

# Donegal Annual

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# CONTENTS

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**Front cover:** Burt Castle, Photo *John M. Beattie*

**Inside front cover:** Map of Donegal

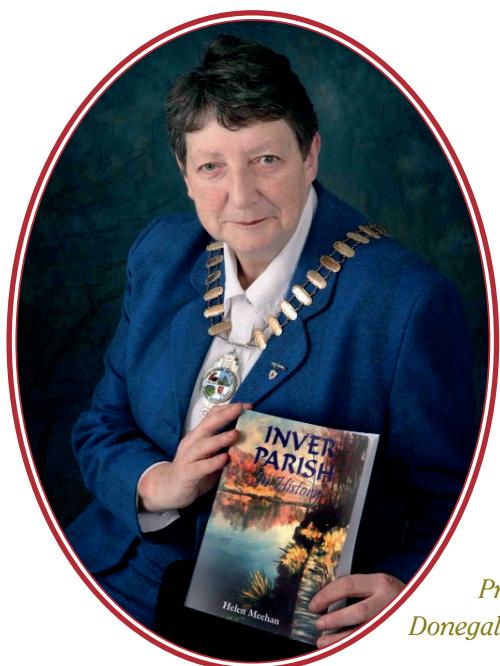
**Back cover:** Rev. William Chichester, Rector of Clonmany, Co. Donegal, courtesy of the Hon. Patrick O'Neill; copied from original in Shane's Castle by Maria Blackwood-Price, Redford Rectory, Culdaff, courtesy of the Hon. Patrick O'Neill

**Inside back cover:** Ballyshannon

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<b>President Donegal Historical Society.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Donegal and Antrim Link : O'Neill and Chichester.....</b>	<i>The Hon. Mrs. Fionn Morgan</i> 6
<b>Commemorating the Anniversary of the Flight of the Earls in Rathmullan.Á. Ní Dhuibhne</b>	34
<b>The Chieftain.....</b>	<i>Anon</i> 44
<b>Dirge for Sir Cahir O'Doherty .....</b>	<i>Anon</i> 45
<b>O'Dogarty Addendum .....</b>	<i>Dr. Jerrold Casway</i> 48
<b>Niall Garbh O'Donnell and the Rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Doherty .....</b>	<i>David Finnegan</i> 60
<b>1608 The Collapse of Traditional Gaelic Lordship in Co. Donegal ...</b>	<i>Dr. Darren McGgettigan</i> 83
<b>A Tale of Two Stones.....</b>	<i>Belinda Mahaffy</i> 98
<b>The Adairs of Donegal : Towards a Trans-Atlantic Game Plan .....</b>	<i>Dr. Robert Spiegelman</i> 102
<b>Mary Rosalie Boyd South African Poet .....</b>	<i>May McClintock</i> 119
<b>The Letterkenny Connection for Patricia Rosalie Boyd .....</b>	<i>Brian Brooke Boyd</i> 127
<b>The Fianna in the Blue Stacks .....</b>	<i>Helen Meehan</i> 130
<b>Philip MacDevitt Bishop of Derry 1766-97.....</b>	<i>Rev. Philip Donnelly</i> 142
<b>Captain Henry Gallaugher DSO .....</b>	<i>Col. Declan O'Carroll (Retd.)</i> 164
<b>A Unique Mummers' Play from North Donegal.....</b>	<i>Dr. Alan Gailey</i> 186
<b>Handley Air Crash in 1943 in East Inishowen .....</b>	<i>Joe O'Loughlin</i> 197
<b>The Civil War in Donegal 1922-23 Some Observations .....</b>	<i>Dr. Desmond Murphy</i> 207
<b>Michael Davitt Remembered .....</b>	<i>Bernard O'Hara</i> 213
<b>VEC Minutes Archived .....</b>	<i>Sandra Buchanan</i> 219
<b>Book Reviews.....</b>	220
<b>Donegal Studies 2007 .....</b>	<i>Eileen Burgess</i> 227
<b>Past Presidents.....</b>	239
<b>Proceedings of the Society.....</b>	<i>Anthony Begley</i> 240
<b>Officers.....</b>	245
<b>Schools' Competitions .....</b>	<i>Patrick Shallow</i> 246
<b>List of Members.....</b>	247
<b>Calendar of Events 2008.....</b>	256

## HELEN MEEHAN



*President, County  
Donegal Historical Society*

Helen Meehan (née Montgomery) was born in Ballybrollaghan, Frosses. Educated at Frosses N.S., Coláiste Bhríde, Falcarragh, and Carysfort College, she graduated as a Primary Teacher in 1957 and taught in a Loreto Convent School in Dublin until appointed to Frosses in May 1960 where she taught until retirement in September 1998. Inheriting her interest in history, genealogy and folklore from her late father, Robert, she joined the Donegal Historical Society in 1960. She encouraged pupils to enter the Society's schools' competitions, in which they excelled and competitions run by the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. Helen has conducted many field days - the most memorable being in April 2002, the centenary commemoration of Ethna Carbery's death. A tour guide for visitors to the Donegal Bay area, she has delivered lectures at the Society's seminars, Heritage Week events, Ulster-Scots conferences, and Flight of the Earls commemorations. A regular contributor to *Donegal Annual*, her work appears in *Béaloideas* (U.C.D.), *Due North* (Federation of Ulster Local Studies, Belfast), *Clan Montgomery Journal* (USA), *Spark* (Enniskillen) and publications commemorating school reunions and church centenaries, such as the bi-centenary book of St. John's Church of Ireland, Inver (2007). In November 2005, Helen published *Inver Parish in History*. Other interests include travel, philately and history of art; for relaxation she does embroidery (sprigging). Active in the P.T.A.A. (Pioneers), she is the Diocesan Quiz Officer and undertakes fundraising for Third World countries. Residing in Coolum, Mountcharles, Helen is married to John and they have four grown-up children.

## COUNTY DONEGAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The *Donegal Annual* is the Journal of County Donegal Historical Society which was founded by JCT MacDonagh on 20 December 1946. The objective of the Society is to record and preserve the history of the county.

The Editor invites articles and reviews relating to the history and folklore of Donegal. Manuscripts may be submitted to the Editor by email and should include bibliographic references and a short biography of the author. Authors are invited to submit new publications for review.

The Society has a Museum at Rosnowlagh with the co-operation of the Franciscan community. Four competitions are organized for schools annually, the Harley-MacDonagh Competition, the Father Fitzgerald Memorial Competition, the Emerson Award and the Cecil King Competition.

Lectures, field days and excursions are organized. There are over 800 members worldwide. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in history. An application form may be downloaded from our website [www.donegalhistory.com](http://www.donegalhistory.com). Membership for the current year is €20 and payment should be sent to Frank Shovlin, Waterloo Place, Donegal Town. Back issues are available from the Secretary.

The Society is a member of the Federation of Ulster Local Studies, which was established on the initiative of the Society in 1974.

The articles are the work of their respective authors and while the Editorial Board seeks to ensure that all information contained in the articles is accurate, it is not responsible or liable for the contents of any article.

## DONEGAL AND ANTRIM LINK : O'NEILL AND CHICHESTER

*The Hon. Mrs. Fionn Morgan*



*Randalstown Gate, built in the time of Charles, Henry St. John, first Earl O'Neill (1779-1841) bearing his arms.*

The proceedings from the McGlinchey Summer School 2000 are subtitled: *Aspects of Church History in Inishowen and the North West*. This issue, 3, of the Summer School had been passed on to me by my brother, Lord O'Neill of Shane's Castle.

It was not, however, Conall Byrne's submission: *History of the Church in Clonmany Parish* which first alerted me to the fact that in the churchyard of St Columba's I would find a grave covered with an inscribed stone telling me that this was the last resting place of one, Mary O'Neill, only child of Henry O'Neill of Shane's Castle.

No, the reason that I knew about this grave was because, in an old bulging scrapbook, at Shane's Castle, I had found an early 20th Century cutting from *The Belfast Telegraph* dated 21.2.23. This scrapbook was the work of my great-aunt, Anne O'Neill. (1848-

1934). She was the daughter of the Revd William Chichester, who, in 1855 had inherited, rather to his surprise, Shane's Castle, its domain and its great estate. At the time he was a prebend of St Michael's, Dublin with a stall in Christ Church Cathedral.



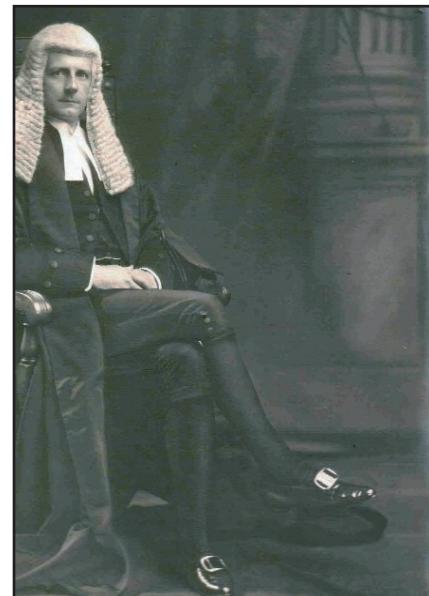
*Anne O'Neill, only daughter of Rev. William, Lord O'Neill at Tullymore Lodge with her dog Fido.*

Anne O'Neill had been the victim of an ambitious step-mother. When Anne's mother, the gentle Henrietta Torrens, the Rev<sup>d</sup> William's first wife, died too young, he married her first cousin, Elizabeth Grace Torrens, always known in the family, as E.G. Elizabeth had refused to countenance a marriage between her step-daughter and the land agent of a neighbouring estate, a Mr McClintock, which is odd because he was nothing if not a gentleman. His name continues to appear in the Shane's Castle Visitor's Book. But after her father's death in 1883, Anne was no longer there. She had removed, together with her bachelor brother Robert, to Tullymore Lodge in Broughshane. This town was named for the same Shane O'Neill who gave his name to Shane's Castle. Anne took the scrapbook, which might not otherwise have survived, with her: The date of that *Belfast Telegraph* cutting: 21.2.1923 is significant.

## THE BURNING OF SHANE'S CASTLE, CO ANTRIM, 1922

The article in the newspaper is headed: *Donegal & Antrim Link: O'Neill and Chichester*. From 1921 until 1929 Hugh O'Neill of Cleggan Lodge, Broughshane had represented Co. Antrim in the first Parliament of Northern Ireland. He was also its first Speaker. On 20 May 1922 he was, with his wife Sylvia, (Sandeman) in Belfast. This is what he wrote in his diary

A terrible tragedy happened in the early morning of May 20th. Shane's Castle was burnt down by Sinn Féin raiders. I heard the news here in Belfast at about 7am and Sylvia and I left for Shane's Castle at 8.30. When we arrived it was practically all over and the whole of our part of the dwelling house as far as the pantry completely destroyed.



*Hugh O'Neill, Stormont's first Speaker*

Many people thought that the reason that Shane's Castle was singled out for destruction was precisely because Hugh O'Neill, my great-uncle, was Stormont's first Speaker. My grandfather had been killed in action on 6 November 1914. So, in the minority of my father, another Shane O'Neill, Stormont's Speaker was the nominal head of the family. (My father was killed in 1944 so it was my aunt, Midi Gascoigne, mother of the writer and broadcaster, Bamber Gascoigne, who told me how much her Uncle Hugh had done for the family in *loco parentis*). Hugh O'Neill ends his diary entry regarding the fire:

I forgot to mention that the raiders at Shane's Castle asked particularly for me, and if I had been there at the time (and it was only chance that I was not) I should probably have been shot.

The future of Ireland was unsettled in 1923 when J.J.B - I have asked the Central Library in Belfast to try to identify the writer who uses only initials - visited Clonmany, where eighty-four years later, in 2007, I attended the 10th McGlinchey Summer School. He wrote:

Clonmany in Inishowen bounded, on the north by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the west by Lough Swilly, has at present the distinction of being one of the few spots in the Free State where a British Force is maintained under the terms of the Treaty

The Anglo-Irish Treaty had been signed in London on the 6th December 1921. It established the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth. The refusal of a large section of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. to accept the settlement laid the foundations for the civil war that followed six months later. The attack on Shane's Castle was part of the subsequent troubles. It was not the troubles which interested J.J.B when he visited Clonmany:

On the occasion of my visit I observed on the north side of the church two horizontal tombstones very much mossgrown and almost covered with leaves off the trees which enveloped the churchyard. With some difficulty I was able to decipher the following inscriptions:

*Underneath this stone  
Lie the remains of  
Mrs Mary Chichester  
Wife of the Revd Arthur Chichester  
& only daughter of  
Henry O'Neill Esq  
of Shane's Castle  
who died on the 12th May 1786  
aged 66 years  
also  
Those of her son the Revd Dr  
William Chichester  
Who was for many years  
Rector of the parish of Clonmany  
and who  
To the great regret of his relations, his friends and his parishioners  
Departed this life on  
31st day of August 1815 aged 72 years*



*The Rev. Dr. William Chichester, LL.D., of Broughshane, Co. Antrim & Clonmany, Co. Donegal, who died on 31 August 1815. The original picture was burned in 1922. This copy was made by Maria Blackwood-Price, related to the Chichesters via her grandfather, the Ven. Townley Blackwood-Price. (This watercolour now belongs to the Hon. Patrick O'Neill, son of the Rt. Hon. Terence O'Neill, former Prime Minister of Northern Ireland 1963-69)*

The Rev<sup>d</sup> William does look amiable in this picture. It is easy to believe that his relations, his friends and his parishioners did regret his departure from this life. Charlie McGlinchey, after whom the McGlinchey School is named, tells us in *The Last of the Name* that he was equally loved by the Catholics in the parish and that Father Shiels, Catholic priest in Clonmany in the Rev<sup>d</sup> William's time, liked to put it about that the Rev<sup>d</sup> William, just before his death, had "gone over" and joined the Catholic majority in the parish.

So how was it that this most Irish, Catholic parish sustained a Protestant clergyman? The 1659 census shows that the parishioners of Clonmany numbered 271, and that one, Mr Arthur Leyning, was an English Protestant.

In antiquity, so often once called the mists of time, and now more frequently called pre-history, the Úi Neill, the dynastic family prominent in Ireland north and south, were dominant in Inishowen. This was the demi-island of Owen or Eoghan, one of the fourteen sons of Niall Naoighiallach, Niall of the Nine Hostages, whose historic existence is supported by DNA evidence. This was "music to my ears" as, in a paper on Shane MacBrian O'Neill, the Shane who gave his name to Shane's Castle, I wrote, "Strictly speaking, Niall of the Nine Hostages is considered pre-historic, but it is hard to consider someone pre-historic who is said to have lived circa 400 A.D, a possible contemporary of Palladius, appointed Bishop of "the Irish who believe in Christ" in A.D. 431 by Pope Celestine, an undisputed fact recorded at the time by Prosper of Aquitaine." The Annals record Niall as being King *in* Ireland - at this date no-one would have been King of all Ireland - from 379 to 405 A.D which would, admittedly, make him a generation older than Palladius. If place names may be given in evidence, Niall's son, Owen, gave his name, not only to Inishowen, but also to Tyrone, the land (*tír*) of Owen.

By the sixteenth century, although there may have been the occasional O'Neill about - the modern O'Neill surname derives, as many readers will know, from Niall Glúndubh, Niall Blackknee- the dominant family in Inishowen were the O'Dohertys. (During my recent visit to the peninsula, I met no-one local with the name O'Neill). The story of Cahir O'Doherty is a sad one. He is referred to as the *Queen's O'Doherty*: the Queen, of course, being Elizabeth 1st. He had been, at a tender age, knighted. After all he had been foreman of the jury which, after the Flight of the Earls, found "the Great O'Neill" guilty of treason in January 1608.

It was but three months later in that same year, 1608, that the crass behaviour of Sir George Paulet, the English governor of Derry, led to O'Doherty's April Rebellion. Nothing new in that. Boudicca's husband had been the Roman's Briton, but after his death, their crass behaviour led to her, initially so successful, short-lived rebellion. Sir Cahir's rebellion lasted a mere three months. At barely 22 years of age, in July 1608, Sir Cahir O'Doherty was shot dead at Kilmacrenan.

If that was his fate, what was to be the fate of Inishowen? The Romans were not slow to overrun the lands of the Iceni, killing, burning and spoiling as they went. Nor were they slow to grant these lands to their soldiers: nothing new either in rewarding soldiers with

grants of land. In Ireland in 1608 one soldier was supreme. He had already been Ireland's Lord Deputy for three years. His name was Arthur Chichester.

Arthur Chichester's nephew, Sir Faithfull Fortescue, left an account of his uncle which was privately printed by the Chiswick Press in 1858. "He was only a Gramer Schollar," wrote Sir Faithfull Fortescue, "and being very active, strong and ingeinous, tooke affection to a millitary course." Indeed, he did: "he had the command of one of the Queen's ships with 500 men in Sir Francis Drake's last voyage to the West Indies" ..... "he was Sergeant Major General to the Queen's army in Picardy ..... and at the siege of Ameons (sic) was shott in the shoulder, and for his courageous good service then (and in those warrs) was Knighted by King Henry IV of France." No surprise then that Chichester's first Irish appointment, given to him by Lord Lieutenant Mountjoy who had known him in the Low Countries, was "Sergeant Major General of the Army".

Sir Faithfull Fortescue revered his uncle. Well, you may say, blood is thicker than water. But not all uncles, or indeed aunts, are revered by their families. Outside the family, this uncle has a rather different reputation. Polly Devlin, who was guest of honour at the O'Neill Summer School 2006, sent me a postcard printed with an extract from her book *All of us There* naming Chichester a villain. This was based on an incident related in Fynes Moryson's account of the Nine Years War. Moryson was Mountjoy's secretary and could be deemed a biased witness. It was Chichester himself, recounting his exploits in his decked barque, a ship of 30 tons, who sent this well-known despatch (May 1601) to Sir Robert Cecil, not yet Lord Salisbury:

We have killed, burnt and spoiled all along the Lough (Lough Neagh, which was for a time to be called Lough Chichester) within four miles of Dungannon, from whence we returned hither yesterday; in which journeys we have killed above one hundred people of all sorts, besides such as we burnt, how many I know not. We spare none of what quality or sex soever and it hath bred much terror in the people.

To read this now breeds in us not so much terror as revulsion. No wonder that the Dublin-born military historian, journalist and Fellow of All Souls, Cyril Falls, in the *Birth of Ulster*, (1936) wrote: "While to uninstructed Irish Nationalists, Cromwell is the English villain of Irish history, the better-read reserve that place for Chichester". A scorched earth policy is hard to defend. It was, again, nothing new. The "African" Roman Emperor

Septimus Severus, buried in York, carried out just such a policy in the north of England. But a precedent is not a defence.

When I spoke at the McGlinchey Summer School I attempted the defence that Chichester was but a soldier carrying out orders. I now think this defence will not do. The orders need not have been carried out with such ferocity. Nicholas Canny in the *Elizabethan Conquest* says that in dealing with the native Irish population they [the English] were absolved from all normal ethical restraint. John McGurk has written an article on this theme: "The Pacification of Ulster 1601-1603" which appears in a book recently published by Four Courts Press called *Age of Atrocity*.<sup>1</sup>

In his youth Chichester himself had committed an indiscretion. He had assaulted a Royal Purveyor and, ironically enough, had escaped the long arm of the law by hiding-out in Dublin. Long since pardoned for that offence, knighted by the King of France and promoted from Governor of Carrickfergus to Lord Deputy of All Ireland, in England respected by his patron Salisbury and the Lords of the Council, who was better placed than Sir Arthur Chichester to receive the spoils of Inishowen?

## ARTHUR CHICHESTER, RANDALSTOWN

The Arthur Chichester who married Mary O'Neill of Shane's Castle was not a soldier. He was a clergyman and the son of a clergyman. He had been a curate in Randalstown. Until the 1801 Act of Union, Randalstown - named by Rose O'Neill for her husband, Randal, 1st Marquess of Antrim - had been, politically, in the pocket of the O'Neills. Elections, it has been said, were decided in the drawing-room of Shane's Castle. Young Arthur, however, did not find his bride in the ancient stronghold of the O'Neills on the banks of Lough Neagh, a lough no longer bearing his family name.

Henry, Mary's father, was the son of the then "incumbent" of Shane's Castle, who was always known as French John O'Neill. He had spent much time as a young man in Paris and thus gained the appellative. If this conjures up the idea of a gilded youth on a Grand Tour nothing could be further from the truth. He was in trade. It would have seemed unlikely that "Little John of the Largy", as he was once known, would have ended up at the castle, though he was the grandson of Felim, third son of Shane MacBrian of Shane's Castle. Shane's granddaughter, Rose O'Neill, heiress to the castle (who had married, as

his second wife, the 1st Marquess of Antrim), left no children. She had named “Little John” in her will; but two other cousins were named before him. When these two, Cormac and Charles, also died childless, French John, smiling to himself for he had three sons and seven daughters, returned to Ireland prosperous from the wool trade in which he had been engaged in France, took up residence at Dunmore, north west of Randalstown, and waited for his inheritance.

## HENRY O'NEILL

Henry O'Neill, Mary's father, was the eldest of French John's three sons. From the evidence we have, it would seem that French John never much cared for his eldest son. This is the letter he wrote from Dunmore on 22 March 1711. The letter was addressed to Joshua Dawson Esq., Dublin Castle:

Dear Brother, - I am now two letters in your debt, occasioned by some disorders and the plague of the farmers. I was surprised when you writ you had sent Harry (Henry) a flute, for he deserves not the least favour from any friende; but I was much more surprised when my wife asked the person that brought it how he came to see you, he towld her he carried a letter from Harry to you, which no doubt was to send him a flute, and is such a piece of impudence that none but him could be guilty of; when I challenged him for it he made such lame excuses, that if some company had not prevented me, he should have felt the weight of my arm as much as ever he did. I am so ashamed of this action of his that I know not what to say, but I will not forget it to the rogue, and he shall be sure of my resentment.....

