselves to choose a fit person for the see and, having obtained from him the oath of fealty to the Roman see, to consecrate him (*Vet Mon* 52, no 139; Dowden 1912, 378; Watt 1969, 26). A further papal mandate, dated 2 January 1248–9, proposed that the see should be transferred from ‘the island on which it is now’ to ‘some more secure and accessible place’ to be chosen by the two Bishops, the costs to be met in part by the King (*Vet Mon* 52, no 140; Watt 1969, 28; Cowan & Easson 1976, 216).

Bishop Clement was by the King’s deathbed on Kerrera on 8 July 1249 when he gave another small endowment to the see of Lismore; this time it was the church of Kilbride in Lorn, near modern Oban (Duncan & Brown 1959, App II: calendared *RMS*, 2, no 3136(2); Watt 1969, 28). Duncan & Brown, who discuss the charter (*op cit*, 210), suggest that its brevity is a result of the confused circumstances of the day and the state of the King’s health. The charter was witnessed by Bishop Clement. Alexander may have also attempted to found a cell of the Cistercian abbey of Coupar Angus on Kerrera at the same time but this foundation appears to have been abortive (Cowan & Easson 1976, 82).

Alexander’s expedition to Lorn does seem to have resulted in the appointment of a Bishop. On 27 September 1250, Alan, ‘elect of Argyll’, executed, with William de Bondington, Bishop of Glasgow, a ‘kind of “Inspeximus”’ of the early charters of Paisley (*Paisley Reg* 4–5 and 134; Dowden 1912, 379; Watt 1969, 26). Alan had apparently been consecrated by 27 September 1253 as he was mentioned on that day as Bishop of Argyll (*Paisley Reg*, 129–30; Watt 1969, 26). Later Bishops succeeded in the see without vacancies of inordinate length even though the cathedral remained on Lismore until the Reformation and the see was not noticeably better endowed. Duncan & Brown (1959, 209–10) suggest that this confirms the view that the lords of Argyll had been partly responsible for the previous vacancies in the see and that the grant of Kilbride church by Alexander was part of a project to move the cathedral onto the mainland, partly at the King’s expense, as a means of reducing the MacDougall influence. However, this argument is not wholly convincing as the influence of the lords of Argyll would hardly have been less at Kilbride, especially as Dunstaffnage Castle had been ascribed to the second quarter of the 13th century (RCAHMS 1974, 210), that is, before Alexander’s ill-fated expedition. That the island territories were still being disputed with the Norse also seems to provide little cause as Alexander appears to have regarded Lismore as an undisputed part of his Kingdom (*in regno Scocie* — *RMS*, 2, no 3136(5); Duncan & Brown 1959, App IV).

Bishop Alan was still alive on 2 February 1261/2 (*Paisley Reg*, 130) but died during that year (Anderson 1922, 2, 604: *Chron Melrose*). Laurence de Ergadia, a Dominican and possibly a MacDougall (Sellar 1986, 13), was elected in immediate succession to Alan (Dowden 1912, 379; Anderson 1922, 2, 604–5: *Chron Melrose*) on a mandate to the Bishops of St Andrew and Dunkeld for confirmation and consecration, dated 31 March 1264 (Watt 1969, 26). Laurence is mentioned as Bishop on 20 June 1268 (*Dryburgh Liber* 7, no 11) and was still alive in October 1299 (*Paisley Reg* 131) but must have died soon after.

The diocese of Argyll was at this time so poor that the papal taxation recorded in *Bagimond's Roll* notes a single entry for the whole diocese of £34 12s in the first year and £34 12s 1d in the second; this can be compared with Dunkeld where the Bishop himself was taxed at 100 marks (Dunlop 1939, 49, 53 & 68).

It has been necessary to rehearse the history of the see and its Bishops to the 1290s in as much of the slender detail as possible in order to establish whether or not either the see or the Bishop was at any time wealthy enough to have been the likely builder of the castle of Achanduin. It would seem clear that neither was the case. Archaeological excavation indicated a probable construction date in the 1290s (Turner, in prep), a time when the under-endowed see was held by a Dominican possibly related to the MacDougalls of Argyll. It remains to consider the evidence for connection between the castle and the bishopric in the first half of the 14th century.

THE BISHOPS AND THE SEE, 1300–43

Andrew, apparently a friar, was consecrated Bishop in 1301 (*Vet Mon* 169, no 368; Dowden 1912, 379–80).

