

The Green Man of Cercles

DAOLAS ABBEY

These early examples of stone masks are on the fountain in the cloister at Daolas (Douglas) Abbey, in Brittany :



Fig 1 : Five of the ten heads on Daolas Cloister Fountain

These heads are pre-Romanesque, from the Xth or XIth century. They are not spitting foliage but real water.

Fig 2 : Fountain detail

Although it has been made into a museum and thoroughly commercialised, Daolas remains a fascinating place, well worth a visit. Among the surprising items to be found in the park is this mysterious little statue :



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Fig 3 : Enigmatic statue

The notice by it reads : “Enigmatic personage. Date unknown. Of very primitive workmanship, it represents masculine and feminine fertility at the same time. It might be a remnant of Druidical religion practised by the Abbey’s spring.”

Fig 4 : Enigmatic statue notice

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Fig 5 : Montebourg Font

This font from Montebourg, Normandy, seems like a “missing link” between the stark granite masks of Brittany and the Masque Feuillu that we have come to know as the Green Man. Note the Nordic appearance of the sculpture : we are still under the Viking influence of the Normans’ ancestors. Click here :

http://www.mondes-normands.caen.fr/france/Patrimoine_architectural/Normandie/Cotentin/montebourg/1403Montebourg/

for a brief article on this very rare font.

(NB – mondes-normands can also be obtained in English



Next to the “enigmatic statue” is the spring and a shrine built by monks of more recent times

Fig 6 : The Shrine

housing a statue of the Virgin and Child

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Fig 7 : The Virgin Mary & Child

The statue of the Virgin and Child is hardly less primitive than that of the “petit bonhomme”, while inside the shrine are some naïve polychrome statues made of wood in the Baroque period :

Fig 8 : Saint Nicholas

I particularly like this one of St Nicholas on his reindeer.



The green-painted gates of the shrine are decorated with more “Green Men” of a similar period, but remind us of the cult of the triple head or trinity of gods.

Fig 9 : Three GM on door

Daolas generally seems to illustrate the idea that many former Druids slipped into becoming Christian monks with relative ease.

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(To be continued)

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