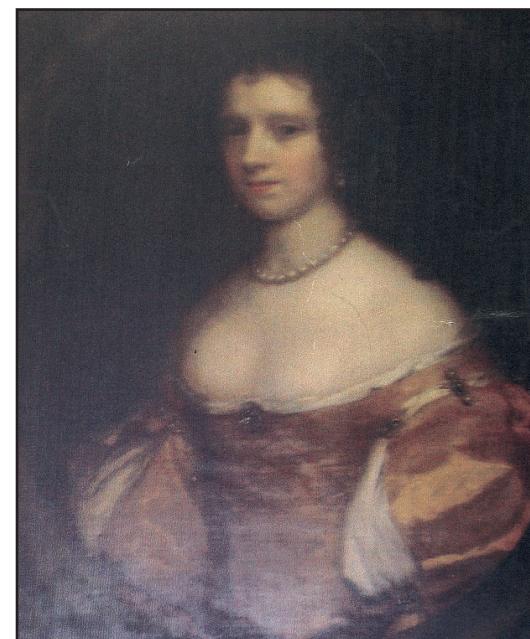
I am, dear brother, yours most affectionately,

John O'Neill

It has to be said that young Henry's letter to Joshua Dawson was impudent. It starts: “My brother Charles and Tatty give their duty to you, and a great many thanks for their fine swords, and I am mightily obliged to you for forgetting me.” It ends, “Pray send me a voice flute, if there be any in Dublin, by the next post.”<sup>2</sup> Charles and Tatty were his brothers. Tatty, presumably being a family shortening of the youngest boy's name, Clotworthy, a name that sounds a little ridiculous to a modern ear but resounded well in Antrim. Captain Hugh Clotworthy had served at Carrickfergus with Chichester and his name

became a family name of the Viscounts Massereene, Lords of Antrim and neighbours of the O'Neills for three hundred years or more until Antrim Castle was burnt down but a few nights after Shane's Castle when, unlike the O'Neills, the Massereenes jumped ship and left Ireland; but then they were immigrants not, like the O'Neills, “racy of the soil”.<sup>3</sup>

The man to whom Henry wrote his impudent letter may have been family - his son was married to one of French John's many daughters - but Joshua Dawson was not a man to be trifled with. He was Chief Secretary to the Lords Justice. In addition to having influence in the corridors of Dublin Castle he had dealt shrewdly in Dublin property to which the name Dawson Street bears witness. Furthermore, the Mansion House in Dawson Street had been his own private family home, built to his specifications in 1710. Only five years later, but presumably at a profit, he sold the house and gardens to Dublin Corporation for £3,500 + 40s per annum and “a loaf of double refined sugar which was to be paid to the Dawsons every Christmas”<sup>4</sup>, a Christmas they would be having, not in Co Dublin but in Co Londonderry, at Moyola Park, where to this day hangs a portrait of Jane O'Neill married to Arthur Dawson, Joshua Dawson's eldest son.



Jane (O'Neill) Dawson, 1739

It may seem, because of Joshua Dawson's position, that there was an element of calculation about John O'Neill's wish that his son, Henry, should not give offence. This would be unfair. O'Neill's letters are familial, equal to equal, and not remotely grovelling. When the time came for O'Neill to note Dawson's death, as was his custom with friends and relations, he wrote of his "kind, dear friend" who died at Castle Dawson in 1724.

French John seems to have been something of a character. He was said to have worn his hair in the old Irish fashion of the glib: "a thick mass of hair worn on the forehead and sometimes drawn down over the eyes." Not only would this have been long outmoded, but since 1537 (28. Henry VIII c5) it had been forbidden.<sup>5</sup> His predecessor in the castle, an ardent Protestant, anguished over French John's succession for he was suspected of Papist Jacobite sympathies. Glimpses of this John O'Neill's character may be found among the McDonnell papers, once at Glenarm Castle, now in the Public Record Office. *The Ulster Journal of Archaeology* (Vol. III p. 164) published an anecdote emanating from this source:

French John was a veritable and legitimate O'Neill, who found it necessary to push his way in the world. With this view he went to Flanders and became engaged in the wool trade, at which he worked with his own hands. When by deaths and unexpected circumstances he was re-called to Ireland, he felt assured that his laudable efforts to gain an independence by trade would be used as a reproach, and he met this expected attack by suspending in his hall at Edenduffcarrick the identical wool cards he had used, saying that he would be the first to mention his own trade.

(Right up until the 19th Century, Shane's Castle continued to be referred to by its old Irish name, Edenduffcarrick, *the brow of the black rock*).

It is from a letter preserved at Glenarm that we hear once again of Henry O'Neill in the words of his father: "My oldest son hath foolishly lost himself by marrying a poor gentlewoman of noe fortune".<sup>6</sup> Henry, against his father's wishes, had married Mary, widow of Captain John Bickerstaffe of Rosegilt in the Largy. (The Largy, a name meaning the wooded slopes of a hill, is the place where, as we may remember, French John had been raised. It consists of twenty-one townlands and was part of the Shane's Castle estates).

There is no evidence that Mary Bickerstaffe was anything but respectable and she was after all "a gentlewoman" and an officer's widow; but she was, as family historian Charles O'Neill "barrister-at-law, Dublin" put it, "estimable but portionless".

Describing the problems of finding husbands for his many daughters, French John wrote:

My two eldest daughters are married agreeable, but goode men and great sumes of money are wanting in this poore countrie, especiallie amongst us old natives, and our pride will not suffer us to match with mean familys, though very rich.

Similar sentiments to those of French John may be found in A.P.W. Malcomson's *Pursuit of the Heiress*<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless I think we can be fairly certain that if Mary Bickerstaffe had been "very rich" she might have met with a warmer reception. But French John, as we know, had other reasons for not warming to his eldest son. Some years later, his second son, Charles, made a much more satisfactory marriage. In 1736 he married Catherine, daughter of the Rt Hon St John Brodrick, P.C, M.P, eldest son of Alan, 1st Viscount Middleton, Lord High Chancellor of Ireland. As a consequence, in the winter of that same year, French John made a deed of settlement, dated 11th December, leaving the O'Neill estates to his son Charles whom he described as his "eldest son and heir at law"; but then Henry had been dead for fifteen years; and he had not left a son. His only child was his daughter, Mary. No mention at all was made of her in French John's Will. She had no inheritance. But innocently enough, she had made a shrewd move. She had married a Chichester.

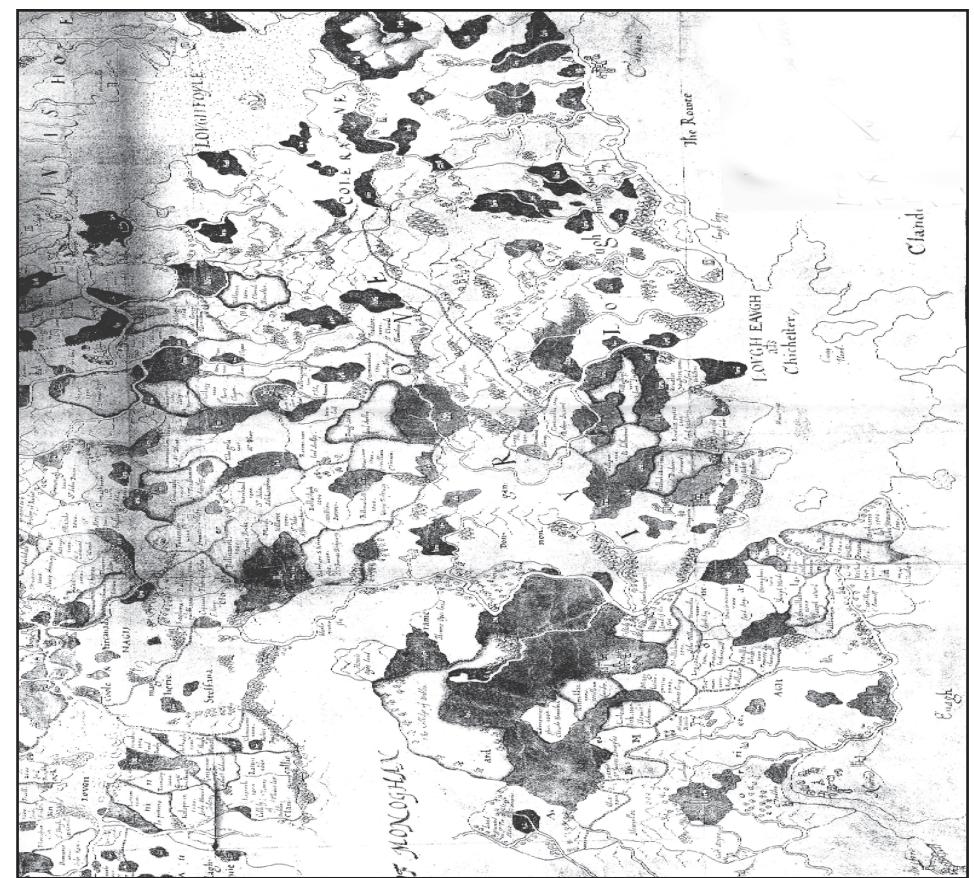
## ANGLICISATION AND REBELLION

Mary's husband, Arthur Chichester, was not a direct descendant of Sir Arthur Chichester. Sir Arthur Chichester had no direct descendants. The Chichester tomb in St Nicholas' Church at Carrickfergus shows a little marble bundle, surmounted by a skull signifying that Arthur and Letitia's infant son had not survived. Letitia was the daughter of Sir John Perrot, Irish Lord Deputy (1584 - 88). Reputed to be the illegitimate son of Henry VIII, he had begun his career in Ireland by ruthlessly suppressing the Desmond Rebellion in Munster. Had

the child lived he could have had a formidable genetic inheritance. Letitia had been twice widowed before she married Sir Arthur. There were to be no other children. The Chichester family in Ireland, Marquises of Donegall, descend from Arthur's brother, Edward.

There was another brother, the eldest brother, Sir John Chichester, who had preceded Sir Arthur as Governor of Carrickfergus. Some say, and it is not unlikely, that what befell Sir John influenced Sir Arthur's attitude to two of Ulster's largest landholders, Hugh O'Neill, 2nd Earl of Tyrone, and his cousin,<sup>8</sup> Randal McDonnell, chief of the Scots in Ireland and father of Rose O'Neill's husband, Randal, 1st Marquis of Antrim. It was Randal's brother Alexander, who had caused the offence. Remonstrating against what the Scots saw as unfair taxes imposed by Sir John Chichester, and provoked by a theft of their cattle, the Scots rode down to Carrickfergus. Sir John and one of his officers, Moses, or Moyses, Hill were afterwards accused of rashness when they rode out against them. In the affray Sir John was killed and, according to Sir John Davies,<sup>9</sup> his head was cut off and sent to Tyrone's camp at Dungannon where his soldiers "kicked it around like a football".

Sir Arthur, thereafter, affected to despise these McDonnells: "a very savage and heathenish people, speaking Irish, wavering and uncertain". But as Scots they benefited from a Stuart King and, in May 1603, King James granted them 300,000 English acres in the Route and the Glens. Chichester was not pleased. He endeavoured to secure lands for himself that would march up against the McDonnells and keep them in North Antrim and out of Carrickfergus. As for Tyrone, many of the English "conquistadors" thought James' terms after O'Neill's submission at Mellifont too lenient. There was to be no leniency from Chichester. Mountjoy had ruthlessly destroyed the O'Neill inauguration seat at Tullaghoge in Co. Tyrone, but it was Chichester who took upon himself Mountjoy's mantle with the extra ferocity of a personal vendetta and with the added imperative of religious conversion.



*Ulster, 1610 attributed to John Norden. Note Lough Neagh is called Lough Chichester. (British Museum, Cotton Collection Ms. Augustus 1 ii 44)*

Today, religious toleration - if we set militant Islam and a few bigoted Ulstermen firmly to one side - is considered by most people a virtue. This was not so in the 17th Century. "Toleration is the greatest of all evils," preached the Presbyterian, Thomas Edwards<sup>10</sup> in 1646: "it will bring first scepticism in doctrine and looseness of life, then atheism." Even John Locke (1632-1704) known for his advocacy of tolerance would not extend it to Catholics: "Papists should not be tolerated because their beliefs were absolutely destructive of all government except the Pope's." Trinity College, Dublin, was founded in 1592 with this "mission statement": "for the planting of learning, the increasing of civility and the establishing of true religion within the realm". True religion was, of course, post-reformation Protestantism. In Chichester's view, Protestantism was to be the means to anglicisation: "If there be no reformation all the buildings and labours here are but in vain." He was, of course, referring to the Plantation of Ulster.

It was Chichester's father-in-law, Sir John Perrott, who had begun the anglicisation of Ireland. For example, in 1585, in Elizabeth's reign he turned Tyrconnell, the ancient County of Conall - Conall being one of the Uí Neill - into the County of Donegal. Chichester continued his work. There had been sheriffs in some Irish "shires", or counties, since the Middle Ages, but it was Chichester who established them on a regular basis. The soldier became the administrator:

"If the tenth part of the treasure," wrote Sir Arthur, "which was expended in the late rebellion of this land had been employed during the days of peace in planting towns, forts and castles in places of advantage in the nests of such as strive to be great in ill actions, the rest had been saved and the Kingdom in a position to bear its own charge with advantage to his Majesty's coffers."

In Chichester's *Letter Book*<sup>11</sup> in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, may be found ample evidence of his work as an administrator, including his attempts to control piracy. He writes in plain, forthright prose with the occasional metaphor: grasp the Irish villains firmly like nettles and they sting not; deliver the "poor flies" - by which he means the common people - from the "webs and oppression of the great spiders" - by which he means the Gaelic chiefs. It was his purpose to set up small and loyal proprietors and not an order of grand landowners. He did, however, respect the Earl of Abercorn, chief undertaker for the Barony of Strabane: "I do heartily affect and honour my Lord of Abercorne (sic) for his vertuous and noble parts." Abercorn had consolidated his influence by bringing over his relations as planters; as had Chichester, one of them being the afore-mentioned, Sir Faithfull Fortescue.

The barrister and wit, Timothy Healy, first Governor-General of the Irish Free State, and someone in no way disposed to be favourable to Chichester, allowed that the "despatches by which Chichester kept Cecil in touch with Irish affairs show marvellous policy; and no English captain wielded sword and pen with the same assiduity and effect." Healy was more than not disposed to be favourable. He was downright hostile. In the course of his practise as a lawyer, he had come upon some land and fishing patents relating to Lough Neagh and the Bann. He became convinced that Chichester<sup>12</sup> had indulged in double dealing and malpractice. He wrote *Stolen Waters: a page in the Conquest of Ulster*,

published in 1913, to prove his case. The case may not be wholly proven but, especially in relation to the Bann Fisheries, some of the mud thrown sticks.

In Chichester's defence, the point is made that his extensive grants of land did not make him a rich man. This, though, was more by accident than design. Owing to pressure of business, he had not time to concentrate on maximising profits from his land holdings - though some of the middle men did - but rather let land at surprisingly low rents. This may also have been due to the fact that he wished to reward, not to fleece, his fellow captains at Carrickfergus many of whom were his tenants. Lands let at low rents to Moses Hill and to Hugh Clotworthy resulted in two of Ulster's great landed estates. Hillsborough, seat of the Hills, Marquises of Downshire, became Northern Ireland's Government House while Antrim Castle, seat of the Clotworthy family, Viscounts Massereene, was, as we have already heard, burnt down in the troubles of 1922 when the Clotworthy family left Ireland.

Chichester's acquisition of Inishowen, with which we are primarily concerned, cannot, in relation to holding it from the Crown, be considered of doubtful legality. That made it no less painful for previous landholders. I was struck, in Clonmany this summer, by the strength of feeling which still, after 400 years, exists. In the course of a conversation with the distinguished teacher and former nun, Bríd O'Doherty, she told me, emphatically, that throughout her childhood she was constantly aware of the deprivation of O'Doherty country: "stolen lands".

Seventeen English families came to Inishowen after Sir Cahir's rebellion. One family is of special interest to the O'Neills of Shane's Castle and was of special interest to Sir Cahir. Henry Hart was the Governor of Culmore Fort. He was also the godfather of Sir Cahir's son. It is easy to forget that this young Irishman had an English wife. Saying that his wife missed English company, O'Doherty invited Hart to dine with him at Buncrana where Sir George Paulet was keeping him under house arrest. Sir Cahir took Mrs Hart hostage and rode back with her to Culmore where he used her to deceive the sentries and was able to capture the fort.<sup>13</sup> Hart had initially refused to surrender the fort even when threatened with death. This did not save him from being frowned upon by the administration but, perhaps because the rebellion was so short-lived, Hart was forgiven and granted land.



*Hart residence, Kilderry, Muff, c.1907*

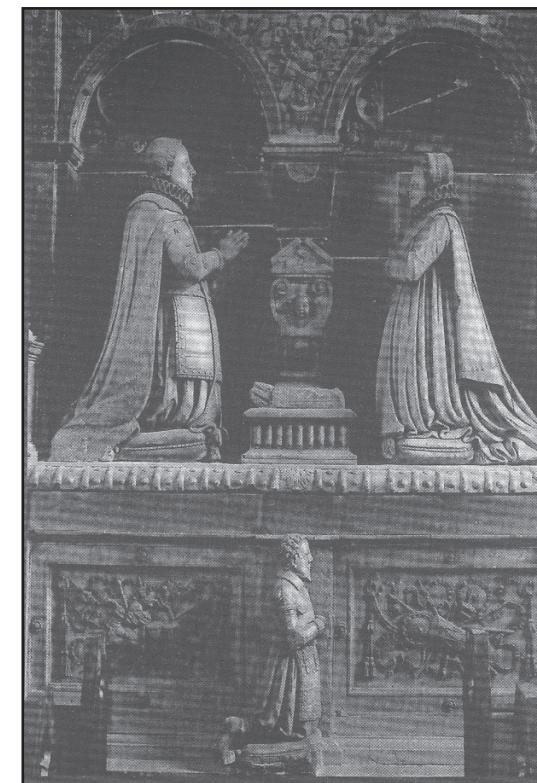
Two hundred years later, though still with a soldier as head of the family, the Harts had moved from fortress to mansion: “The mansion house of Kilderry, the residence of Lieutenant-General Hart, MP for the County of Donegal, is the principle modern structure in the parish.” This was the parish of Muff and the words come from “Replies by William Stanay to Queries of the North West Farming Society” and may be found in the *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Parishes of Co Donegal I.* (1833-5). General Hart’s father was not a soldier. He was a clergyman: The Revd Edward Hart of Kilderry. The Rev<sup>d</sup> Edward had a daughter, Mary Anne, and she became the second wife of The Rev<sup>d</sup> Dr William Chichester (1743-1815) pictured on page ten. They called their son Edward after his grandfather and he became the father of my great-great grandfather, The Revd William Chichester O’Neill.

Sir Arthur Chichester died in London in 1625, but, fittingly, his funeral was held at Carrickfergus; and what a funeral<sup>14</sup> it was: trumpets, cornets, flags, banners, even a “War Horse fully Caparisoned for Battle” were part of the procession attended by those today who would be called the great and the good, among them all the famous names of Protestant Ulster, including our old friends, Sir Hugh Clotworthy, Sir Moses Hill and Sir Faithfull Fortescue. This cortège, alas, we cannot see, but we can see the Chichester monument in St Nicholas’ Church.

The father of the poet, Louis MacNeice, was the Church of Ireland Rector of St Nicholas’, Carrickfergus, and, as a child, the tomb fascinated the poet:

I was the rector’s son born to the Anglican order  
Banned for ever from the candles of the Irish poor;  
The Chichesters knelt in marble, at the end of the transept  
With ruffs about their necks, their portion sure.

The honours which had followed Sir Arthur without seeking - *invitum sequitor honor* was the motto he chose for his coat-of-arms - devolved upon his brother Edward - though not his barony of Belfast - and eventually the main branch of the family became Marquises of Donegall. Meanwhile the descendants of a younger son and a younger son, became, as they so often did, clergymen; and we note especially the Rector of Clonmany, who was also, as it happens, Rector of Broughshane. The Marquises of Donegall flourished for many years but, in the nineteenth century their portion became *no longer sure* and the Fifth Marquis was declared a bankrupt; while the grandson of that Rector of Clonmany and Broughshane, in 1855, inherited the Shane’s Castle estates where my nephew, Shane O’Neill, still resides. His portion, as far as I know, *still sure*.



*Chichester Monument, St. Nicholas' Church, Carrickfergus, Co Antrim.*

The mystery of the story of the O'Neills of Shane's Castle is why neither the Earl - whose "Act of Union" earldom died with him - or his brother, the General, ever married. We know that the Earl liked women. He kept a mistress on Ram's Island and visited her on his steam yacht. The General was a handsome fellow looking much like his mother, the winsome Henrietta Boyle, who married his father in 1777. The father, John, 1st Viscount O'Neill, died of a pike wound in the stomach after the Battle of Antrim that hot summer of 1798. The young heir - he was nineteen at the time and had already lost his mother - is said to have been deeply affected. Matty McTier<sup>15</sup> tells us that he was something of a recluse. We read this in one of the letters she wrote from Belfast to her brother in Dublin.

It is because these brothers failed in their family duty that when the General, 3rd Viscount O'Neill, died - mainly of gout - in 1855, there was no direct male-line heir. The Earl, though, had left a will. The General would like to have left the Shane's Castle estates to his cousins, the Alexanders of Port Glenone, but the Earl's will overruled that possibility and so it was that The Revd William Chichester, great-great grandson of Mary O'Neill, buried in the churchyard of the old church in Straid, Clonmany, took on the responsibilities of running Shane's Castle as well as those he already held as a Prebend of St Michael's, Dublin, with a stall in Christ Church Cathedral.