By a deed dated at *Achichendone* on 10 September 1304, *Eugenil de Ergadia*, Lord of Lorn, of *Menderaloch* and of *Lesmor*, granted to Bishop Andrew for 'the maintenance of the episcopal table', 5½ pennylands in the island of *Lesmore* of his land next to the castle or manor of *Achychendone*, namely the pennyland called *Pennyng-Scanghache*, the pennyland called *Tyrfeirlake*, the two pennylands of *Achychnahunsene* and the 1½ pennylands of *Geyle* (*RMS*, 2, no 3136(6)). This, the first documentary reference to Achanduin Castle, has been taken as indicating that the castle belonged to the Bishops but, in fact, it more convincingly appears to indicate that the castle was in the hands of 'Ewen' at this time as it is more likely that a charter would be dated at the granter's residence than at the grantee's (RCAHMS 1974, 171, states that *RMS*, 2, no 3136, refers to 'the Bishop's castle', but *RMS* prints '*5½ denariatus sive nummatus terre in insula de Lesmore de terra sua propiquiori castro seu manerio de Achychendone*'). The deed also implies that the 2½ pennylands of *Achacendune* granted to the Bishop in 1240 were not the whole of the lands of Achanduin.

The Battle of Brander and the fall of Dunstaffnage in 1308 led to the forfeiture and exile of Alexander, Lord of Argyll, and his son, John. The Bishop of Argyll seems to have gone with them, possibly exiled as a supporter of Balliol and the English. 'Bishop Andrew' had a protection from the King of England on 12 April 1310 (*CDS*, 3, 27, no 141) and, also in 1310, he granted indulgences to visitors to Durham Cathedral (Fowler 1903, 156). 'Friar Andrew, Bishop of Argyll', *en route* for Romsey in Hampshire, received a prest of 100 shillings from the King of England for his expenses on 26 December 1310 (*CDS*, 3, 34, no 183) and, on 14 March 1313/14, a prest of 10 marks (*ibid*, 68, no 355). Bishop Andrew is described as 'living in England at the King's charge'. On the same day, 'Sir John of Argyll', going to the Irish ports on the English King's affairs, received a prest for his own and his men at arms' wages of 100 marks (*ibid*). Bishop Andrew's apparent exile in England with John of Lorn seems to suggest a close and continuing

relationship with the house of Argyll, a relationship approaching dependence or even subservience. Little, seemingly, had changed since the 1240s.

That the cathedral of Lismore continued to function — or, at least, was functioning again by the more settled times of 1314 — is surely indicated by the fact that, in that year, one Gilaspec Maclauchlan of Argyll, in a grant to the Friars Preachers of Glasgow from the *fermes* of his land, became bound in the event of his failure in payment to give one mark sterling to the fabric of the cathedral church of Argyll (*OPS*, 2.1, 160). Bishop Andrew witnessed donations to the Grey Friars of Glasgow in 1314 and 1322 (Keith 1755, 170). Andrew was still Bishop of Argyll on 18 November 1327 (*Paisley Reg*, 137) and his death at the close of 1341 or early 1342 may be inferred from the Pope's letter to Bishop Martin (*Vet Mon*, 283, no 564; Dowden 1912, 380).

By another deed allegedly dated at *Acidune* on 10 September 1334, Ewin, Lord of Lorn, granted to Andrew, Bishop of Argyll, £10 lands in the Isle of Lismore called *Frakersek* (Frakasaig), *Craiginch* and *Achindune* (*OPS*, 2.2, 828 — cit 'a paper at Taymouth'). The curious similarities in the reported documents of 1304 and 1334 attract comment. The 'paper at Taymouth' was clearly not an original charter and its wording suggests that it was not even a later copy. Most of the originals or copies of pre-16th century items cited in *Origines Parochiales Scotiae* can be identified in the relevant Scottish Record Office inventory (SRO GD112). As *OPS*, 2.2 (828, n7) appears to refer to the same source for a grant to the Bishop of Argyll in 1447, the 'paper' may have been a list of grants to the Church, possibly taken from the Earl of Argyll's muniments (cf *OPS*, 2.2, 823, n5) in the early 17th century. The 'paper' was clearly not an original charter and its wording suggests that it was not even a later copy. Both documents are reported as being dated 10 September and both refer to a 'Ewin' of the House of Argyll.

TABLE 1

Comparisons between reported grants of 1304 and 1334

1304 (<i>RMS</i> , 2)	1334 (<i>OPS</i> , 2.2)
Ewin to Bishop Andrew at <i>Achichendone</i>	Ewin to Bishop Andrew at <i>Acidune</i>
5½ pennylands next to the castle or manor of <i>Achychendone</i>	£10 lands
ie lands of or at:	
<i>Pennyng-Scanhach</i>	<i>Frakersek</i>
<i>Tyrfeirlake</i>	<i>Craiginch</i>
<i>Achychnahunsene</i>	<i>Achindune</i>
<i>Geyle</i>	

Apart from the mention of Achanduin, the lands listed in the documents do seem to be different and the two deeds might be accepted as distinct. However, the coincidence of granter, place and date (apart from one digit) between the two charters suggests that the originals were actually granted on the same day with the year miscopied in the 'paper'.