Two years after The Revd William's death in 1883, The Venerable Edward J Hamilton, Archdeacon of Derry, edited a book of Lord O'Neill's sermons and prefaced them with a short memoir of the author. He writes:

For four years from this [his inheritance] he continued to discharge the duties of his Dublin benefice spending a portion of each year at Shane's Castle; but finding that the duties and responsibilities of his new position demanded more of his time and thought than he could afford if he remained incumbent, he resigned the Prebend in 1859. Thus released from the responsibility of duty, he never, however, in the smallest degree, lost sight of his sacred calling, or sank the clergyman in the landlord.

The Revd William Chichester much resembled his grandfather and namesake. They were both erudite, accomplished scholars. It pleased me to find that his sermons tackled mis-translations, and awkward subjects such as that of the *Parable of the Unjust Steward*, preached at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin on 29th April 1855, as a thanksgiving for the



*Redford Rectory, Culdaff, birthplace of Rev. William Chichester, later Lord O'Neill. (see also back cover)*  
return of plenty after years of famine. (It is also pleasing to note that the Rev. William's predecessor, "the General", cancelled rents on the Randalstown estate during the Great Famine).

My father's sister, the afore-mentioned Midi Gascoigne, thought the encomiums after the death of her great-grandfather absurdly fulsome. She belonged to a generation that needed to shake the dust from the skirted table legs of Victorian hypocrisy. Telling me about feudal Christmases at Shane's Castle when plum puddings and suits of clothing were handed out and the tenants all shouted: "Long Live Lord and Lady O'Neill" - "Poor things," she said, "perhaps they didn't want to say that."

The Revd William's academic life began at Foyle College, Londonderry: several books presented to him as prizes may still be found on the shelves at Shane's Castle. With him at Foyle College was his cousin, William Hart, destined for the Indian Civil Service. In a letter of condolence, Hart<sup>16</sup> wrote that Chichester was, "by far the most steadfastly high-principled boy I ever met, a boy of wonderful courage and fortitude." "In due course," the Archdeacon tells us, "he entered Trinity College, Dublin where he was a diligent student, and passed a distinguished, academical career obtaining a classical scholarship and coming out moderator for his degree."

There is, I think, enough evidence to support the belief that he was a good, kind and clever man. Andrew Hart, Vice Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, wrote of him, “I have a very warm memory of his amiability, high principles, constant sympathy with all who had anything to do with him, and of his absolute disinterestedness.” I have an 1864 diary of his which contains no appointments but which continues throughout the year with what he calls occasional thoughts:

Some think the natural tendency of the human mind is to do something to earn salvation. I think a much more common tendency is to entertain a vague hope of salvation without trying to abstain from sin; and it is this which has given romanism on the one hand, and ultra-evangelicalism on the other, so great a hold on professing christians. Both these systems encourage the idea that religion is done for us:

Romanism by the Pope or the Priest; ultra-evangelicalism by Christ.

In defence of my aunt’s attitude to her great-grandfather I must, in all fairness, report that I have seen a letter from one of the Staples family complaining that staying at Shane’s Castle in the time of The Revd Lord O’Neill was just a little dull. What would have enlivened it, at least for some of us, would have been the music. For The Revd Lord O’Neill was a skilful musician. He is listed in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, not as a clergyman, or a landlord, but as a composer.

Archdeacon Hamilton tells us how he would retreat to his study in the tower to write and to think; but at other times, down he came to his magnificent music hall to sit and play at his magnificent organ. The tower he retreated to was not the tower house of “Conn, Chief and Prince of Clanaboy, 1471-1482, Royal Heir of Ulster, fountain of hospitality and general patron of the literati of Ireland and Scotland”. That tower house still stands amid the ruins of the old castle, accidentally burnt down in 1816; no, The Rev<sup>d</sup> William had been blessed with the means to have had built for himself what must, for him, have been the *beau idéal* of castles, virtually a church, music hall adorned with stained glass windows. This was the Shane’s Castle which was purposefully burnt down on that fateful night in 1922 when Stormont’s Speaker, my great-uncle Hugh, was in Belfast and wrote those words in his diary, “A terrible tragedy happened .... Shane’s Castle was burnt down by Sinn Féin raiders.”



*The Rev. William Chichester, First Baron O'Neill (1813-1883), born at Redford Rectory, Cudlaff. He inherited the O'Neill estates in 1855.*

Not all the music at the Victorian castle was heavy-going. The scrapbook - Great Aunt Anne’s scrapbook - contains accounts, and printed programmes, of light-hearted evenings, even afternoons, of music and entertainment. One such is a Matinée Musicale devised by Charlie McClintock, the very gentlemen who was not allowed to marry great-aunt Anne. The wicked step-mother of this story being, we may remember, The Revd William’s second wife, cousin to his first, and daughter of The Venerable John Torrens, Archdeacon of Dublin, a property owner in Clonmany<sup>17</sup>.

When, in 1998, I travelled to Clonmany with my brother, Lord O’Neill, there came with us my cousin Annette Firth whose maiden name was McClintock. Her mother, Rose O’Neill, had two brothers; Arthur, my grandfather killed in 1914, and Stormont’s Speaker, great-uncle Hugh. No objection was made to the match between Rose O’Neill and Charlie’s kinsman, Captain Jack McClintock, RN. The McClintock family still live at Red Hall, Ballycarry, near Carrickfergus and not far from the place where Sir John Chichester lost his head. Annette is a botanical artist.



*Music Room, also known as the Organ Room of the Victorian Castle, probably by Maria Blackwood-Price (The image is the property of the Hon. Shane O'Neill of Shane's Castle)*



*Memorial Plaque commemorating Anne O'Neill in Broughshane Church, one of the livings held by her great grandfather. (Photograph by Annette McClintock)*

We must not forget that it was the drive and ambition of The Revd William's second wife, Elizabeth Grace, which succeeded in convincing the powers that be, not to revive the Irish peerage, but to create a new, English barony for her husband. Elizabeth took on the lease of a house in Mayfair and all the family silver was shipped over for the season. Musical soirees were the means by which she royally entertained London Society. It is unlikely that The Revd William would much have enjoyed the London Season. "His," said his friend, Sir Robert Stewart, "was a gentle, unobtrusive nature." Sir Robert was the organist of Christ Church Cathedral and Trinity College, Dublin. The music would have kept our hero sane. Stewart praised his musicianship:

Lord O'Neill was attached to the study of the organ almost from youth. He was, however, more than a mere executant upon the King of Instruments, for he was able at a moment's notice to adapt well and artistically for that instrument, music intended for voices and other instruments. He could even play from figured bases which few save cathedral organists can do ...

## ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH, STRAID , CLONMANY

There would have been no great organ in the church of St Columba at Straid. When my brother, my cousin and I were there in 1998, not so long after the bombing of Omagh, we found the church roofless, an empty Gothic arch framing the hills beyond, and sheep safely grazing among the graves; the stone over Mary's grave no longer moss-grown, its inscription legible. When we read it, reserved though many present-day O'Neills tend to be, we were all three of us moved to remember this ancient link between the O'Neills and the Chichesters.

It was a peaceful scene, fittingly, for this was a church dedicated to Columcille, St Columba, the dove of the church: Irish history, though, always has its ironies for in his youth, Columcille had been a fighting man in one of the O'Neill septs; and it was a scene that inspired a sense of reverence for we were in Inishowen where, the *Tripartite Life*<sup>18</sup> tells us, in the year 442, St Patrick came and baptised Eoghan, son of Niall Naoighiallach and blessed Inishowen and all its people. The *Tripartite Life* also tells us that when Ireland's patron saint was on Cruachan Aigle, now Croagh Patrick in Co. Mayo, fasting for forty days and forty nights, he would not come down from the mountain until an angel had made him many promises, one being, "that the Saxons should not dwell in Ireland, by consent or perforce, so long as I abide in heaven." Sir Arthur Chichester could tell us that this was not a well-kept promise; but even he, as settler rather than soldier, said: "We are now all of us become builders and planters here and not wasters and destroyers as in our younger years"; so maybe the people of Inishowen, baptised as they are with *faery dust* - a line I stole from Louis MacNiece - can forgive him and bless his kinsmen, learned and godly clergymen like the first Revd Dr William Chichester, beloved at Clonmany; and his grandson, the second Revd William Chichester, who became Lord O'Neill and was loved in London, Dublin, Belfast and Shane's Castle.



Left – Sea Aster at Lough Swilly by the botanical artist Annette McClintock whose mother Rose O'Neill was a sister of Stormont Speaker, Hugh O'Neill, and of the author's grandfather, Arthur O'Neill.

Right – Sea Mayweed, by the same artist.



- <sup>1</sup> J. McGurk, "The Pacification of Ulster 1601-1603" in *Age of Atrocity*, D. Edwards, P. Lenehan, and C. Tait (editors), (Dublin, 2007).
- <sup>2</sup> John O'Neill to Joshua Dawson, 22 March 1711. The few letters that we have were copied from originals at Dublin Castle. I have been told that these originals cannot be found. They were copied by Charles Henry O'Neill, Barrister-at-Law, Dublin, born on Christmas Day 1812 and called to the Bar in 1846. He was the son of Felix O'Neill of Drumderg House nr Toome. He gathered together a file of family history which was first published in the *Belfast Mercury* and repeated in the *Ballymena Observer* in 1909.
- <sup>3</sup> Given that we are dealing with the "Chichester" O'Neills, this claim may seem far-fetched. Certainly the orthodox view would be that "veritable and legitimate" O'Neills of Shane's Castle came to an end in 1855. I am basing the claim on work done in Oxford by Professor Bryan Sykes who says that a true descent obtains through female, mitochondrial D.N.A.
- <sup>4</sup> Edith Johnson Liik, *The History of the Irish Parliament 1692-1800*, Volume IV (Belfast, 2002), p 26; I am indebted to this magisterial work, published by the Ulster Historical Foundation in six volumes.
- <sup>5</sup> Constantia Maxwell, *Irish History from Contemporary Sources* (1509-1610) (Dublin, 1923). p 113.
- <sup>6</sup> Rev. George Hill, "The MacDonnells of Antrim", p. 349
- <sup>7</sup> "The Pursuit of the Heiress, Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland 1740-1840" was reissued and first published by the Ulster Historical Foundation in 2006. It is a handsomely illustrated volume.
- <sup>8</sup> Randal's father, Sorley Boy McDonnell, was married to Mary, daughter of Con O'Neill, 1st Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill's grandfather.
- <sup>9</sup> Sir John Davies (1569-1626) Solicitor General, and subsequently, Attorney General (1606-19) for Ireland. He was also a Court poet. *His Contention betwixt a Wife, a Widow and a Maide* was performed before the Queen in 1602. The "football" story comes from *A Discovery of the true causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued .... until .... his Majesty's Happy Reign*, published in 1612. Sir John Davies' Irish appointments coincided with those of Chichester.
- <sup>10</sup> Thomas Edwards (1599-1647) MA Queen's College, Cambridge 1625. At Cambridge he became known as "Young Luther".
- <sup>11</sup> R. Dudley Edwards, "Chichester's Letter Book", *Analecta Hibernica* No 8 , (Dublin, 1938)
- <sup>12</sup> For a fair assessment of the Lord Deputy, see *Sir Arthur Chichester* by John McCavitt, (Dublin, 1998)
- <sup>13</sup> Cyril Falls, *The Birth of Ulster*, (London, 1936), p. 137
- <sup>14</sup> For this splendid event please see p.56 of Charles McConnell's *The Family of Chichester and Carrickfergus*, published by the Council in 1999
- <sup>15</sup> To those who have not read them, I warmly recommend the *Drennan-McTier letters* published in three vols by the Women's History Project in association with the Irish Manuscripts Commission in 1998. References to the 1st Earl occur in Vol III p.688; and in the Joy Papers, Linenhall Library, 4, p.352.
- <sup>16</sup> William Hart wrote a memorandum dated 26th April 1885. In 1824, when he was between seven and eight years old, he, "was taken to Kilmore Rectory on my way to be placed at Foyle College, the Diocesan School of Derry, in order that I might be introduced to William and Robert Chichester, as a future schoolfellow desirous of their countenance and protection...." The family residing at Kilmore, at about that time, consisted of Edward Chichester the Rector of the Parish, his wife and four sons, ..... besides two very old ladies, who, since the death of Edward's father in 1815, had found a home with Edward's family, first at Redford, when he was Rector of Culdaff; and now at Kilmore to which parish he had been transferred. One of these ladies was the maiden sister and the other the widow of Edward's father, the Revd Doctor William Chichester Rector of a remote parish in Inishowen, in memory of whom both William and I received our baptismal names." With reference to Venerable Hamiltons's memoir, I used to think of my great-great grandfather travelling between his stall in the South and his seat in the North as a symbol of the United Ireland I hoped one day to see.
- <sup>17</sup> A. Day and P. McWilliams (editors), "Statistical Report by Lieutenant W Lancey, May 1834", *Ordnance Survey, Parishes of Donegal* 1, 1833-35, *North-East Donegal*, Vol.38, (Belfast, 1997), p.18. The report shows, as a proprietor in the parish of Clonmany, Archdeacon Torrens who "holds Magherymore".
- <sup>18</sup> Whitley Stokes, (editor and translator) *The Tripartite Life of St Patrick* (London, 1887)

The Hon. Mrs. Fionn Morgan was educated at St. Anne's College, Oxford. She worked in teaching and publishing before her marriage to a diplomat, now Sir John Morgan, with whom she travelled to Russia and Brazil. A resident of London, she edited the *Diplomatic Wives Journal* and is currently writing a history of the O'Neills of Shane's Castle, Co Antrim. She is a frequent visitor to County Donegal.

**PHOTOS/IMAGES :** The Editor acknowledges the cooperation of the author, the Hon. Mrs. Fionn Morgan, in securing permission from the following to publish photographs and prints used in this article : British Museum, Lord Rathcavan, the Hon. Shane O'Neill of Shane's Castle, Co Antrim, the Hon. Patrick O'Neill and Annette McClintock, botanical artist who painted the flower images and kindly provided photographs of the memorial plaque. The photo of Redford Rectory is based on a painting, courtesy of Gordon Duggan, by a German artist, Maria Meier. A drawing of Redford Rectory by Rollo Gillespie can be found in Amy Young's book, *Three Hundred Years in Inishowen* (1929). The Kilderry photo is from H.T. Hart's *The Family History of Hart of Donegal* (1907)

# COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FLIGHT OF THE EARLS IN RATHMULLAN

*Áine Ní Dhuibhne*



*President Mary McAleese, her husband Martin and John Behan, Sculptor, showing commemorative monument in background.*

The departure of three Ulster chieftains with their families and followers from Rathmullan 400 years ago was a historical event of great moment. Over the centuries the historical account was imbued with local folklore in the Rathmullan area – *There is the bay they left from. Here is the track of the old road they travelled. That wallstead marks the last place where O'Neill rested before reaching Rathmullan.* As 2007 drew closer, there was an expectation here that the anniversary would be fittingly marked in Rathmullan and that here too the many strands of this historical commemoration would be drawn together in September.

This was a challenge taken up in Rathmullan and by Rathmullan groups - to provide the opportunity to learn about, reflect on and evaluate some of the wealth of material that

makes up the history and heritage of Donegal and Ulster four hundred years ago. This was a most appropriate time to shed a light on the past that explains the present and will continue to mould the future. During the year, Rathmullan hosted many significant commemorative or celebratory events that illustrated the material and mental worlds of a Gaelic past that resonates in Irish life today.

Rathmullan's historical commemoration began most fittingly in January 2007 with the launch by Seán Beattie, editor of *Donegal Annual*, of a new publication by Rathmullan and District Local History Society – *Rathmullan, Ramelton and Raphoe Diocese at the time of the Flight of the Earls* (Ed. Áine Ní Dhuibhne) . The articles by Helen Meehan, Mary Haggan and Áine Ní Dhuibhne, referred to in the title, were based on a series of talks organised by the Society in 2006. The dissemination of knowledge, awareness-raising and interest were maintained throughout the year with numerous historical talks and walks in English (and where possible in Irish) from the Heritage Centre to the Abbey and to Portnamurry. Societies and groups, among them IPMAG, RSAI, Donegal Historical Society, Éigse Uladh, Ionad Buail Isteach and Maynooth History Group came for a weekend conference, a day or just a few hours' visit.

One of the most delightful events organised in the Spring was the opening of the Schools' Flight of the Earls' Project. Pupils of the three local national schools, St Garvan's, Brown Knowe and St. Joseph's undertook in-depth research on the lives of children in Ireland at the time of the Flight of the Earls. The record of this research, the beautifully-crafted exhibits, consisting of model pieces, booklets, creative writing and art work went on display with music supplied by the Fanad Accordion Band on 18th March.



*Launch of Donegal Annual at Portnamurry in March 2007*

## CONFERENCE

Rathmullan and District Local History Society held its first ever conference over the May Bank Holiday weekend. The undertaking was ambitious and it proved to be most successful and enjoyable. The purpose of the conference was to explore aspects of life in Ireland at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The topics included the politics, laws and social conditions in a Gaelic chieftainship with special reference to the O'Donnells; the language, literature and music of Gaelic Ireland with special reference to Bardic poetry and of course, the Flight of the Earls and its aftermath at home and abroad. Following the opening on 4th May by Judge Frank O'Donnell, these themes were dealt with in scholarly and engaging presentations by the invited speakers: Professor Raymond Gillespie, An tOllamh Micheál Mac Craith, Dr. Nollaig O Muiráile, Dr Bernadette Cunningham, Dr. John McCavitt, Dr. Darren McGettigan, Dr. John Mc Gurk and Dr. Katherine Simms. Over the course of the weekend, there were conducted tours in the Flight of the Earls Heritage Centre and the Carmelite Friary, traditional music recitals, a guided bus tour of areas nearby associated with the O'Donnells and Mac Sweeneys by Christy Gillespie and a boat trip on Lough Swilly with historical commentary.

## BOOK LAUNCH

Dr Bernadette Cunningham's book, *O'Donnell histories: Donegal and the Annals of the Four Masters*, which was published by Rathmullan and District Local History Society, was launched at the conference by the Chief Herald of Ireland, Dr Fergus Gillespie. This clear, informative overview of the Annals of the Four Masters, linked the Rathmullan commemoration to the parallel 400th commemoration, the founding of St. Anthony's College in Louvain. One particular focus of that commemoration "The writing of Irish history" illustrates the crucial role in that undertaking of Donegal Franciscans such as Hugh Ward, John Colgan and Micheál Ó Cléirigh who were steeped in the culture of scholarship and learning fostered by the O'Donnell chieftains.

From early September onwards people began to make their way to Rathmullan for the key part of the year-long commemoration - that of marking the actual event that occurred on



*Countdown to unveiling of sculpture by President McAleese, with her husband, Martin, left, and John P. Carr, right, Rathmullan and District Local History Society*

14th September 1607, when the three Ulster chieftains, O'Neill, O'Donnell and Maguire with their families and followers sailed into exile in Europe from "the port of the great Swilly" - Rathmullan. The commemoration began on the morning of the 14th in St. Joseph's Church with a Mass of Thanksgiving for the work of the Franciscans in Donegal and the Carmelites in Rathmullan before 1607. Most Rev. Dr. Philip Boyce, Bishop of Raphoe, His Excellency Most Rev. Giuseppe Lazzarotto, Apostolic Nuncio, Rev. Fr. Francis McAteer, P.P. Killygarvan and Tullyfern Rev. Fr. Caoimhín Ó Laoide, Provincial OFM, Fr. Jimmy Murray, O Carm. and Fr John J. Silke, Diocesan Archivist concelebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving in Irish and English with priests of the parish, neighbouring parishes and friars from the friaries of Ard Muire and Rossnowlagh.

The commemorative Mass leaflet included two specially written historical articles - *The Donegal Franciscan Tradition* by Fr. Patrick Conlon O.F.M. and *The Carmelites at Rathmullan* by Fr. Jimmy Murray O.Carm. Sacred music was provided by the choirs of St. Catherine's and St. Joseph's churches, soloists Elaine McFadden, Mairéad Ní Fhlatharta and Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin and the DIT Irish Traditional Music Ensemble, directed by Odhrán Ó Casaide.

## UNVEILING OF SCULPTURE

The ceremony to mark the unveiling of The Flight of the Earls sculpture by John Behan on Rathmullan beach, began at midday. The Chairperson of Rathmullan and District Local History Society, Mary O Reilly, welcomed President Mary McAleese on her arrival. The President quoted the poignant lines at the beginning of the poem by Eoghan Rua Mac a' Bhaird, (who himself travelled into exile with the Chieftains) – Anocht is Uaigneach Éire – Tonight Ireland is desolate. The President addressed a huge crowd that included the Bishop of Raphoe, Most Rev. Dr. Philip Boyce, the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Most Rev. Giuseppe Lazzarotto, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Stanley Stewart and the Bishop of Derry and Derry, Rev. Ken Goode, the Italian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Lucio Alberto Savoia, the Portuguese Ambassador H.E. Mr. Paulo Castilho, the Austrian Ambassador H.E. Dr Walter Hagg and representatives from the Embassies of Germany and Switzerland. The President was thanked by Arthur Lynch on behalf of the Rathmullan and District Local History Society.



*Re-enactment of the Flight of the Earls from Portnamurray, 14 September 2007*

## PORTNAMURRAY

The ceremony at the site of the chieftains' departure was undoubtedly the focal point for the huge number of local people, visitors and strangers from far-flung places who came to Rathmullan to commemorate a historical event. Just to stand on Portnamury's stony beach on that September day, touched many of the people who had gathered there with a special poignancy. If it was not that atmospheric place that caused the catch in the throat or the tear in the eye then it was most likely the sight of two small boats being rowed away to the waiting sailing ship, while verses of bardic poetry in Irish and the sad strains of the piper's lament for O'Donnell resonated around the amphitheatre of Portnamury, that did so.

Mary Haggan of Rathmullan and District Local History Society and Rathmullan Commemorating the Flight of the Earls' Committee, prepared the order of the ceremony. The narrator was Denise Blake. The ceremony included the recitation of Bardic poetry by Proinnsias Mac a' Bhaird, a lament on the uileann pipes by James Mahon and the singing of Mairéad Ní Fhlatharta and Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin. The prayer service was conducted by Rev Alan Tilson, Fr. Francis McAteer and Rev. Stanley Stewart. The children from the local schools sang the hymns. The laying of a wreath on the sea at Portnamury by Dermot Ryan, on behalf of the Kinsale Historical Society, recalled the disastrous affect on Gaelic civilisation of the defeat at Kinsale and the departure of the Ulster chieftains. A presentation was made on behalf of the Federation of Local History Societies of Ireland to Áine Ní Dhuibhne for Rathmullan and District Local History Society.



*Crowds assemble for the unveiling of sculpture*

## COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FLIGHT OF THE EARLS IN RATHMULLAN

The ceremony at Portnamurry was followed by the ceremonial Walk of the Clans along the seafront road to the Marquee. The colourful procession of chiefs and clan members holding flags and banners aloft, was led by the Pipe Band of the 28th Battalion of the Irish Army. This muster of the Clans of Ireland was a unique affair – the first such since Red Hugh O'Donnell called a muster of the clans on his way to Kinsale! The large gathering which included Clan chiefs and representatives of many Gaelic Clans was addressed by the Chief Herald of Ireland, Mr Fergus Gillespie. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, sister of The O'Donnell, (An Dálach) reflected on aspects of O'Donnell history and spoke in appreciation of the commemoration being conducted here. Hugo, the O'Neill of Clandeboy, described the inherent loneliness associated with the Irish nobility in exile. A contributor to this issue of *Donegal Annual*, the Hon. Mrs. Fionn Morgan attended the celebrations, accompanied by her brother, Lord O'Neill of Shane's Castle and Lady O'Neill. Tom Sweeney traced the history of one Gaelic Clan that did not go into exile. T.J. Dowds, Chief of the O'Dowda clan recalled that his immediate predecessor Tadhg Buí led his men to Ballymote to meet with Red Hugh for the march to Kinsale. Cahir Tierney, described the work and aims of the Clans of Ireland Ltd. The recent formation and hugely successful promotion of the Gallagher Clan was seen as an encouraging sign of growth and interest in clan history and heritage in Ireland and beyond. The Flight of the Earls' Concert 'Ceol agus Cultúr na nGael', a cornucopia of musical talent and artistry, organised by Rathmullan Commemorating the Flight of the Earls' Committee, delighted and entertained a large audience. The programme featured Tommy Peoples, Paul Dooley, the DIT Irish Traditional Music Ensemble, Steve Cooney, Mairéad Ní Fhlatharta, The Campbells of Glenties, Kate Ford, Martin McGinley, Tony Wilkinson, Mark Boyce, Dessie and Steve, and the Loose Canons. Connecting the 17th century Flight of the Earls with the



— 40 —

## COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FLIGHT OF THE EARLS IN RATHMULLAN

Celtic Tiger of the 21st century made for a lively debate on Friday 14th. Dr Garrett Fitzgerald, journalist Fintan O'Toole, Martin Mansergh T.D. and historian Christy Gillespie succeeded in informing and entertaining a large audience, while seeking to convince with their arguments whether it was the Flight of the Earls or the Celtic Tiger that sounded the death-knell for Gaelic culture. On Saturday 15th a bilingual History Symposium was held in the Marquee. "The Earls and the Exiled Irish Abroad" was the theme for the illustrated talks by Dr. Declan Downey, and Marcos Ó Murchú, Doire.

## BLUESTACK RAMBLERS

A large crowd gathered in Portnamurry on the afternoon of Sunday 16th September to welcome "the Walkers". These were the Bluestack Ramblers from Donegal, retracing the journey of Rory O'Donnell and the Stewartstown Walkers from Tyrone who walked the route taken by Hugh O'Neill and his followers, four hundred years earlier. The crowd assembled in the atmospheric amphitheatre of Portnamurry Bay where a poignant and moving ceremony took place as ninety-nine costumed walkers each dropped a wildflower in the Swilly waters to commemorate those who left that shore in 1607. The ceremony concluded with a presentation to members of Rathmullan and District Local History Society from the Stewartstown Walkers. A carved stone plaque, depicting Hugh O'Neill designed for placement at Portnamurry, was presented to mark Hugh O'Neill's last physical association with Ireland.



There is a sense of satisfaction among the groups in Rathmullan, (The Rathmullan and District Local History Society, Rathmullan Commemorating the Flight of the Earls and the Flight of the Earls' Heritage Centre Committee) that were responsible for undertaking the major commemorative events here. This was a historical commemoration of a hugely significant period in Irish history but to merely commemorate it, however successfully, should not of course be the end in itself. Such a commemoration will only be judged to

— 41 —

have been successful if the momentum is sustained and resources are used to promote a better understanding of our county's history and a deeper appreciation of our county's unique cultural heritage, for present and future generations.

## Rathmullan Beach – September 2007

*The Fighting Earls left their tragic countries*

*Minded to return, but never did.*

*Those who were left behind*

*had to face the conquerors and see*

*their planted lands and trades outlawed.*

*A Gallowglass with broken axe*

*Swords hidden for a better day*

*Great Chief reduced, through generations,*

*to mending pots and pans.*

*A culture overthrown*

*Men withering, and dying*

*or worse*

*But now, four hundred years have passed*

*A proud President stands on windy beach,*

*with cheering crowds*

*and helicopter sounds,*

*and all the Panoply of State*

*unveiling Bold Bronze to those long ago times.*

*In an Ireland free and fair*

*a First in Four Hundred commemoration*

*of those who left and those who stayed*

*to face a harsher music*

*and survive*

*And I stood, with my love, and watched  
the night time sky light up with fire  
and thought of Genoa and Rome  
and how it must have been  
for those who came not back  
but learned a foreign tongue and strangers' ways*

*Did they pine for Portnamurry?*

*Or foresee Clan banners fly again  
in proud triumphant march  
along a new Road?*

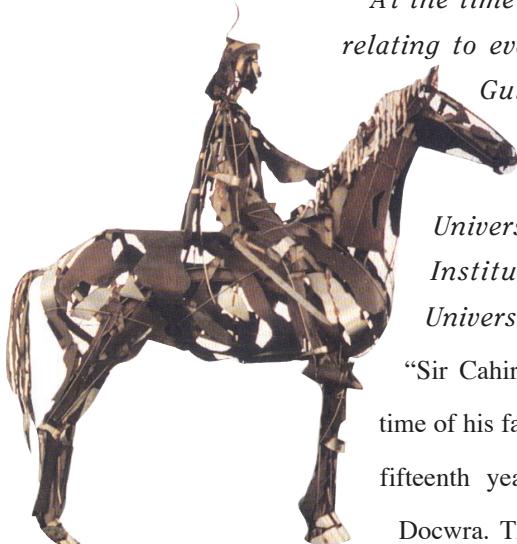
(Brian McCabe, Co. Kildare)

Áine Ní Dhuibhne is editor of *Rathmullan, Ramelton and Raphoe Diocese at the Time of the Flight of the Earls* and is also the co-author of *Along Rathmullan's Shore*. Living in Rathmullan, she is a founder member of Rathmullan and District Local History Society. The website may be visited at [www.rathmullanflightoftheearls.ie](http://www.rathmullanflightoftheearls.ie).

**Photos – Author and editor.**

## THE CHIEFTAIN

*This section of Donegal Annual is dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the 1608 Rebellion and its aftermath.*



*At the time of going to press, a Conference relating to events in 1608 is planned for the Guildhall in Derry on 1-2 July 2008. Further information from Dr. Eamonn Ó Ciardha, University of Ulster or Dr Billy Kelly, Institute of Ulster Scots Studies, University of Ulster, Derry.*

“Sir Cahir, born in 1587, was fourteen at the time of his father’s death, and was therefore in his fifteenth year when placed under the care of Docwra. That there existed a strong feeling of mutual affection between Docwra and his protégé is apparent from the manner the former always speaks of O’Doherty. Thus he tells us that being stationed at one time at Omy (Omagh), he and his men set out on a “cattle prey” to “Cormocke MacBaron’s countrey”, which they robbed of 400 cows. They did not, however, get off with them without a struggle with MacBaron’s people, and in the end Docwra lost twenty-five of his men. He says that on this occasion, ‘O’Doherty [Sir Cahir] was with us, alighted when he did, kept mee companie in the greatest heats of the feight, beheaued himself brauelie and with a great deal of love and affection, all that day, which at my next meeting with my lord, I recommended him and gave him the honour of knighthoode in recompense of.’ (Docwra’s *Narration*) In person, he is described as tall and handsome, of polished manners, winning and attractive and well educated. Some of the letters which are still extant in Dublin, as well as some of his sister Rosa, attest the calligraphy of both.” Bishop O’Doherty, *Derriana*.

Photo : Impression Ltd., Dublin. Sculpture by Maurice Harron, Derry.

## DIRGE FOR SIR CAHIR O'DOHERTY

ANONYMOUS



*Weep, weep, the lost Chieftain, the noble the brave  
Who in youth’s early morn has gone down to the grave.  
Weep, weep, the young warrior whose prowess has thrown  
A glory unfading o'er old Inishowen.*

*In the battle the bravest, the first in the fight,  
His foes trembling fled from his sword flashing bright,  
And his tall waving plume was a terror to all,  
From the borders of Dublin to dark Donegal*

*With Absolem’s beauty, and Jonathon’s grace,  
The pride of his clan and the flower of his race,  
His eye beamed with love for the sons of his Gael,  
But the fire of its wrath made his enemies quail;  
Deceived by false friendship, he trusted the foe  
Till, lashed into madness by Paulet’s fierce blow  
He swore to clear Sasanach lords from the soil  
And reign a free Chieftain from Swilly to Foyle.*

*Chichester had robbed him of land and of fame,  
And had vowed to extinguish his clan and his name,  
Nor thought he would dare to contend for his own-  
But he knew the Chieftain of old Inishowen.*

*He roe in his wrath, though his warriors were few,  
But just was his cause and their fealty was true,  
And he swept through the north like the hurricane blast  
And scattered the foeman wherever he passed.*

*In the land where his kinsman Columba was born  
He marshalled his hosts in the grey of the morn;  
By Doon's lonely rock he met Wingfield's array,  
And hero-like roused to the deadly affray;  
But the ball of a foeman, unerringly sped,  
Pierced the brain of the Chieftain, and Cahir lay dead.  
His head, as a trophy of Britain's fell power,  
Was spiked by Chichester on cursed Dublin Tower.*

*The halls of Buncrana are filled with deep gloom,  
And Elagh the princely is still as the tomb;  
From the Foyle to the Swilly tears fall thick as rain  
For the Chief who shall never lead Fiamuin again:  
From Burt's lovely castle and Inch by the sea,  
From Shrove's sandy shore to the rock of Dunree,  
One deep wail of sorrow, like ocean's loud moan,  
Rends the hearts of his clansmen in old Inishowen.*

*Weep, weep the lost Chieftain struck down in his bloom-  
In life's early morning, consigned to the tomb:  
The noble, the brave and the hope of our land,  
Whose night in the battle no foe could withstand.  
He's gone from our eyes when we needed him most,  
Gone, whose prowess in war was our stay and our boast,  
Gone, the day-star whose brightness we each thought his own,  
Gone, the valiant Chieftain of old Inishowen.*

*Without him the sky seems bereft of the sun;  
Singing dirges to ocean the rippling streams run;  
The song birds are silent, joy's spirit has flown,  
Night's deep cloud of sorrow enwraps Inishowen.  
But his name, unforgotten, in song and in story,  
Shall live through the ages, encircled with glory;  
While the hills are reflected in Swilly's blue wave,  
Shall the fame still be cherished of Cahir the brave.*

The poem appeared in *Derriana, Essays and Occasional Verses Chiefly relating to the Diocese of Derry* by Rev. Dr. O'Doherty, Bishop of Derry, (Dublin, 1902). Bishop O'Doherty writes an interesting account of the 1608 Rebellion in *Derriana*, entitled "The Rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Doherty" pp. 180-265.

# O'DOGARTY ADDENDUM

*Jerrold Casway*

It has been more than two decades since my study on Rosa O'Dogarty was published.<sup>1</sup> Since that time not much in the way of new material has surfaced to change the telling of Rosa's life or the travails of her family. Interest in the O'Dogartys, however, has never wavered and was renewed by the quatercentennial commemorations of the "Flight of the Earls." The O'Dogartys' participation and fate were significant to that watershed event.<sup>2</sup>

Rosa O'Dogarty was the young wife of Cathbhar (Caffar) O'Donnell, the younger brother of Hugh O'Donnell, the first earl of Tyrconnell, who with their infant son, accompanied the earls to the continent in September 1607. When the O'Donnell brothers died of disease in 1608, and Rosa's brother, Sir Cahir, was killed during his ill-fated rebellion, O'Dogarty prospects were altered forever. With the new mindfulness of the earls' ill-considered flight, interest in Rosa's family was reconfirmed. This attention invited fresh assessments and commentaries.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most often asked questions involved Rosa's relationship to Cathbhar (Caffar) Óg O'Donnell. Cathbhar Óg was one of two children who was left behind by the departing earls. He was reportedly the illegitimate son of Cathbhar O'Donnell, but some Flight researchers asserted that Cathbhar Óg was mothered by Rosa O'Dogarty.<sup>4</sup> But Rosa and the elder Cathbhar had only one O'Donnell child, Hugh, who was born in June 1605. His birth, and the prophecy announced by the number of toes he had on one foot,<sup>5</sup> confirmed his age and status. If Cathbhar Óg was Rosa's older child there would not have been such notoriety given to little Hugh. Not to be overlooked was the 1604 date of Rosa's marriage. This chronology made it unlikely that she would be the mother to the six-year old Cathbhar Óg.

At the time of the Flight, both Hugh and his older step-brother, Cathbhar Óg, were living with fosterers.<sup>6</sup> Only Hugh, Rosa's son, made it to Rathmelton on time for the departure. Young Cathbhar never met up with his father and was taken into custody by the Dublin government.



Cahir O'Doherty's sword and mace.

With all of this attention and angst about Cathbhar Óg's situation, no proof or evidence exists to confirm his legitimacy or association with Rosa O'Dogarty. Rosa had only birthed two sons, Hugh, Cathbhar O'Donnell's son, and Henry Roe, Owen Roe O'Neill's offspring. (7) If there was any validity to Rosa being Cathbhar Óg's mother it would have certainly been a matter of contemporary discussion and speculation. Neither the O'Donnells, the Franciscans in Louvain or prying English agents ever spoke or alluded to that relationship.

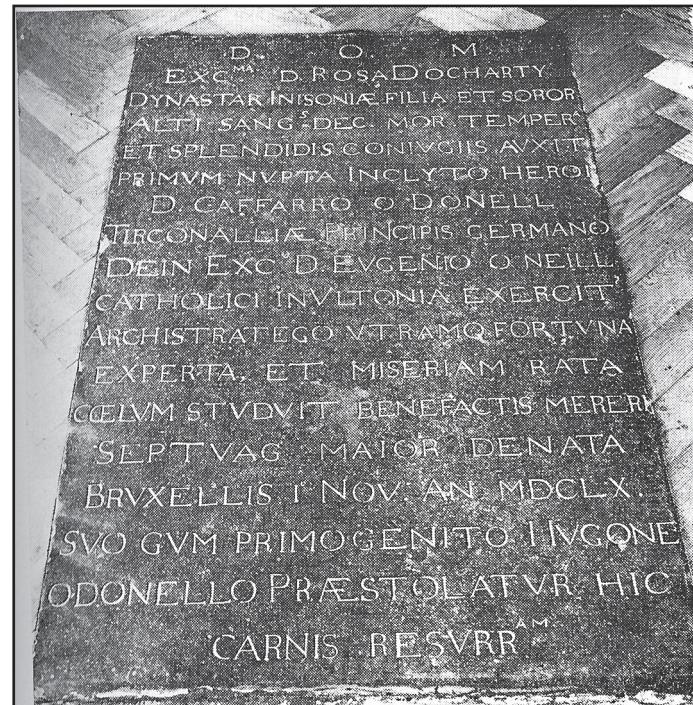
Attention to Cathbhar Óg (Con MacCaffrey) O'Donnell resurfaced in the mid-1620s. Described as "The next of blood to the pretended Earl of Tyrconnell,"<sup>8</sup> he was summoned to live with Lord Deputy Falkland where his behavior and commitment to "our religion" could be observed. O'Donnell made a favorable impression and Falkland recommended him for a pension. Satisfied that Cathbhar and his young cousin, Hugh O'Rourke, were in religious conformity, Falkland sent them to London with letters of recommendation.<sup>9</sup> In July 1626, Falkland applauded the government's "clemency and bounty" because it dispelled suspicions that the cousins were "gone for lost men."<sup>10</sup>

A short while following these optimistic comments, both young men were incarcerated, after trying to escape to the continent.<sup>11</sup> At this point, another post-flight character entered the picture, Mary Stuart O'Donnell, the daughter of the Earl of Tyrconnell and Bridget Fitzgerald. Born at the time of the Flight, Mary and her mother remained in Ireland. Raised as a Catholic, the nineteen-year old Mary resisted all efforts to use marriage to temper her religious convictions. While in London she befriended her cousins, Cathbhar Óg and Hugh O'Rourke, and helped organize their escape. In disguise, Cathbhar and Hugh fled to the continent and anonymity.<sup>12</sup> With all the accompanying exposure and attention, nothing was ever said or intimated that Cathbhar Óg was the offspring of his late father's legal wife, Rosa O'Dogarty.<sup>13</sup>

### ROSA'S MARRIAGE

Rosa's marriage date to Sergeant-Major Don Eugenio [Owen Roe] O'Neill posed another question. Brian O'Doherty, a student of history living in Belgium, discovered the marriage license in the Louvain City Annals Office. The date of their marriage was 18 June 1613.<sup>14</sup> The occasion of her second marriage was made possible when the widowed Rosa fled her Roman exile in the summer 1612. She returned to Louvain, the vortex of the native Irish community, centered about the Franciscan College of St. Anthony of Padua. Here she was reunited with her young son, her sister-in-law, Nuala O'Donnell and her cousin, the sergeant-major of the Irish regiment. How closely she knew Owen before her exile to Rome is not known. They were, however, an ideal match, particularly after the deaths of so many young prospective native leaders. Owen was unmarried and in his early thirties. Rosa was a young widow who shared her suitor's political and religious attitudes. Both were propelled to the forefront by their strength of character. They were also generational lynchpins linking young children to aging native leaders led by the Earl of Tyrone. Owen was the tacit commander of the Irish Regiment in Flanders with no landed prospects in his homeland. Rosa had her Spanish pension, but no property or wealth commensurate to her status. Her father, brother and husband were dead; only a seven-year old son survived. The patriarchs of the native exiled community, directed by Florence Conry, the titular Archbishop of Tuam, and founder of the Franciscan College at Louvain, undoubtedly exerted pressure on the couple. Their relationship lasted thirty-five years, during which time they became devoted companions and allies.<sup>15</sup>

Within a year of the marriage, Rosa gave birth to her second son, Henry Roe O'Neill. There is no documentary evidence that she had any other children.<sup>16</sup> Henry's birth was noteworthy given the pruned ranks of the native exiles. Rosa was now the mother of two boys whose lineage were politically significant. Her first child, Hugh O'Donnell came under his step-father's tutelage. He became a captain of infantry in the Irish regiment, but was reported dead in April 1625. He was not yet twenty years of age.<sup>17</sup>



*Gravestone of Rosa O'Doherty in Louvain*

Another issue affecting Rosa's family was the accusations that Owen Roe fathered illegitimate sons. In a 1986 article in *Seanchas Ardmhacha*<sup>18</sup> these claims were addressed. The men often identified as General O'Neill's offspring were shown to be false pretenders of his lineage. The discrediting of these claimants could not overlook the fact that Owen and Rosa were separated for long periods during the Confederate war decade. However, his age, failing health and moral values did not incline him to promiscuity. In response to this refutation, the late Micheline Walsh responded with a new candidate. She said that Captain Bernardo O'Neill was Owen's real illegitimate son. Walsh relied on documentary evidence from 1681 that promoted Bernardo's son, Eugenio, for the earldom of Tyrone.<sup>19</sup> The nomination and validation, however, were dubious and inconclusive.

When Don Bernardo O'Neill, the seventh earl of Tyrone died in the summer 1681, the search began for his successor. The Spanish Council of State surprisingly turned to Sir William Godolphin, a Catholic former English Ambassador to Spain. Living in Madrid, he investigated the succession to the earldom. Godolphin was an unlikely investigator of native Irish lineage. In the course of his probe he acknowledged the difficulties of validating a claimant. Finally, he nominated a young orphaned child, Don Eugenio O'Neill, the son of Captain Bernardo O'Neill of the Irish regiment serving in Catalonia. Captain Bernardo, Godolphin, said was the illegitimate son of General Owen Roe O'Neill. Lord William was also told that the pope had legitimized Captain Bernardo. But Godolphin weakened his pronouncement when he related that he could not find any record of this dispensation.<sup>20</sup> On face value, the claims of the child and his father appear to be somewhat suspect.

Ironically, before the seventh earl's death<sup>21</sup> he had nominated a successor. His delegated heir was not Captain Bernardo, but Don Constantino [ Constantine or Con] O'Neill, a great grandson of Shane the Proud, who was still living in Ireland.<sup>22</sup> Constantine would emigrate to Spain where he pursued his alleged birthright. In his petitions and testimonials to the Spanish king and the royal councilors, Constantine advocated the legitimacy of his claim. He based a good deal of his case on the late earl's bequest. Infrequently, Constantine made a reference to his young illegitimate rival. In one pamphlet he went into detail about his rival's claim. He related that the late earl knew Captain Bernardo and yet did not designate him for succession. Instead, he selected the petitioner, whom he did not know. Much of Constantine's disclaimers against Captain Bernardo and his son appear to come from Godolphin's initial report. Actually, Sir William's disclosures were the only documentable acknowledgment to the alleged paternity of Rosa's second husband. Curiously, a desperate Constantine said that it was "public knowledge" that Captain Bernardo was "procreated in bastardy and incest."<sup>23</sup> This accusation of incest is difficult to associate with Owen Roe's known reputation and persona. Nevertheless, Godolphin's report and Constantine's repetitious charges brought nothing new or significant to the lineage debate.