Until David Sellar's article of 1986, the 'Ewin' of the documents was unidentified. The 'Lord of Lorn' making grants in 1304 ought to have been Alexander of Argyll (*de Ergadia*) but his son was known as 'John of Lorn' and 'Ewin' could be an error for John. Even if this is accepted, however, John/Ewin should hardly be described as 'of Argyll', as he is in the grant. Sellar (1986, 6) has pointed out that John of Lorn had a son, Ewen, older than his brother Alan whose progeny actually succeeded. 'Oweyn', son of John of Argyll, was mentioned as being sent to the household of the Prince of Wales (soon to be Edward II) in 1306 (*CDS*, 2, no 1830), and, in the same year, Ewen also appears in the English records as *Audoenus Darguil* (*CDS*, 4, 489; cf *CDS*, 5, 198; Sellar 1986, 6). *Audoenu Darguil* was at Kincardine in the Mearns with the Prince of Wales in September 1306 and lost a horse (*CDS*, 5, 203). Sellar (*ibid*) suggests a possible identity

between this Ewen and that of the alleged 1334 document and suggests that he survived to regain his Scottish lands in the wake of Edward Balliol. But Sellar also admits that this may merely be another instance of confusion between the names Ewen and John and that the 1334 reference may be to Ewen's nephew John, grandson of the John of Lorn of Bruce's day.

Sellar (1986, 5) tells us that the first certain appearance of this John of Lorn, son of Alan, is in 1338 as *Johannes de Ergadia dominus de Lorn* and, as *Johannes de Larin Dominus Ergadie*, he entered into an indenture with John of the Isles in 1354 (MacPhail 1914–34, vol 1, 75–6 & vol 2, 147–8, 148 n1; Sellar 1986, 5). John died, leaving only two daughters to inherit his lands and through whom the lordship of Lorn passed to the Stewart lords of Lorn (RCAHMS 1974, 197–8; Sellar 1986, 5). Sellar (1986, 5–9) also concludes that John had an illegitimate son, Alan, through whom the chieftainship of the MacDougalls descended.

Sellar (1986, 17, n 15) further suggests that, while there may be two grants, the 'paper at Taymouth' cited by Cosmo Innes may have confused them. The 1304 date rests on a 1507 royal confirmation in which the charter is recited verbatim and is only open to challenge if one assumes that the chancery clerk has omitted *tricesimo* when copying it. The 1334 date rests solely on a 19th-century secondary source, citing a now unidentified piece of paper, probably of early 17th-century date.

The seemingly trivial matter of the two grants and their date is of some importance with respect to the history of Achanduin Castle. The *RMS* entry supplies the first documentary reference to the castle but it also seems to imply that the castle was actually that of the 'Lord of Lorn' who was generously(?) granting some of his nearby lands to the Bishop (the poverty of the see of Argyll has been well established).

EPILOGUE: THE BISHOP AND ACHANDUIN IN 1452

The MacDougalls were forfeit in 1308 and it is notable that, in all the lists of redistributed lands of the lordship of the MacDougalls, Lismore is never once mentioned. It is possible, therefore, that, while most of their property was stripped from them, the family were allowed to retain Lismore. This leads to the possibility that Alexander, John and 'Oweyn' may not have been formally exiled but sought asylum at their own discretion at the English court, along with their 'personal' Bishop.

The archaeological evidence (Turner, in prep) suggests that there was little occupation of Achanduin Castle from c 1400 to comparatively modern times. It is believed that the MacDougalls returned to mainland Lorn and built Dunollie Castle following the grant in 1451 by John Stewart, Lord of Lorn, of 'Dunolly' and other lands to *John Alani de Lorn nominato Mak Dowil* (John Maol) and his son (Sellar 1986, 8: John Maol was recognized as chief of the MacDougalls). The MacDougalls apparently abandoned Achanduin some time before this. The Bishop of Argyll seems to have had possession of Achanduin Castle itself in 1452 and for a short time took up occupation (Thomson 1819, 14–15; 1977 50–1). It can be deduced that Achanduin Castle had probably been given to the Bishopric at an earlier date but the Bishops did not find much use for it. The events of 1452 certainly seem to imply that the Bishop was an infrequent visitor to Lismore.

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