Florence Conry

*"The patriarchs of the native exiled community, directed by Florence Conry, the titular Archbishop of Tuam, and founder of the Franciscan College at Louvain, undoubtedly exerted pressure on the couple"*

Undoubtedly, it was in the best interest of a claimant to link himself to the descent of someone so well esteemed as Owen Roe O'Neill. Encouraging this tact, was the fact that no one from Owen's direct descent group was alive to dispute the late Captain Bernardo's claims. With an earldom and regimental command at stake this settlement attracted many aspirants. O'Neill relatives and retainers were always ready to challenge or support a possible claimant. In February 1682, fifteen O'Neills, living in Ireland, signed a petition acknowledging Constantine as Don Bernardo's legitimate heir.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Godolphin was no authority on native genealogy. He only knew what he had been told. He had no way of checking on Captain Bernardo's self-serving claims or story. Sir William apparently was fed unsubstantiated information. These self-promoting testaments were what Don Constantine and the Spanish Council of State relied upon. They were a weak way to validate Captain Bernardo's claims, who the late seventh earl described as a man of "inordinate conceit."<sup>25</sup>

No one before Godolphin, or after Constantine, made reference to Owen Roe's paternity. If, therefore, Captain Bernardo was Owen Roe's illegitimate son, why was there no reference to him by the generation of leaders who knew General O'Neill? Given the shallow evidence source, the significant title under contention, the lack of corroboration

from Owen's contemporaries and General O'Neill's documented condition and character, it appears that Captain Bernardo's claims were self-aggrandizing and baseless.

## ROSA – THE FINAL YEARS

Other Lady Rosa reassessments involve her whereabouts and relationships during the closing years of the Confederation. According to Rosa's biography, intelligence reports indicated that she spent a great deal of time in Galway coordinating the shipment and dispersal of supplies from the continent. New information, however, has suggested that she and her daughter-in-law, Eleanor Fitzgerald [Henry Roe's wife], spent much of their time in Westport. Anne Chambers, writing about Sir Theobald Bourke, first Viscount of Mayo, proposed that Westport, rather than Galway was Rosa's main base of operations in 1648-49. Although we may never be able to confirm her actual residence, it is safe to say that both west coast ports were secure enough in 1648 for her purposes. While in Westport, Eleanor Fitzgerald, with her husband away campaigning, became involved with Sir Theobald Burke, later third viscount of Mayo. Eventually, Eleanor left Henry Roe and married Theobald sometime in 1649, a year before Henry Roe's capture and execution. Rosa was distressed by Eleanor's actions, but her primary concern was the custody of her two-year old grandson, a prominent O'Neill scion.<sup>26</sup> The youngster was too valuable a claimant to be left behind in Cromwellian Ireland with Eleanor and her Old English husband. With Owen Roe and Henry dead, there was nothing left in subjugated Ireland for Rosa and her grandchild. Rosa took custody of the child, leaving Eleanor with few alternatives but to accede to her mother-in-law's will and plans.

By mid-1652, Rosa and young Hugh found refuge in Brussels. Again, Lady Rosa became a supplicant and petitioner of Catholic Europe. Working through Father Andrea Mangelli, the Internuncio in Flanders, Rosa appealed to Pope Innocent X and the Congregation de Propaganda Fide on the child's behalf. The pope promised his support and protection for Rosa's eminent grandchild. In August 1653, Rosa took a difficult step and allowed young Hugh to depart for Rome. Accompanied by an Irish priest, Rosa's last familial bond was severed. Lady Rosa died seven years later and was buried alongside her first son in the chapel of the College of the Irish Franciscans in Louvain. Her grandson went on to become a cavalry captain in the Spanish service and rose to the rank of colonel in his Barcelona command. In 1667, he received a knighthood of Calatrava. Six years later, the only surviving grandchild of Owen and Rosa was dead. He was twenty-six<sup>27</sup>

This addendum cannot conclude without a revised overview of Rosa's immediate family. Her brother, the Lord of Inishowen, Sir Cahir died in his rebellion at the age of twenty-one. He left an unnamed daughter and widow, Mary Preston, sister to Thomas Preston, Owen Roe's lifelong rival. Unfortunately, little is known about the fate of each.<sup>28</sup> Another brother, John, married Elizabeth O'Cahan. He survived the post-rebellion plantation and died in 1638. His son, however, fled to the continent and had an active military career in the service of Rosa's husband. An unidentified sister wedded Oghie Óg O'Hanlon. Her tragic fate was recited in the State Papers' rebellion reports. Pregnant, this sister was captured, stripped of her clothes and left to die in the woods. Rescued, she passed away shortly after giving birth.<sup>29</sup> Rosa's sister, Margaret, too, was caught up in the English dragnet. She ultimately gave damaging testimony against her brother's supporters and was confined for a number of months in Dublin Castle. Two decades later, she and her son appealed to "Madama Rosa" for maintenance in Ireland.<sup>30</sup> A younger brother, Rory, was also held by the English and ultimately fled to the Low Countries. He died in 1621.

The most significant surviving O'Dogarty was Rosa's nephew, brother John's son, Owen O'Dogarty. Little is known about his early life, but he made his way to Flanders and took up service in the cavalry of his uncle's [Owen Roe] Irish regiment. Although O'Dogarty was not mentioned in pre-rebellion intelligences, he returned to Ireland with Henry Roe and other Irish officers in 1643. At first, he served as a captain of horse, but was promoted to major after the Portlester skirmish. This award was in recognition of his daring relief of the fortified mill that held off an attack by Lord Moore.<sup>31</sup>

O'Dogarty's reputation and loyalty also secured him a place on a list of officers, the "Maccabees," that O'Neill intended to build his new ruling cadre around.<sup>32</sup> At the critical battle of Benburb, O'Dogarty's cavalry played an important role. Initially, O'Dogarty, together with Brian Roe O'Neill, led 400 "choice" horsemen against the Lagan army that was intending to join up with Robert Monroe in Armagh. After deterring their progress, O'Dogarty aligned with General Richard O'Farrell's strategic right flank. His light cavalry participated in the successful attack on Robert Monroe's left side. Eventually, the turning of Monroe's left forced the Scots back against the Blackwater. Once the tide of battle was decided, it was O'Dogarty and his light horsemen that pursued the fleeing Monroe.<sup>33</sup>

The next time we hear about O'Dogarty was in December 1646 as the O'Neill-Preston campaign against Dublin was collapsing. To prevent the duplicitous Preston from joining up with Ormond's forces, Brian Roe O'Neill and Owen O'Dogarty led three troops of horse to secure the passages along the Brosna River on the borders of King's County.<sup>34</sup> Major O'Dogarty was also prominent during the Kilbeggan mutiny in early October 1647. Recalled from campaigning in Connaught, O'Neill's northern army was directed to relieve Leinster after Preston's disastrous setback at Dungan's Hill. Resentful of the Confederate government's abusive reliance on O'Neill's Ulster forces, a heated debate erupted at Kilbeggan Church. Many of Owen Roe's leading officers complained that the Supreme Council contributed nothing to the army's maintenance, yet they always called upon them in times of crisis. Five or six regiments threatened to withdraw their troops. Among the officers who were steadfast in their support for Owen Roe was Major O'Dogarty.<sup>35</sup>

In June 1648, after the Supreme Council of the Confederation broke with the clerical party and censored Owen. O'Dogarty, now a colonel, signed a declaration against the government's cessation of arms with Baron Inchiquin.<sup>36</sup> The Confederate government reacted by assembling four armies to march against the recalcitrant northern force. In the manoeuvres that followed, O'Neill shifted his soldiers to disrupt and confuse his adversaries. After securing garrisons along the Shannon, Owen Roe moved east and captured the town of Birr. In this engagement Major O'Dogarty was wounded, but resumed his command, and led his horsemen toward the beleaguered town of Athy. O'Dogarty had two purposes. He hoped to disrupt the siege long enough to allow the garrison's commander to break out of his confines. Secondly, when O'Dogarty arrived with Henry Roe's cavalry, General Preston was in the process of returning to Carlow. To forestall this action, Henry Roe sent Owen O'Dogarty to go after these "excommunicated runaways." They hoped that Colonel Owen could delay Preston until Owen Roe's main force arrived. O'Dogarty's strategy was to approach Preston's lines and challenge them to stand and accept a cavalry duel on the plains before the city. Preston's horsemen would have nothing to do with O'Dogarty's summons. Preston retired and O'Dogarty and Henry Roe repaired to Owen's camp outside of Stradbally.<sup>37</sup>

Colonel O'Dogarty also served with the northern army until the bitter end. It is not known whether he attended the Belturbet Council that elected Ever MacMahon, the bishop of

Clogher, as Owen Roe's successor, but wherever Henry Roe was Owen O'Dogarty was close by. At the Scariffhollis debacle, when most of the northern army was destroyed and Henry Roe was captured and murdered, Owen O'Dogarty managed to save many of his troopers and escaped toward Charlemont. He later participated in the siege of Kilkogan and was last heard from at a skirmish near Lusmagh. Presumably, he was killed because there was no record of him continuing his resistance or going to the continent.<sup>38</sup>

After Owen O'Dogarty's passing, the family's fortunes fell on Lady Rosa and her grandson. Regrettably, her age and dependence, and young Hugh's premature death terminated the fortunes of the Inishowen O'Dogartys. For the time being researchers can only wait until more information is uncovered to continue chronicling this ill-fated family and its inspiring matriarch.

<sup>1</sup> J. Casway, "Rosa O'Dogherty: A Gaelic Woman," *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, Vol. 10, (1980-81), 42-62; J. Casway, *Rosa O'Dogherty* (Columbia,1983), pp. 1-34.

<sup>2</sup> "The Flight of the Earls - 400 Years of Irish Exile" Symposium presented by Chicago Humanities Festival, 4-5 November 2006. "Flight of the Earls, 1607-2007" Symposium at Letterkenny Institute of Technology, 17-19 August 2007.

<sup>3</sup> J. Casway, "Heroines or Victims? The Women of the Flight of the Earls," *New Hibernia Review*, Spring 2003, Vol. 7, pp. 57-74.

<sup>4</sup> Apparently, a number of people proposing this relationship were citing T. S. O'Cahan's fictitious biography of Owen Roe O'Neill. See T.S. O'Cahan, *Owen Roe O'Neill* (London, 1968), p. 31 & p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> J. Davis to Salisbury, 12 Sept. 1607, *Calendar of State Papers*, Ireland 1606-1608, London, 1874, pp. 270-1. Casway, Rosa, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 8, n.15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Chichester to Privy Council, 12 Sept. 1608. *Cal. SP, Ire.*, 1608-1610 (London,1874), p. 29; Chichester's Instructions, 14 Sept. 1608. Ibid., 62; Chichester to [Salisbury], 18 Oct. 1608. Ibid., 87; Lords of Council to Chichester, 20 June 1609. Ibid., 218.

<sup>8</sup> Falkland to Privy Council, 7 June 1626. *State Papers, Ireland*, 63/242/346, 334. J. Casway, "The Last Lords of Leitrim: The Sons of Sir Teigue O'Rourke," *Breifne*, 1988, p. 571; J. Casway, "Mary Stuart O'Donnell," *Donegal Annual*, (Ballyshannon,1987), p. 31. Rosa and Cathbhar's son, Hugh O'Donnell died in April 1625 at the siege of Breda.

<sup>9</sup> Casway, "Mary Stuart," *Donegal Annual*, p. 31; Falkland to Privy Council, 7 June 1626. *SPI*, 63/242/346,

- 334.
- <sup>10</sup> Falkland to Conway, 18 July 1626. *Ibid.*, 63/242/389, 36.
- <sup>11</sup> Casway, "Mary Stuart," *Donegal Annual*, p. 31.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. B. Jennings, ed., *Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders*, 1582-1700 (Dublin, 1964) , p. 210 & p. 213.
- <sup>13</sup> Only T.S. O'Cahan fanciful biography of *Owen Roe* misrepresented those alleged episodes. O'Cahan, *Owen Roe*, pp. 44-8.
- <sup>14</sup> Marriage License, 18 June 1613. Louvain City Annals Office. I am indebted to Brian Doherty for this citation and discovery.
- <sup>15</sup> Casway, Rosa, p. 15; Casway, "Heroines or Victims," *NHR*, Spring 2003, Vol. 74, 71.
- <sup>16</sup> Henry O'Neill was baptized as Joannes Henricus O'Neill on 22 May 1614. Baptismal Certificate, Louvain City Annals Office. John O'Neill, the young earl of Tyrone, was Henry's godfather. Again I am indebted to Brian Doherty.
- <sup>17</sup> Casway, Rosa, p. 16; Casway, "Heroines of Victims," *NHR*, Spring 2003, Vol. 74, 71.
- <sup>18</sup> J. Casway, "The 'Illegitimate Sons' of Owen Roe O'Neill," *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, Vol. 12, #1, 1986, 116-21.
- <sup>19</sup> M.K. Walsh, "The Last Earls of Tyrone in Spain and Captain Bernardo O'Neill, Illegitimate Son of Eoghan Rua," *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, #1, 1988, 33.
- <sup>20</sup> Walsh, "Last Earls," *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, 1988, 38. Original in Archvo General de Simancas, GA 2598.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 36 & 39. Original in Archivo General de Simancas, E 4125 & E 4131.
- <sup>23</sup> Memorial of Don Constantino O'Neill to Carlos II, 4 Sept. 1683. Cited in Appendix, #13 in Walsh, "Last Earls," *SA*, Vol. 13, 1988, 57.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix 1, 43. O'Neill Testimonial, 1 Feb. 1682. Archivo General de Simancas, GA 2598.
- <sup>25</sup> Deposition, 16 Nov. 1682.. *Ibid.* .Walsh, "Last Earls," *SA*, Vol. 13, 1988, 47, Appendix 7.
- <sup>26</sup> A. Chambers, The Shadow Lord - Theobald Bourke/Tibbott-ne-long, 1567-1629 (Dublin, 2007), p. 151. Eleanor had one child with Bourke, a son, Luke, who died in 1684. Eleanor passed away in 1693.
- <sup>27</sup> Casway, Rosa, p. 23; M.K. Walsh, *The O'Neills in Spain*, (Dublin, 1960), pp. 27-9.
- <sup>28</sup> Casway, *Rosa*, p. 6.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 & 12; Davis to Salisbury, 5 Aug. 1608. *SPI*, 63/224/249, 171.
- <sup>30</sup> Certificate, 1 July 1609. *Cal. S.P., Ire.*, 1608-1610, p. 227; SPI 63/277/90III, 16. Casway, Rosa, p. 12.
- <sup>31</sup> "An Impartiall Relation of the Most Memorable Transactions of Generall Owen O'Neill and his Party....", J.T. Gilbert, ed., *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland from 1641 to 1652*, (Dublin, 1880), 3.2, 201; "An Aphorismical Discovery of Treasonable Faction", *Ibid.*, Dublin, 1879, 1.1, 106; J. Casway, *Owen Roe O'Neill and the Struggle for Catholic Ireland* (Phila., 1984), pp. 87-88.
- <sup>32</sup> J. Casway, "Gaelic Maccabeanism: The Politics of Reconciliation," in J. Ohlmeyer, ed., *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 188. "Epistle Dedicatore to Don Eugenio O'Neale" in Aphor. Disc., Gilbert, ed., *Contemp. Hist.*, 1.1, 6.
- <sup>33</sup> Casway, "Owen Roe", pp. 119-36. Aphor. Disc., Gilbert, ed., *Contemp. Hist.*, 1.1, 111.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 137. Casway, "Owen Roe", pp. 167-8.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 192-4.
- <sup>36</sup> Declaration, 17 June 1648. Bodleian Library, Carte MS, LXVII, 156. Gilbert, ed., *Contemp. Hist.*, 1.2, 741-3; R. O'Ferrall & R. O'Connell, *Commentarius Rinuccianus.....*, S. Kavanagh, ed., (Dublin, 1939), III, 295.
- <sup>37</sup> Casway, "Owen Roe", p. 233; Aphor. Disc., Gilbert, ed., *Contemp. Hist.*, 1.1, 262-3; Mem. Trans., *Ibid.*, 3.2, 210.
- <sup>38</sup> J. Casway, "The Belturbet Council and the Election of March 1650," *The Clogher Record*, XII, 1986, 159-70. P. Walsh, *Irish Chiefs and Leaders*, Dublin, 1960, p. 170. Aphor. Disc., Gilbert, ed., *Contemp. Hist.*, 2.1, 88, 112, 114.

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**Photos** – sword and mace from *Romantic Inishowen* by Harry Swan.  
Other photographs – editor.



## NIALL GARBH O'DONNELL AND THE REBELLION OF SIR CAHIR O'DOHERTY

*David Finnegan*

*'...Sir Niall O'Donnell seems to be wavering and irresolute which side to take', Sir Arthur Chichester to the Privy Council, 2 June 1608.*

*'That if he had known they would have used him thus, he would have set them all on work so as they never were in their lives', words attributed to Niall Garbh by Sir Thomas Ridgeway, 3 July 1608.*



Although not regarded with quite the same loathing as the Irish quisling *par excellence*, Dermot MacMurrough, because of the catastrophic impact of his decision to support the English garrison planted at Lough Foyle in the latter stages of the Nine Years' War, Niall Garbh O'Donnell has been represented by Irish nationalist historians as having betrayed Gaelic Ireland.<sup>1</sup> This is somewhat ironic given that it was his unswerving attachment to the Gaelic mode of lordship that guided his career and eventually led to his incarceration in the Tower of London for the last seventeen years of his life. Yet the most eminent contemporary Gaelic men of letters regarded him with little affection; his confinement to the

Tower elicited little sympathy from O'Sullivan Beare or the Four Masters and his death in captivity in 1626 occasioned little comment.<sup>2</sup> While his career is of paramount importance in understanding the final years of the Gaelic system and to a firm understanding of the structural weaknesses that brought it to pass, he remains completely overshadowed in Irish historiography by his cousin and *bete noir* Hugh Roe O'Donnell. This is because consideration of his career has been influenced by retrospective analysis of the events of the early seventeenth century. Irish nationalists had little use for a man as apparently self-serving and oblivious to the wider issues brought into play by the eclipse of the Gaelic order. More surprisingly, given his apparent privileging of dynastic *real politick* over 'faith and fatherland' or family (his wife abandoned him for his betrayal of the rebel cause), Irish revisionist historians have also failed to utilise him as a means of explaining events during the death throes of Gaelic Ulster.

While this article will focus upon his role in the O'Doherty rebellion, that cannot be understood without a firm grasp of his earlier career. His career from 1589 when he replaced Hugh MacEdegany at the head of his grandfather's faction – the MacCalvagh branch of the O'Donnell family – was spent in pursuit of his lifelong obsession to be the lord of Tyrconnell. This governed all his actions. In this he was but pursuing the claim of his line to hegemony within Tyrconnell. He shared with his grandfather, Calvagh and his father, Conn MacCalvagh, the conviction that it was Shane O'Neill's imprisonment of Calvagh between 1561-64 for his loyalty to the crown that had allowed Calvagh's younger brother, Hugh, to usurp power. This conviction was sustained by the Dublin government which had granted Calvagh letters patent to Tyrconnell in the mid-1560s, and which had thereafter intervened intermittently to preserve the position of his heirs within the lordship. This was of course not mere altruism on the government's part; for notwithstanding the fact that Hugh had destroyed the primacy of Shane O'Neill at the Battle of Farsetmore in 1567 (for which service he was knighted) the government never wholly trusted this branch of the family, especially after Sir Hugh's marriage to Fionnuala (or Ineen Dubh) the daughter of James MacDonald of the Isles.<sup>3</sup>

The government's recognition of the MacCalvaghs led to the emergence of a new claim to power diametrically opposed to its Gaelic counterpart. These systems frequently clashed thereafter, giving those collateral branches of the ruling family who sought to contend for power the option of pursuing that aim in combination with the crown.<sup>4</sup> After the death in 1581 of Sir Hugh's *tánaiste*, Cathbarr, opposition within the lordship to the

ruling O'Donnell branch steadily intensified, encouraged by sporadic government interventions, especially the imprisonment in 1587 of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, Sir Hugh's designated heir.<sup>5</sup> Successive heads of the MacCalvagh faction were the chief challengers and it was with great difficulty that the ruling faction clung to power. Their ability to do so suggests that there remained a strong attachment to Gaelic modes of lordship amongst the majority of the politically active members of the Tyrconnell polity.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the 1570s and 1580s the MacCalvaghs were aware, as was Hugh O'Neill in the neighbouring lordship of Tyrone, that given the government's continued reluctance to invest sufficient resources in establishing its authority in Ulster, power remained vested in the Gaelic system and that the 'strong arm' was the most important qualification for lordship.

Here too Niall was well qualified for lordship<sup>7</sup> as a member of the *deirbhfhine* of Manus 'the Magnificent'.<sup>8</sup> The qualities most necessary for the exercise of Gaelic lordship were personal bravery and martial ability which Niall had in abundance, and political acumen with which he was only somewhat less blessed.<sup>9</sup> He also possessed the more practical supports necessary to the pursuit of power in a Gaelic lordship. Based in the Cineál Moain, the best land in the Tyrconnell lordship and the traditional lands attached to the office of *tánaiste*, Niall had many tenants, who owed him rent and services, as well as considerable wealth in cattle. Within Tyrconnell he had support from Owen Óg MacSweeney and Conn O'Gallagher and less predictably that of the O'Dohertys of Inishowen. He also inherited from his father's faction the strongholds of Lifford and Castle Finn. His status within Tyrconnell was confirmed by his marriage to Nuala, the daughter of Hugh MacManus. Outside the lordship he was often allied with Turlough Luineach, the ruling O'Neill and inveterate enemy of Hugh O'Neill, the second Earl of Tyrone and son-in-law of Hugh MacManus. He also had support from his cousins, the MacLeans of Duart with whom he had been fostered and who owing to the execution of another of their cousins, Hugh Gavelach MacShane, were inveterate opponents of the Earl of Tyrone – MacShane's executioner – and his chief allies, the family of Sir Hugh Donnell.

By 1592 Niall was in a position to make a strong bid for the O'Donnellship, especially as Hugh MacManus laboured under senility and with his most able son, Hugh Roe, languishing in Dublin Castle.<sup>10</sup> At this juncture however, Hugh Roe escaped from Dublin Castle and rallied the lordship against the oppressive English garrisons which had exploited it since his incarceration. This coupled with the support of 1,000 Scottish mercenaries supplied by his mother rallied the traditionalist party in Tyrconnell behind him. Soon after

Hugh Roe compelled the more independent O'Donnell collaterals to submit and secured his inauguration after his father's abdication in May 1592. Niall Garbh, we are told, submitted then 'wholly through fear'.<sup>11</sup> He was forced to surrender hostages and to hand over Lifford, which controlled one of the key fords on the River Foyle. Niall thereafter proved himself remarkably Machiavellian in adapting to the exigencies of the time.<sup>12</sup> He exploited his marital connection to ingratiate himself with Hugh Roe and through his martial ability rose to a position of considerable trust in Hugh Roe's forces during the Nine Years' War. Despite this he never lost sight of his ambition to rule Tyrconnell.

## DOCWRA'S ARRIVAL IN LOUGH FOYLE

The English government were well aware of this charade (through Niall's overtures)<sup>13</sup> and in April 1600, assured of Niall's support, they landed an expeditionary force at Lough Foyle under the command of Sir Henry Docwra.<sup>14</sup> His second invitation in February 1600 was opportune for after the debacle of the Essex expedition, Elizabeth and her government were resolved to bring the Ulster confederates to their knees no matter what the cost.<sup>15</sup> They remained convinced that their best means of doing so was to set the Irish against each other.<sup>16</sup> Tyrone had had his doubts about the sincerity of Niall's attachment to the rebel cause from at least 1598.<sup>17</sup> Yet Niall's Machiavellian cartwheel seemed to stun Hugh Roe and it led to the development of a murderous hatred between the MacHughs and MacCalvaghs.<sup>18</sup> This naïveté was surprising given that to secure their military service, O'Donnell had been forced to take hostages from the Connacht lords, while he had also had to imprison his chief *ur-rí*, O'Doherty, for much of 1595.<sup>19</sup>

*"There is no better war in this country than when they fight in blood one against the other"*, Sir Arthur Chichester to the Privy Council, 16 December 1600

Niall's service yielded extraordinary dividends for Docwra's expeditionary force. Although he initially brought a mere '30 horse, 120 foot and only three score kine' his defection as a brother-in-law of the O'Donnell dealt a devastating blow to Hugh Roe's prestige. As Docwra advertised the government 'his love and credit with the people is little inferior to O'Donnell's, and may easily be more, if he be backed and strengthened by Her Majesty; for the one is known and commonly reputed timorous and fearful [Hugh Roe], and the other valiant and as hardy as any man living'. Moreover, Dowcra contin-

ued that ‘divers of his friends have offered to come to him themselves in person’. Within months of the alliance Niall had enabled the expeditionary force to seize and garrison with 1000 men the strategically critical stronghold of Lifford.<sup>20</sup> This drove a wedge between Hugh Roe and Hugh O’Neill’s spheres of influence and as Docwra pointed out ensured that ‘our men [were] conveniently lodged in houses (which we wanted extremely before), our horses accommodated with the like, and well stored with provisions (of which we stood in no less want)’.<sup>21</sup>

## SEIZURE OF LIFFORD

The seizure of Lifford forced Hugh Roe to return from a projected raid on Thomond and to encamp at Croaghan, two miles to the northwest of Lifford, so his labourers could harvest safely. Having persuaded Docwra to attack Croaghan, Niall ‘and his brothers were leaders of the fight’. This engagement ensured that Niall could never rejoin Hugh Roe because in the course of the skirmish Niall and his brothers killed The O’Donnell’s younger brother, Manus.<sup>22</sup> What Niall was about here was the reduction of the MacHugh faction and the extension of his own practical authority within Tyrconnell rather than the extension of English authority.

Yet his support was critical in allowing Dowcra to erode the rebels’ positions from the rear and, accordingly at the formal meeting with Mountjoy in March 1601 where Niall’s alliance with the government was confirmed, he was able to set a high price.<sup>23</sup> As reward for his services up to that point and to ensure his continuing support against the Ulster confederates the government ceded Tyrconnell to him; though Inishowen, despite his protestations, was not included in his ‘custodiam’ (formal crown promise).<sup>24</sup> While utilising government support in his bid to oust Hugh Roe, Niall was determined to retain the authority of the O’Donnell and boldly informed the government that he would ‘punish, exact, cut and hang, if I see occasion, where and whensover I list’.<sup>25</sup> Here was no reformer modernising Gaelic lordship to fit with the crown’s sovereign claims; in Niall Garbh’s vision of Tyrconnell’s future, Elizabeth and her successors would function as shadowy suzerains.<sup>26</sup> Niall was determined to be an independent Gaelic lord and sovereign within Tyrconnell. Neither was it by any means certain that he was resigned to renouncing traditional O’Donnell claims to authority over Inishowen and north Connacht.

After his return to the north Niall, using his own natural followers and 500 foot and 100 horse granted him from Dowcra’s expeditionary force, continued to considerably undermine Hugh Roe’s position within Tyrconnell, though it was not until Hugh Roe’s mission to Spain after the catastrophic rebel defeat at Kinsale that the confederate party in Tyrconnell disintegrated. By early 1602 however Niall could claim to be effective master of the lordship having seized the strongholds of Rathmullan, Doe, Ramelton, Castle Derg, Newton, Donegal, Banagh, Lough Eske, Ballyshannon and Enniskillen, as well as the monasteries of Donegal, Magherabeg, Assaroe, Devenish and Lisgooley.<sup>27</sup> He had obtained the submission of many of the O’Donnell vassals and had ‘taken many of O’Donnell’s prey since his departure and has received in MacSweeney Banagh with his creates and others of his country’.<sup>28</sup> He had been knighted, granted a royal ‘custodiam’ promising him Tyrconnell and he was even recognised in some state correspondence as ‘The O’Donnell’. Niall appeared to have accomplished his aim of becoming the paramount power with Tyrconnell. He was not to enjoy this position for very long however and he would soon have cause to echo Donal O’Cahan’s famous hope that the devil take all Englishmen and as many as put their trust in them.

As Niall’s internal position in Tyrconnell strengthened his relationship with the English administration and some of its servitors, especially Dowcra, deteriorated.<sup>29</sup> Dowcra claimed that Niall was conducting himself in too independent a manner for a good subject and he took prisoner those Tyrconnell sub-lords who had yielded Niall hostages.<sup>30</sup> Niall deemed this assertion of English sovereignty within Tyrconnell a contravention of his ‘custodiam’ as well as an effort to undermine his authority within Tyrconnell and he protested these as such. Niall’s efforts to cultivate alliances with the Maguires, the O’Dohertys, the MacDavitts and the Sliocht Airt O’Neills were now cast by Dowcra as part of a general unwillingness to co-operate with English administration and by extension a refusal to acknowledge Elizabeth’s sovereignty.<sup>31</sup> In April 1602 the English Privy Council advised Mountjoy and the Irish Council that ‘now that Niall Garbh is so wholly possessed of Tyrconnell, we doubt not but your Lordship and the Council, upon perusal of former grants and present consideration of things, will foresee that he be not made so absolute to be out of awe of the state’.<sup>32</sup> Mountjoy, whose earnest desire by mid-1602 was a return to England to garner his rewards for breaking the back of the rebellion, was predisposed to do entirely that and had already observed from Rory O’Donnell’s spirited rearguard action ‘how notable an instrument he may be made to bridle Sir Niall Garbh, whose insolence has grown intolerable’. The Privy Council’s view that ‘as there is some

shrewd suspicion; that in your grants Her Majesty be no way barred of any forfeiture of the whole upon treason committed by the patentees' suggested that their interpretation of the 'custodiam' granted Niall differed substantively from Niall's articulated above. This further endorsed Mountjoy's intention that 'whilst giving effect to Her Majesty's promise to Sir Niall' to also 'settle' Rory 'in a considerable part of Tyrconnell'.<sup>33</sup>

### INAUGURATION AT KILMACRENAN 1603

These difficulties likely contributed to Niall Garbh's decision to have himself inaugurated as the O'Donnell at Kilmacrenan in early 1603, though the critical factor was probably the return to Tyrconnell of Rory O'Donnell after he had concluded a peace with Mountjoy. His inauguration and his refusal to virtual the English garrison at Ballyshannon were unequivocal statements that Niall's claim to Tyrconnell was not merely derived from his 'custodiam'. Niall was illustrating that he had earned the support of the Cineál Chonáill (people of Tyrconnell) through traditional Gaelic modes and had been popularly elected as their lord. His justification after his arrest for his presumptuous act was illuminating. He pointed out that he had been referred to as the 'O'Donnell' in correspondence from Mountjoy in 1601 and told Docwra '...you know the whole country of Tyrconnell was long since promised me, and many services that I have done, that I think have deserved it, but I saw that I was neglected, and therefore I have righted myself, by taking the cattle, and people, that were my own, and to prevent others, have made myself O'Donnell; now by this means the country is sure unto me...' <sup>34</sup>

This was the rub. Niall's desire to have Tyrconnell assured to him as its Gaelic sovereign was seen as atavistic by the English government given its desire to abolish any sovereignty but its own throughout Ireland. Although he had been promised much, given the government's dominant position there was little that he could do but accept that the administration had reneged on its deal with him.<sup>35</sup> Docwra subsequently offered qualified sympathy for what had happened to Niall when he uneasily recounted in his 1614 'Narration' that '...I was verily persuaded he was at that time a malicious rebel, and if it might be done with justice, the safest course were to take off his head, but if he had not done anything that Law could take hold of in that kind, I saw not how his lordship [Mountjoy] could think himself freed of his Promises...' <sup>36</sup>

Niall escaped after three days in confinement. According to O'Sullivan Beare he fled 'to

a thick wood and gathered his forces and party'. Though possibly prompted by fear, this was a disastrous decision. Docwra and Rory O'Donnell combined their forces and divested him of his goods and followers (according to O'Sullivan 4,000 died) and forced him to sue for peace and pardon.<sup>37</sup> It was to get worse for Niall because Docwra's argument that 'His Majesty is not tied to former promise made him, seeing that he has entered into arms against the State'<sup>38</sup> was taken up by Mountjoy who insisted upon the establishment of Rory O'Donnell in Tyrconnell because then 'His Majesty will have a most firm subject of him, and one that with his own power will be able to utterly suppress Niall Garbh'<sup>39</sup>. Against this backdrop Niall's visit to London to present his claim to the whole lordship before the new monarch availed him little. Although the Four Masters suggest that he was well satisfied with the grant of 'his own patrimonial inheritance, namely, that tract of country extending from Leachta-Suibhaine, westwards, to Seascann-Lubanach, lying on both sides of the River Finn', Niall returned to Tyrconnell nursing a clear sense of betrayal.<sup>40</sup> He remained suspected by the Dublin administration between 1603-8.

It is the sense of betrayal that Niall Garbh felt that has persuaded most historians who have considered the events of summer 1608 in Ulster that he was complicit in O'Doherty's Rebellion. It also convinced the Dublin administration shortly after the outbreak and on the basis of the flimsiest proofs (which admittedly became much stronger as time wore on) that Niall was 'a rebel in all but action'. Less consideration is given the fact that the events of summer 1603 more likely left him much chastened. In a matter of days his inability to resist the state's forces was made plain. Thereafter he seems to have placed his hopes of advancement in the crown and had sought to exploit legal channels to advance his cause.<sup>42</sup> His behaviour in the year before O'Doherty's rebellion scarcely suggests that of a malcontent. In early 1607 he had helped the state to bring the rebels Caffer Óg O'Donnell and Niall MacSweeney to submission, earning in the process 'a blow...which he will hardly recover of long time, if he escape with his life'.<sup>43</sup> That September he was providing intelligence on the movement of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, as Chichester argued at the outbreak that 'that he has the power to further the service in hand, if he be loyally affected'; he had the same power to hinder it and if he had supported O'Doherty the government would not have quashed the rebellion so quickly.<sup>45</sup>

This fact was appreciated throughout the administration and its servitors in Ulster were extremely jealous of his actions. This led to numerous confused and often conflicting reports of Niall's behaviour throughout the revolt. As early as 10 May Sir Thomas Phillips, based at Coleraine, alleged that Niall was in rebellion and that 'Niall Garbh has conditioned with Sir Cahir that he is to acknowledge him his lord, and for that respect to yield to him, as his ancestors before have done, 120 cows by the year'. The inaccuracy of this report should soon have been apparent for Niall did not assume the O'Donnellship as Phillips also alleged nor did O'Doherty 'deliver up to him the castle of Burt'. Phillips also withdrew his claim the following day.<sup>46</sup>

In order to establish Niall's role in events amidst this myriad of conflicting reports and claims and counter-claims it is instructive to examine briefly the course of events from the outbreak of the rebellion on 18 April until the arrest of Niall Garbh around 20 June.<sup>47</sup> The first action was the seizure of the Culmore Fort and the burning of Derry on 18-19 April.

<sup>48</sup> Niall's first observable reaction was to offer in his letter to Chichester of 25 April to bring in O'Doherty's head or to drive him from his country in return for a grant of the entire country of Tyrconnell. It seems that he sought to use the crisis to persuade the crown 'to restore to him the possessions of his ancestors, being the whole country and territory of Tyrconnell'. It seems however that he was prepared to make some adjustment to the new order. He recognised that an English presence in Tyrconnell was now inevitable and he was willing to accept that Ballyshannon, Derry and Lifford were to be reserved to the crown. He also made it plain that he had rejected O'Doherty's offer of the traditional allegiance owed by his family to the O'Donnells and 'to deliver the whole spoil taken...from the Derry' if Niall would 'defend him'.<sup>49</sup> He pointed out that he had warned Hansard of 'O'Doherty's pretence touching the overthrow of Derry, before his going up' and had prevented a son of O'Boyle from seizing a local fort by placing a ward of his own men there.<sup>50</sup> He also requested arms from the Ballyshannon and Lifford garrisons to equip his men to encounter the rebels<sup>51</sup> Niall assured the governor that despite O'Doherty's appeals and offers to join him 'neither this solicitation nor the losses which he has sustained, nor the support given to the claim of his adversary, Tyrconnell, by his great friends, shall weaken his [Niall's] allegiance towards his King'. He concluded by observing that he had found 'a general mistrust conceived by the chief commanders here towards himself'.

In response, Chichester encouraged Niall to make good these offers, but warned him not 'at this time' to 'stand capitulating with the king' whilst advising him that he might 'expect recompense according to your carriage and desserts'. He commended Niall's decision not to join with O'Doherty and requested him to use his good offices with O'Doherty to secure 'the liberal usage and release' of the female prisoners taken by the rebels at Derry.<sup>52</sup> The tone of this letter was implicitly threatening and might well have made Niall stand on his guard, particularly given the harassment to which Sir Henry Folliot, the governor of Ballyshannon, had subjected him in previous months.<sup>53</sup> The Privy Council, influenced by the reports of its Irish councillors concluded that there 'was such a swelling in his [Niall's] style as gives no good assurance of his loyalty, unless he shall now demonstrate it by action'.<sup>54</sup>

## MARSHAL WINGFIELD DISPATCHED

As confusion reigned in the north the government mobilised for action remarkably quickly. Chichester was determined to demonstrate both the state's power and that the old way of settling grievances was no longer tolerable. He noted that 'the eyes of the bad are now fixed upon them, and therefore this war should be made thick and short'.<sup>55</sup> Although the garrison comprised considerably less than its nominal 1,700 infantry, Chichester dispatched Marshal Wingfield with a 'small diminutive of an army' to engage the rebels, while he prepared additional forces and awaited reinforcements from England.<sup>56</sup> In the event these were not required, for just as Chichester marched north to rendezvous with Wingfield, the latter's forces encountered the rebels in the vicinity of Kilmacrenan on 5 July. In the ensuing skirmish O'Doherty was killed.<sup>57</sup> Although the rebels were dispersed as a result, Chichester pressed on into Ulster and engaged in a shockingly brutal mopping-up campaign typified by his grim resolution that the remaining rebels pardon could only be received to mercy after bringing in their fellows' heads.<sup>58</sup>



*Ulster 1602-3, before the death of Queen Elizabeth I, showing churches, houses and forts.*

By this time Niall Garbh had been arrested for ‘since the disaster of the Derry he has been doubtful, denying to come to any command in those parts’;<sup>60</sup> it was only on 8 June that he had joined with Wingfield, who had arrived in the vicinity of Derry on 20 May. From 25 April he had tried to use the government’s necessity to ensure the terms of his 1601 agreement, as he understood them, were implemented. Niall’s disastrous failure to join promptly with the Marshal gave colour to the allegations that he was involved in the rebellion. Though it seems possible that Niall’s absence from the English camp was occasioned by fear of the hostile attitude towards him, the fact that ‘he was never in the camp but two nights’ hardly eased English fears and left him open to charges of collusion. Given Chichester’s express warning, this was a very high-risk strategy, particularly in the *maelstrom* of rumour then sweeping Ireland. It confirmed the suspicions of the Dublin and London governments that Niall could not be depended upon, especially because as the weeks passed evidence of collusion between Niall and the rebels continued to accumulate.<sup>62</sup> The nerviness of the Dublin administration owed to the alarm occasioned by the Flight of the Earls and continuing reports of the fugitives’ return at the head of a

Spanish army.<sup>63</sup> It was this climate that saw Sir Cahir O’Doherty, a dyed-in-the-wool loyalist, accused of raising rebellion when he left his castle to cut some wood in November 1607. When O’Doherty immediately went to Dublin to protest his innocence, instead of being received gratefully as his past services merited, Chichester first had him imprisoned and then placed the enormous recognisance of £1000 upon him.<sup>63</sup> This was the climate of suspicion that forced O’Doherty into rebellion declaring that he would ‘play the enemy who they [the government and its officials] would not admit for a friend’. In this climate it was inevitable that Niall’s effort to force the government’s hand by inactivity saw him condemned as an enemy of the state.

The two-part indictment presented against Niall on the occasion of his trial at the King’s Bench in Dublin in June 1609 best encapsulate the reasons for his arrest: ‘First that he moved and incited O’Doherty to enter into rebellion, and that he laid the plot of taking the fort of Culmore and of sacking and burning of the Derry’; and second ‘that, O’Doherty being in actual rebellion, and Sir Niall Garbh admitted to be one of the King’s captains; he betrayed the counsels of the King’s army to O’Doherty; gave his counsel and advice how to decline and avoid the King’s forces; and gave him comfort and encouragement to continue in his rebellion’.<sup>66</sup> Consideration of the entire body of evidence makes it clear that Niall’s arrest was predicated upon longstanding suspicions of his overweening ambitions and the reports of a number of Ulster informants.<sup>67</sup> He was under suspicion from the outset. Chichester, deeply suspicious of his intentions, had advised Marshal Wingfield to arrest him if he had not given adequate display of his loyalty by the time the government’s forces arrived in the north.<sup>68</sup> Chichester also continued to advise the Privy Council of Niall’s doubtful behaviour and on 20 May the Privy Council advised Chichester that they would ‘not make Sir Niall’s fortune so great as may prove unfit should he show an evil mind hereafter’.<sup>69</sup> Such evidence has been grist to the mill of those historians who are convinced of Niall’s innocence and who believe that he was the victim of a campaign orchestrated by members of the Dublin administration who wished to have him removed. Séan Ó Domhnaill has suggested that Chichester regarded Niall as his only major competitor for a grant of Inishowen and because of this, sought to discredit him in England. This is a possibility but orchestration of evidence and deliberate fabrication are two completely different things. It must be admitted that Chichester had written to England to learn what portion of Tyrconnell the king might be willing to allow Niall.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, it was certainly the case that Chichester’s opinion that Niall might eventually rebel was shared by a number of the local English commanders and supported by the testimony of a number of Irish witnesses.<sup>71</sup>

Ó Domhnaill believed that the charges of complicity in O'Doherty's Rebellion were far from proven and rightly pointed out that a number of his chief accusers were longstanding enemies, condemned prisoners or utterly unreliable. As the mother of his greatest rivals, Ineen Dubh's testimony was the least safe (Niall had slain one of her sons with his own hand).<sup>73</sup> He had also recently deprived her of her stronghold at Mongavlin.<sup>74</sup> Her specific accusations were anything but; she asserted that 'he and O'Doherty will murder them all'. Her insistence that Niall was in communication with the rebels under the command of Phelim Reagh MacDavitt at the Culmore fort were not confirmed by Phelim in his deposition of 3 August 1608 (although he later implicated Niall). If Niall had been a secret party to the rebellion and then reneged it is unlikely that Phelim would have passed up an opportunity to revenge himself.<sup>75</sup> Other key witnesses produced equally contradictory evidence. One Dubhaltach MacGiolla Duibh, who was reported by Chichester to have testified that Niall had sent messengers to O'Doherty warning him that the government's forces were preparing to attack him in Glenveigh, was presented in Sir John Davies assessment as having said messengers 'were not sent to O'Doherty from Sir Niall for he saw them not; and he thinketh they could not have been there but he must have seen them'.<sup>76</sup> MacGiolla Duibh also ludicrously insisted that the governor of Lifford, Sir Richard Hansard, was secretly in the conspiracy.<sup>77</sup> His secretary, John Lynshull, offered no direct evidence that Niall was involved.<sup>78</sup> Most preposterous of all however was the statement, unverified by any written or signed testimony, that Niall's two brothers accused him of complicity in the revolt during their stay with the English army at Glenveigh.<sup>79</sup> These men had always been and remained staunch supporters of their brother.<sup>80</sup> While a number of individuals testified that while Niall's men were involved in the attack on Derry and Niall was granted half the spoil for his assistance<sup>81</sup>, one Lieutenant Baker, an English officer who participated in the defence of Derry and identified the assailants made no mention of Niall or his men in his description of the attack.<sup>82</sup> Finally a letter sent on 28 June by O'Doherty to O'Gallagher seeking his support made no reference to Niall as a potential ally.<sup>83</sup>

Yet there were other witnesses who alleged that Niall was in collusion with the rebels and the present author believes that Ó Domhnaill's arguments that Niall was innocent of active collusion with the rebels are based on special pleading and a failure to examine all of the evidence.<sup>84</sup> While there seems to be no doubt that Niall did not materially support the rebels,<sup>85</sup> there certainly appears to be not inconsiderable evidence that Niall was guilty of providing the rebels with moral support by holding out the possibility that he would

join them. At this point it is more instructive to consider the remaining evidence against him in the context of his trial.

## ON TRIAL 1609

Niall's trial, which took place on 24 June 1609, lasted roughly eight or nine hours. As mentioned above he had been arraigned upon two charges. We are chiefly dependant upon government accounts of the episode to reconstruct events. Yet there are major problems with the government's case against Niall. In the case of Phelim Reagh MacDavitt, torture (or the threat thereof) seems likely to have been used to obtain incriminating evidence; witness his contention that O'Doherty would have joined the Earls in their flight (O'Doherty then still stood in high favour with the government and he was foreman of the jury that condemned the fugitives for treason).<sup>86</sup> Davies reported that the prosecution gave no evidence to prove the first part of the indictment that Niall had provoked O'Doherty to revolt and had laid the plot for the taking of Culmore and the 'sacking and burning of Derry...though himself did but faintly deny it'. This was because Niall had 'the benefit of Mr Marshal's protection after that fact was committed'. Yet this disregards that there was little real evidence to suggest that Niall had planned the attack on Derry as well as the fact that Sir George Paulet, governor of Derry had given O'Doherty sufficient provocation. 'Not only had he offered' O'Doherty 'insult and abuse by word, but also inflicted chastisement on his body; so that he would rather have suffered death than live to brook such insult and dishonour, or defer or delay to take revenge for it; and he was filled with anger and fury, so that he nearly ran to distraction and madness'.<sup>87</sup>

The prosecution then focused on the second half of the indictment that Niall had, 'after he was received and trusted in the army as a servitor', betrayed the counsels of the army to O'Doherty to encourage him to remain in arms and to avoid the crown's forces. The testimony of eight witnesses (four of whom delivered *viva voce* as the others had been executed) testified that Niall was guilty of these further offences committed after his protection. Most damning in Davies' eyes was the testimony of the foster-father of Niall's eldest son, Dultagh MacGiolladuibh, who brought the message warning O'Doherty to flee Glenveagh before the crown's forces moved against him.<sup>88</sup> Three others who had heard the message delivered in person corroborated this account.<sup>89</sup> Davies continued that the army officers serving alongside him had by 'divers particular actions and omissions...after his protection' shown himself so 'disobedient and perfidious...that he might have been condemned to death in a marshal's court'.<sup>90</sup>

Niall's own defence (of which the reports of the trial fail to supply any details) must have been more convincing than his defence of his conduct before the Irish Council and in his letter to Salisbury written shortly after his transfer to the Tower of London provides us with his view of his role during the rebellion. He relied upon his service in the Nine Years' War rather than addressing his own position and attitude during the critical month before his arrest. He pointed out to Salisbury that he had been the first to warn of Tyrone and Hugh Roe's treasons 'when they first purposed their rebellion in Sir William Fitzwilliam's time' and that if he 'could not be drawn by Tyrone and O'Donnell themselves, when the Spaniards were in Ireland, to back them to be false to the crown' he was most unlikely to be 'partaker with so base a rebel as O'Doherty'.<sup>91</sup> He believed that his current difficulties owed to the hatred of 'the Earl's [Tyrone's] secret friends' in the Irish government who feared that 'they themselves might be touched with it' [complicity in Tyrone's treason]. In his earlier defence before the Council he argued that he had commission for all of his actions. He justified his departure from the camp as an attempt to gather men for the suppression of the revolt and horses and livestock for safekeeping. He even admitted that 'two days before O'Doherty fled, he had sent his people to Glenveagh for the creates which offered of themselves to come to him' but argued that he 'acquainted Sir Oliver Lambert' with this fact 'and had Mr Marshal's warrant for it in writing'. He failed however, to address the key question as to just why he failed to join up with the government's army until early June.<sup>92</sup>

Despite the considerable amount of evidence the prosecution had amassed the jury refused to bring in a 'guilty' verdict.<sup>93</sup> Given that the jurors clung to their conviction that Niall had not been proven guilty despite being starved for three days to return a 'guilty' verdict, Sir John Davies' lamentation that 'though the evidence were clear and full against' Niall, an Irish jury 'will never condemn a principal traitor' rang a little hollow in this case. That a jury that he alleged to have been comprised of his enemies acquitted Niall of all charges seems to confirm that the evidence against him was 'improbable, inconsistent and confused' and ultimately unsafe.<sup>94</sup> Perusal of the actual testimonies, as opposed to the government's slant on the evidence, suggests that the jury's doubts about Niall's guilt were justified. For instance Lynshull's two interviews do seem to suggest that counsel was leading the witness, particularly as the second interview contained material, relating to offences alleged against Niall after he had received his pardon, that the earlier one did not.<sup>95</sup>

Having failed to persuade or coerce the jury into finding against Niall the crown prosecutor withdrew the indictments to prevent a 'not guilty' verdict being returned. This meant that the crown could proceed to a retrial or transfer Niall to England for trial there. Davies admitted to Salisbury that this involved 'pretending that he had more evidence to give for the king'. This determination to remove Niall from the scene has caused considerable speculation amongst historians. Aidan Clarke has stated that what governed the English government's response to Niall's involved the 'subordination of justice to policy'. As mentioned earlier Seán Ó Domhnaill believed Chichester coveted Inishowen for his own and sought to exploit the situation to have his only serious rival removed. Adhamhnán Ó Domhnaill has argued that the Irish government worked to discredit Niall by suggesting to London that he refused to assist them as his removal would facilitate their projected plantation, the planning of which was then already underway.<sup>97</sup> Had he come out openly against O'Doherty Niall would have placed himself within the category of 'deserving Irish'. Niall was transferred to the Tower of London soon after where he was to die some seventeen years later. His fate was certainly an injustice before the law but the reality was that Niall had not done enough to secure his position. While Chichester is blamed for Niall's incarceration, it was King James who ordered his transfer to London.<sup>98</sup>

There is no doubt that the Irish government had no wish to return such a potentially disruptive force to the north. Sir John Davies insisted that 'he must be kept in prison till the colonies of English and Scottish be planted in Tyrconnell' for 'of the O'Donnells there is not one man left of any reckoning, now that Sir Niall Garbh is clapped up in prison'<sup>99</sup>. Chichester's instructions for the interrogation of the captured Phelim Reagh MacDavitt suggest that the deputy sought Niall's elimination.<sup>100</sup> After their arrest Niall Garbh and his fellow arrestees were declared by Chichester to be 'unfit (ill-affected, and now enraged as they are to be let loose, and dismissed home into their countries)'. He recommended their execution as a means of forever quieting Ulster.<sup>101</sup> Chichester's argument that it was sometimes 'necessary to offend or transgress against the law in some things in order to maintain justice in great matters or in the whole' bore the stamp of Machiavelli.<sup>102</sup>

It is difficult to say with certainty whether and to what extent Niall had colluded with the rebels in 1608. It is the present author's conviction that the critical mass of evidence points to the fact that, although embittered by the crown's failure to fully honour its promises to him after 1603, he was much too politically savvy to ascribe to a revolt that had little prospect of succeeding. The evidence does suggest that he possibly encouraged

O'Doherty to rebel, but that he never seriously contemplated joining him. Niall was in no position to mount any real resistance for, as Chichester observed, while he had a 'good store of men' he had 'but few arms, which...is a general want among the Irish'.<sup>103</sup> Nor could he have been under any illusions as to the danger of choosing the wrong course of action given Chichester's advice of Mayday 1608 to 'consider you with yourself the last experience you have seen of traitors and rebels, what Tyrone and O'Donnell did when they were strongest' and promise that 'you may expect recompense according to your carriage and desserts'.<sup>104</sup>

Yet he still gambled that he could extract a copper-fastened promise that Tyrconnell would be his if he held aloof long enough to force the state to buy his assistance against the rebels. He failed utterly to see either his dispensability or the new determination of the government to secure Ulster by ridding it of all who might oppose their authority. So what brought Niall to his ruin was his refusal to negotiate power.<sup>105</sup> Although he was prepared in 1608 to make some concessions to the state's power, he failed to recognise the altered political reality in Ulster ensuing upon the flight of his old nemeses – Tyrone and Tyrconnell – the previous year. Niall simply did not appreciate the increased role of the English sovereign's power in Ulster politics. The unpalatable lesson that persuaded the earls to flee – that no form of sovereignty could be interposed between the king and any of his subjects (at least without the royal commission) – was not one that Niall could, or more likely would, absorb.<sup>106</sup> He refused to be a landlord.

Ultimately Niall doomed himself because failing to recognise the new order he never relinquished his ambition to have the whole of Tyrconnell as did his ancestors or in the deputy's words 'to become a Roitelet [French: 'little king']...to the great disturbance and discordance of all'.<sup>107</sup> His actions in 1608 – holding the state to ransom – could only have been based upon the related beliefs that his complicity could not be demonstrated sufficiently to secure a conviction (and in this he was proved right) and that his earlier and recent record of loyalty would insulate him from the consequences of rumoured involvement. Yet as Niall learned to his cost the question of whether or not he supported the rebels either materially or morally was beside the point; given his behaviour in 1603 the events of the late spring and summer of 1608 demanded an unequivocal demonstration of loyalty on his part. In the changed context only a conspicuous display of loyalty could have saved Niall and this he conspicuously failed to deliver. This confirmed his political atavism to the Irish government; he could not be considered as a fit prop of the state's

power.<sup>108</sup> The Gaelic poet, Owen Roe MacWard, was convinced that Niall had been wrongfully imprisoned and that the English government had employed Grecian treachery in plotting his downfall.<sup>109</sup> The reality is much less romantic. Niall attempted to play a high stakes game when his hand was insufficiently strong. He gambled and lost.

<sup>1</sup> This tradition began with O'Sullivan Beare who claimed that '...greed for chieftaincy prompted Niall O'Donnell, surnamed Garbh, to effect the destruction of Tyrconnell by levying war against O'Donnell'; P. O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth: chapters towards a history of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth, being a portion of the history of Catholic Ireland* (ed. & trans.) M.J. Byrne (Port Washington, 1970), p.58.

<sup>2</sup> The historian John Lynch blamed Niall for allowing Docwra's soldiers to kill the aged bishop of Derry, Redmond O'Gallagher; J.J. Silke, 'Niall Garbh', *New DNB* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland* (eds.) H.C. Hamilton, E.G. Atkinson and R.P. Mahaffy (24 vols., London, 1860-1912), 1588-92, p.498 (hereafter *CSPI*).

<sup>4</sup> *CSPI*, 1509-73, p.353; *Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the earliest to the year 1616* (ed. and trans.) J. O'Donovan (7 vols., Dublin, 1856), sub anno 1581 (hereafter *AFM*). Though Conn MacManus' relationship with the government was hardly without its ups and downs; *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts preserved in the archiepiscopal library at Lambeth, 1515-1624*, (ed.) Brewer, J.S. and Bullen, W. (6 vols., London, 1867-73), 1515-74, p.477 (hereafter *Cal. Carew MSS*); *CSPI*, 1574-85, p.39; *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1575-88, p.329.

<sup>5</sup> M.D. Finnegan, 'Tyrone's rebellion: Hugh O'Neill and the outbreak of the Nine Years' War in Ulster' (M.Litt., National University of Ireland, Galway, 2001), ch.4.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed Niall waited until confirmation of Hugh Roe's death in Spain before having himself inaugurated; *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury, preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire* (20 vols., London, 1872-1968), v. 15, p.146.

<sup>7</sup> On Hugh O'Neill's recognition of this fact see Finnegan, 'Tyrone's rebellion', *passim*, esp. pp.15-9.

<sup>8</sup> B. Bradshaw, 'Manus the "magnificent": O'Donnell as Renaissance Prince', in Cosgrove, A. & McCartney, D. (eds.), *Studies in Irish history, presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin 1979), pp.15-36. The obituary for Conn MacManus reveals Niall's pedigree: 'Con, the son of Calvagh, son of Manus, son of Hugh Duv, son of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, died on the 13th of March. He was an accomplished and truly hospitable man, a sedate and affable man, the supporting pillar of the literati and the kerns; a man who had spent much of his wealth in the purchase of poems and panegyrics; a man by no means the least illustrious in name and character of the descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages, so that after his death Kinel-Connel might have been likened to a harp without the Ceis, to a ship without a pilot or to a field without a shelter'; *AFM*, sub anno 1583.

<sup>9</sup> On the prerequisites for a Gaelic lord see K. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages*

(Dublin, 1972), pp.22-27, 151-210. H. Morgan, 'The end of Gaelic Ulster: a thematic interpretation of events between 1534 and 1610', *IHS*, 26 (1988), pp.8-32, esp.8-11.

<sup>10</sup> *CSPI*, 1588-92, p.498.

<sup>11</sup> P. Walsh (ed.), *The life of Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill, transcribed from the book of Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh. Part 1; text and translation. Part 2; introduction, glossary etc.* (2 pts. Dublin, 1948, 1957), i, p.57.

<sup>12</sup> Though an English government report from 1598 suggested that Hugh O'Neill was aware that Niall's loyalty remained based on his appreciation of the superior strength of the Ulster confederates; *CSPI*, 1598-9, p.137.

<sup>13</sup> *CSPI*, 1599-1600, p.503; *CSPI*, 1600-01, p.179.

<sup>14</sup> *CSPI*, 1599-1600, p.330. J. McGurk, *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631: Derry's second founder* (Dublin, 2005), passim.

<sup>15</sup> *CSPI*, 1600-01, p.179. *CSPI*, 1599-1600, p.503.

<sup>16</sup> 'There is no better war in this country than when they fight in blood one against another'; Sir Arthur Chichester to the Privy Council, 16 Dec. 1600 (*CSPI*, 1600-01, p.85).

<sup>17</sup> *CSPI*, 1598-9, p.137.

<sup>18</sup> *Life*, p.253.

<sup>19</sup> 'Note of intelligences received out of the North', 20 May 1594 (*PRO SP* 63/174/55).

<sup>20</sup> *CSPI*, 1600-01, pp.484, 489-90.

<sup>21</sup> *CSPI*, 1600-01, p.12.

<sup>22</sup> *CSPI*, 1600-01, p.11.

<sup>23</sup> Niall Garbh's swift return to the north was sought 'without whom the war against O'Donnell will be very much hindered'; *CSPI*, 1600-01, p.247.

<sup>24</sup> *CSPI*, 1600-01, pp.288-9.

<sup>25</sup> *CSPI*, 1600-01, pp.290.

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Roe had offered a similar type of arrangement with Elizabeth during the 1595-6 peace negotiations; *PROSP* 63/186/22 xv; 63/186/51; 63/187/3.

<sup>27</sup> *CSPI*, 1600-01, pp.288, 326; *CSPI*, 1601-1603, p.37.

<sup>28</sup> *CSPI*, 1601-03, p.165.

<sup>29</sup> Though the ever perceptive Dowcra had earlier described Niall as '...good to be used while he is satisfied...or kept under, which I am of opinion he must be, lest of an inconstant honest subject he prove a desperate and headstrong rebel as dangerous as any of those two [O'Neill and O'Donnell], which have raised themselves by the same means of Her Majesty's bounty and clemency'; *CSPI*, 1600-01, pp.285-93.

<sup>30</sup> *CSPI*, 1601-03, p.262. Docwra acknowledged that 'many of our nation flatter and extol him beyond all dessert, and others exculpate him by speaking of my malice toward him and envy of his greatness'; *CSPI*, 1601-03, p.327.

<sup>31</sup> *CSPI*, 1601-03, p.538.

<sup>32</sup> *CSPI*, 1601-03, p.600.

<sup>33</sup> *CSPI*, 1601-03, p.553.

<sup>34</sup> H. Docwra, 'A Narration of services done by the army employed to Lough Foyle', *Miscellany of the Celtic Society* (ed.), John O'Donovan (Dublin, 1849), p.267. Captain Richard Hansard, who showed marked favour towards Niall argued that he had committed no offence in claiming the title: 'And touching the title of O'Donnell, the Lord Lieutenant called him O'Donnell, in sundry his extant letters in his lifetime of the late O'Donnell, as likewise her Majesty called him chief of his name in the Custodiam granted unto him under the great seal of Ireland of the country of Tyrconnell. At the request therefore of his followers upon his death of O'Donnell in Spain he took upon him the name, having better right thereunto than any other of his family; which being not capitally inhibited he conceived would not be offensive to the state'; Hadsor to Cecil, 23 June 1603 (*Salisbury MSS*, v.15, p.146).

<sup>35</sup> Niall suspected that Elizabeth's death might involve a reversal in fortune for the Ulster rebels who 'hath better friends about him [James] than I'; Docwra, 'Narration', p.268.

<sup>36</sup> Dowcra, 'Narration', p.273.

<sup>37</sup> O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth*, p.180.

<sup>38</sup> *CSPI*, 1603-06, p.24.

<sup>39</sup> *CSPI*, 1603-06, p.24.

<sup>40</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1604.

<sup>41</sup> E.A. D'Alton, *History of Ireland* (Belfast, 1920-25), ii, p.210. R. Bagwell, *Ireland under the Stuarts and During the Interregnum* (3 vols., London, 1909-16), i, p.60. E. Hamilton, *The Irish Rebellion of 1641* (London, 1970), p.34. C.P. Meehan, *The fate and fortunes of Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, and Rory O'Donnell, earl of Tyrconnell: their flight from Ireland, and death in exile* (3rd ed., Dublin, 1886), p.187.

<sup>42</sup> 'Sir Niall O'Donnell's demands, apostiled', 22 May 1608 (*Carte Papers*, v.61, p.275).

<sup>43</sup> Chichester to Salisbury, 28 Mar. 1607 (*PROSPI* 63/221/34).

<sup>44</sup> Sir Richard Hansard's advertisement to Sir Arthur Chichester, 1 Sept. 1607 (*PROSPI* 63/222/126 i).

<sup>45</sup> Chichester to Privy Council, 2 June 1608 (*PROSPI* 63/224/114).

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Phillips to Salisbury, 10 & 11 May 1608 (*CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.519-21).

<sup>47</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.573-5.

<sup>48</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.480-4.

<sup>49</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.508-11.

<sup>50</sup> This claim was not corroborated by Hansard but Niall had in the recent past supplied Hansard with reports of potentially rebellious activities; Hansard to Chichester, 1 Sept. 1607 (*PROSPI* 63/222/126 i). This claim made in advance of his arrest suggests that Niall's junkettings with O'Doherty were an effort to gain information concerning his intentions and to ingratiate himself with the state.

<sup>51</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.524-7.

<sup>52</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.512.

<sup>53</sup> 'Sir Niall O'Donnell's demands, apostiled', 22 May 1608 (*Carte Papers*, v.61, p.275).

<sup>54</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.528-9.

<sup>55</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.541-5.

<sup>56</sup> The army had been increased by 800 foot and 100 horse following the Flight of the Earls on the basis of Chichester's complaints that its paltry strength encouraged laughter rather than inspired awe; *CSPI*, 1606-8, p.288.

<sup>57</sup> Wingfield was no stranger to facing greater numbers of enemies having displayed conspicuous valour on the field at Kinsale; *CSPI*, 1601-03, pp.51, 55, 77, 238-40. *CSPI*, 1606-8, p.496.

<sup>58</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-8, pp.606-08.

<sup>59</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-8, p.608; 1608-10, pp.26-7, 34-7.

<sup>60</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.499.

<sup>61</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.574.

<sup>62</sup> S.R. Gardiner remarked that Chichester 'at this time [1607-08] looked with suspicion upon all the northern lords'; cited in J. McCavitt, *Sir Arthur Chichester: Lord Deputy of Ireland, 1605-1616* (Belfast, 1998), p.142.

<sup>63</sup> It was rumoured that the Pope was to make Tyrone King of Ireland; *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.515. McCavitt, *Chichester*, pp.140-45.

<sup>64</sup> On the eve of O'Doherty's arrival in Dublin Chichester had dispatched a letter in which he complained after the baron of Delvin's dramatic escape from Dublin Castle that Ireland then was 'abounding more and more in bad practices and all manner of perfidious devices, growing out of the poisoned hearts of this people'; cited in McCavitt, *Chichester*, p.142.

<sup>65</sup> In the aftermath of the revolt it was rumoured that the London government suspected that the deputy's policies had contributed to the crisis and that he might suffer the humiliation of revocation; *Calendar of State Papers*, Venice (ed.) R. Brown (8 vols., London, 1864-1897), 1607-10, p.138. Chichester also offered to relinquish his post; *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.514.

<sup>66</sup> Davies to Salisbury, 27 June 1609 (PROSP 63/227/89). 'The course of our second evidence given to the jury for the trial of Sir Niall O'Donnell', (*Carte Papers*, v.61, p.280)

<sup>67</sup> By this I mean all relevant documents from April 1608 to the completion of his trial.

<sup>68</sup> Chichester's opinion was that 'he will surely trouble this country at one time or other'; *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.547.

<sup>69</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.529.

<sup>70</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.541-5.

<sup>71</sup> *Carte Papers*, v.61, p.272. This document is misdated 8 May 1608 in the Calendar as it contains details of

events that had not occurred by that time.

<sup>72</sup> S. Ó Domhnaill, 'Sir Niall Garbh O'Donnell and the Rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Doherty', *IHS*, 3 (1942), pp.34-8.

<sup>73</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.586-7. AFM, sub anno 1600.

<sup>74</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.565.

<sup>75</sup> C.P. Meehan, *Fate and Fortunes*, pp.210-12.

<sup>76</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.592.

<sup>77</sup> This despite Ineen Dubh's statement that he sought to capture Hansard and exchange him for his son Neachtain; *Carte Papers*, v.61, p.251.

<sup>78</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.564-5.

<sup>79</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.573. *CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.241.

<sup>80</sup> *CSPI*, 1615-25, p.53.

<sup>81</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.603-4.

<sup>82</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.505.

<sup>83</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.598.

<sup>84</sup> This is most apparent in his suggestion that Lady O'Doherty put it no firmer than she 'believes' that Niall was in the plot (p.35). This is contradicted by Ridgeway's evidence that she delivered 'ferocious invectives against Sir Niall...for the persuading of her husband to his treacherous revolt'; *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.599-605.

<sup>85</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.541-5.

<sup>86</sup> Phelim also allegedly claimed that a general insurrection of the Irishry aimed at seizing the whole kingdom was planned for when the earls returned in autumn 1608. There can be little doubt that Phelim would not have been privy to such plots. I disagree with F.W. Harris' claim that Phelim was probably not tortured; F.W. Harris, 'The rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Doherty and its legal aftermath', *Irish Jurist*, ns, 15:2 (1980), pp.298-325.

<sup>87</sup> AFM, sub anno 1608.

<sup>88</sup> *CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.308-11.

<sup>89</sup> *Carte Papers*, v.61, p.272. *CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.3-4, 18, 20, 45, 308-11.

<sup>90</sup> Davies to Salisbury, 27 June 1609 (PROSP 63/227/89).

<sup>91</sup> Sir Niall O'Donnell to Salisbury, 30 May 1610 (PROSP 63/229/101).

<sup>92</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.590-1.

<sup>93</sup> *CSPI*, 1608-10, p.224.

<sup>94</sup> *CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.222-3. S. Ó Domhnaill, 'Sir Niall Garbh O'Donnell and the rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Doherty', p.37.

<sup>95</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.564-5, 591-2.

<sup>96</sup> A. Clarke, 'Plantation and the Catholic Question, 1603-23', in *N.H.I.*, iii, p.197.

<sup>97</sup> A. Ó Domhnaill, ‘Niall Garbh Ó Domhnaill (1569-1626): “A man more sinned against than sinning”?’,  
*Donegal Annual*, 53 (2001), 4-39; 54 (2002), 19-49, ii, p.29. In July 1608 a commission was sent northwards to establish which lands could be escheated to the crown; N.P. Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001), p.187.

<sup>98</sup> *CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.264-6.

<sup>99</sup> *CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.225, 195.

<sup>100</sup> *CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.1-2.

<sup>101</sup> *CSPI*, 1608-10, p.29.

<sup>102</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, pp.500-01.

<sup>103</sup> Chichester to Privy Council, 19 May 1608 (*PROSPi* 63/224/106).

<sup>104</sup> *CSPI*, 1606-08, p.512.

<sup>105</sup> R. Gillespie, ‘Negotiating order in early seventeenth-century Ireland’, in M.J. Braddick & J. Walter (eds.), *Negotiating power in early modern society: order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp.188-205, 292-97. On the domestication of the English nobility see M.J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), ch.2. and part V.

<sup>106</sup> Chichester’s letter of 14 June 1608 made it clear that tanystry had to be finally extirpated if there was to be any settling of the Kingdom, to Privy Council (*CSPI*, 1608-10, pp.561-3).

<sup>107</sup> Chichester to Privy Council, 19 May 1608 (*PROSPi* 63/224/106).

<sup>108</sup> Though Ciaran Brady has convincingly demonstrated that the servitors under Chichester were especially anxious to discredit those who might stand in the way of confiscations; C. Brady, ‘Sixteenth-century Ulster and the failure of Tudor reform’ in *idem* et al (eds.), *Ulster: an illustrated history* (London, 1989), pp.77-103.

<sup>109</sup> ‘A Bhraighe tá i dTor London’, *Irish Monthly* (1928), pp.153-6.

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Images – woodcut illustration from *The Image of Ireland with a Discovery of Woodkarne*, John Derrick, 1581 published by the Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1985.

*Historical Maps of Ireland*, Michael Swift, London, 1999.

## 1608 – THE COLLAPSE OF TRADITIONAL GAElic LORDSHIP IN CO. DONEGAL

Darren McGettigan

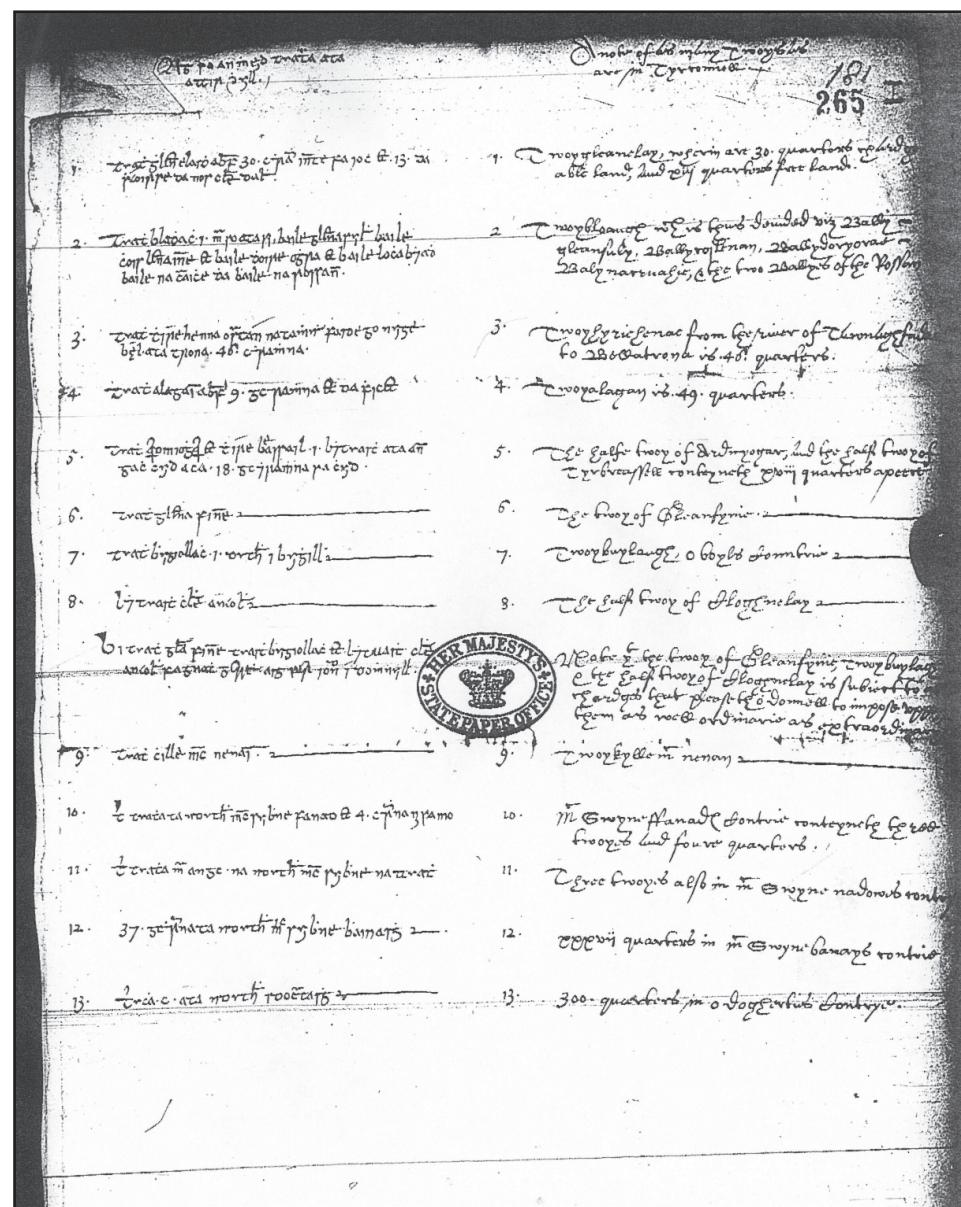


Burt Castle, a prominent landmark on the Derry-Letterkenny road. It was described in 1601 as “a place of great strength by nature and by art better fortified than the custom of the country” (Public Record Office, State Papers, National Archives, London, Sir John Bolles to Sir John Cecil, 16 March 1601, SP 63/208PT1/212-213)

Following the end of the Nine Years War in 1602/03 traditional Gaelic lordship remained strong in Co. Donegal, particularly among those nobles from northern Tír Chonaill who had adhered to the English interest during the latter stages of the war. This was due to the fact that neither they nor their adherents had been exposed to the expulsion and destruction visited upon the stauncher adherents of the Gaelic confederacy. The people who remained loyal to Red Hugh O'Donnell had been driven out of Tír Chonaill into Lower Connacht during 1601, and when Red Hugh died in Spain in 1602 they acknowledged that the war was lost and that traditional Gaelic lordship had ended. As a result it was Red Hugh's followers who adjusted more rapidly to the new political realities in post-war Donegal, a trait not shared by their dynastic opponents in the O'Donnell lordship.<sup>1</sup>

By the autumn of 1602 Lower Connacht held the remaining people loyal to Red Hugh O'Donnell. This included O'Donnell's immediate family, his brothers, Rury and Caffar and their womenfolk, Red Hugh's mother Ineen Dubh and her daughters Nuala, Margaret and Mary. It also included the household families of Tír Chonaill, traditionally the most loyal supporters of the O'Donnell chieftain, led by Owen McShane O'Gallagher. A few of the major nobles of Tír Chonaill including Tadhg Óg O'Boyle, the lord of Boylagh and Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell of Rathmelton had also remained loyal and followed Red Hugh to Connacht. In Red Hugh's absence they were all now led by his brother Rury. By this time Rury knew the war was lost even before news of his brother's death in Spain reached Ireland. As a result he signed a month's truce with the English force in Sligo and opened negotiations with Lord Deputy Mountjoy.<sup>2</sup> Rury was subsequently allowed to submit unconditionally to Mountjoy at Athlone on 14th December 1602.<sup>3</sup> O'Donnell and his substantial body of adherents were pardoned in February 1603 and allowed to return to Co. Donegal.<sup>4</sup>

However, the lure of traditional Gaelic lordship was still very strong amongst elements of the population of Tír Chonaill. Rury O'Donnell's greatest dynastic rival was his second cousin Niall Garbh O'Donnell who had supported the English garrison at Derry since October 1600. He was so successful that he killed one of Rury's brothers and had almost driven Red Hugh out of Tír Chonaill by the end of 1601. Niall Garbh felt that he had a very strong claim to become O'Donnell chieftain as his grandfather had been lord of Tír Chonaill and had been granted an indenture for the lordship under English law,<sup>5</sup> while Niall himself had been called the O'Donnell chieftain in a number of grants and letters from various English officials. It is clear that at an early stage the English administration in Ireland did envisage creating him lord of Tír Chonaill.<sup>6</sup> However, when members of the English government in Ireland such as Sir Henry Docwra in Derry and Lord Deputy Mountjoy in Dublin became aware that Niall Garbh intended to become a Gaelic lord in as traditional and powerful a manner as any of his ancestors they began to write that Niall Garbh 'by his ill carriage he hath forfeited the favour that was intended towards him'.<sup>7</sup>



In 1605 Earl Rory requested that a survey of Co.Donegal "be made up and perused". In 1607 this document entitled "Agso an mhed tuatha a Tiar cruill - this is the numbre of tuatha in Tir Chonail", written in Irish with an English translation, was inserted in the English State Papers, SP 63/222/265.

Nevertheless, Niall Garbh must have been astounded in the spring of 1603 when ‘the people of Rury O’Donnell repaired to Tír Chonaill with all their property, cattle, and various effects’.<sup>8</sup> Feeling that the prospect of future control of Tír Chonaill was slipping away from him Niall travelled to the O’Donnell inauguration site at Kilmacrennan and forced O’Friel to inaugurate him as the O’Donnell chieftain.<sup>9</sup> Niall Garbh stated at the time that ‘the chief inhabitants of Tír Chonaill called him O’Donnell...’,<sup>10</sup> and certainly Donnell

McSweeney Fanad and Donough McSweeney Banagh had previously submitted to him.<sup>11</sup> However, a second of Niall's statements that 'At the request therefore of his followers upon the death of O'Donnell in Spain he took upon him the name...' is more likely correct, indicating little support outside his own immediate family.<sup>12</sup> The English administration in Ireland was outraged by Niall Garbh's actions and Rury O'Donnell and Sir Henry Docwra were ordered to arrest him. Niall Garbh and his followers fled to the woods of Ceann Maghair but they were pursued and plundered 'so that not a single head of cattle was left with Niall's people; so that vast numbers of those who were plundered died of cold and famine'.<sup>13</sup> Niall Garbh eventually surrendered.

The events of 1603 led the English to re-assess their opinion of Rury O'Donnell. Although Rury's followers comprised Red Hugh O'Donnell's most loyal supporters, they were quick to grasp the opportunities presented by his submission and Niall Garbh's miscalculation. In May 1603 Rury agreed to hand over letters which had recently arrived in some Spanish ships leading Lord Deputy Mountjoy to write of 'Rury O'Donnell in whom I have great confidence'.<sup>14</sup> As a result when both Rury and Niall Garbh were summoned to England to meet the new British King James I it was Rury who was created Earl of Tirconnell with Niall Garbh having to be content with his lands in Glenfinn.

### A NEW EARLDOM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

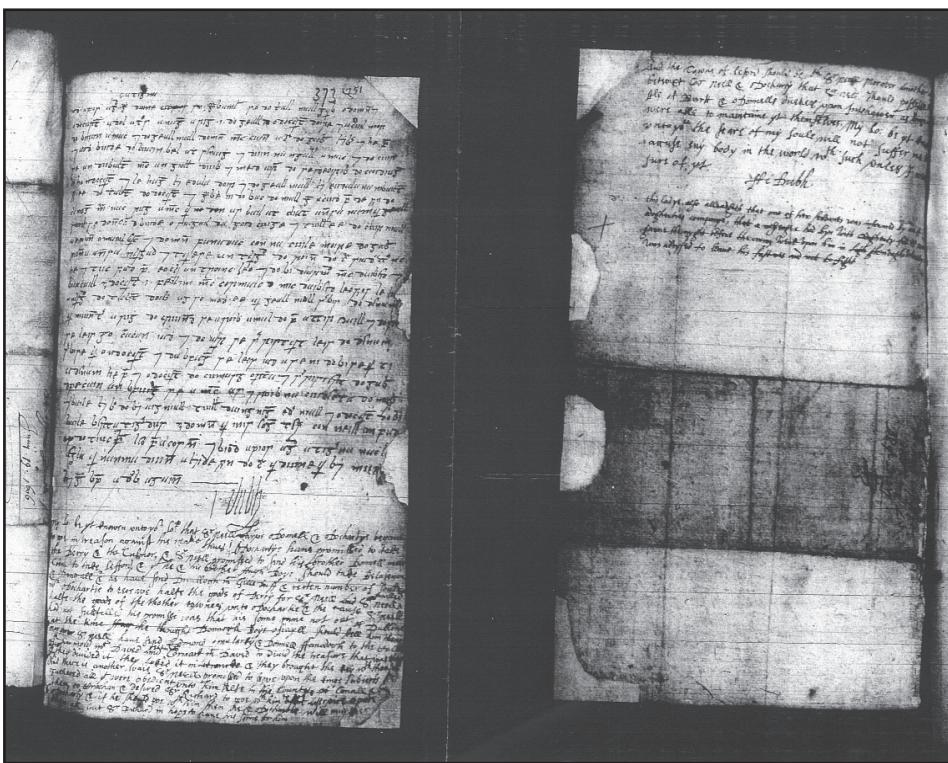
The creation of the Earldom of Tirconnell greatly affected traditional Gaelic lordship in Co. Donegal. Rury's patent granted him 'all the territories or countries in the precinct of Tír Chonaill, with all appurtenances and hereditaments thereto belonging, in as large and ample manner as his brother Hugh Rufus O'Donnell, attainted and dead in Spain, or his father Hugh McManus O'Donnell, or his grandfather Manus O'Donnell, or any other his ancestors, had, enjoyed, or possessed the same'.<sup>15</sup> However, all ecclesiastical land, the land of Niall Garbh O'Donnell in Glenfinn and the O'Doherty lordship of Inishowen were exempted from Rury's authority. As the ecclesiastical lands of the Catholic bishops, the Observant friars and the coarb and erenagh families in Co. Donegal were usually free from the exactions of the O'Donnell chieftains, their loss to the new Protestant church was not great although some revenue was lost. Also the dues from Glenfinn and Inishowen had traditionally been in the form of contributions to O'Donnell's army and the billeting of his mercenaries. Now that Rury could not keep an army such dues were rendered obsolete. However, the loss of Ballyshannon Castle 'together with 1000 acres surrounding the said castle at the Crown's election, and also the entire fishings belonging to the said castle' were a severe loss to Rury being fertile land and a fishery worth £800 a season.<sup>16</sup> Rury also had to agree to 'renounce and relinquish all claim or right' over the O'Connor Sligo lordship of Lower Connacht which also was a serious financial loss. In the ensuing years English officials in Co. Donegal continued to chip away at Rury's land holdings and sources of revenue outside the terms of his patent. Good lands at Lifford and Bundrowes were seized as was the fishery of Killybegs, which was worth another £500 a season to

the earl.<sup>17</sup> Although Rury does not seem to have grasped the significance of these developments at first, by 1605 and 1606 the earl was in frequent correspondence with Sir Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury, complaining of 'such persons as sucked all the wealth of that land which his Highness bestowed on me this three years passed to themselves'.<sup>18</sup>

Rury rapidly had to adjust to being a Jacobean earl rather than a traditional Gaelic chieftain. The nature of landholding in Co. Donegal began to change very quickly. As O'Donnell attempted to improve his financial standing he trampled all over the rights and traditional lordships of his sub-chieftains, as well as mortgaging the land of other adherents and seizing the lands of some nobles outright. An inquisition taken in Co. Donegal in 1609 recorded the process. It states that: 'McSweeney Banagh did, about three years before the said late earl's departure, grant and convey unto the said late earl, his whole title, estate, right and interest of and in the country of Banagh, and that at the same time O'Boyle made the like grant and conveyance of his country called the Boylagh unto the said late Earl of Tirconnell, and that also at the same time McSweeney Fanad made the like grant and conveyance of his country called Fanad unto the said late earl of Tirconnell'.<sup>19</sup> Rury was also being innovative in letting out his own lands stating in 1605 that he was 'willing to grant them estates under reasonable rents and English tenures', although he was finding it difficult to secure tenants after the depopulation caused by the war.<sup>20</sup>

It is likely that O'Donnell gained inspiration for these measures from his brother's confederate Hugh O'Neill. O'Neill too was taking stern measures to put the finances on his Tyrone earldom on a firm footing, by laying claim to the lands of major sub-chieftains such as O'Cahan.<sup>21</sup> What pressure Rury put on his sub-chieftains to agree to his measures is unrecorded. However, that there was opposition to the reforms is clear as the 1609 inquisition states that 'Walter McLoughlin [McSweeney], and others of the sept of Fanad, opposed themselves against the grant',<sup>22</sup> while Tadhg Ó Cianáin in his contemporary account of the flight of the earls in September 1607 records that when the earls 'sent two boats' crews to get water and to search for firewood', 'The son of McSweeney of Fanad and a party of the people of the district came upon them in pursuit. They fought with one another'.<sup>23</sup>

Rury also mortgaged much land in Co. Donegal to Alderman Nicholas Weston, a merchant from Dublin. The earl mortgaged thirty quarters in the O'Friel termon of Kilmacrennan, eight quarters at Portlough belonging to a distant branch of the O'Donnells and twenty-one quarters in Tír Breasail, fifteen of which belonged to his mother Ineen Dubh. As a result Earl Rury was able to raise £1600 sterling through Alderman Weston. O'Donnell also seized land outright from a number of nobles in Co. Donegal such as his first cousin Caffar Óg O'Donnell and some of the McSweeneys of Doe. Caffar Óg's lands lay scattered along the River Swilly and he was a quite isolated and vulnerable figure. Rury seized Doe Castle and sixty quarters of land from the McSweeneys.



*Ineen Dubh's letter written in Irish to George Montgomery, Protestant bishop of Raphoe,*

Again these measures met with stiff opposition from the nobles concerned. In 1605 Earl Rury had Owen Óg McSweeney, the leader of the Doe McSweeneys executed at Lifford.<sup>24</sup> However, a Niall McSweeney then drove the earl's constable out of Doe Castle and deprived Rury of his rents for a year and a half.<sup>25</sup> Although the earl recovered Doe Castle, in January 1607 there was a very serious development when Caffar Óg O'Donnell and Niall McSweeney, who had sixty well armed men, went into what Lord Deputy Chichester called 'a kind of rebellion' by again seizing Doe Castle and proceeding to murder people loyal to the earl in the surrounding areas and steal hundreds of their cattle.<sup>26</sup> Caffar Óg O'Donnell and McSweeney blamed the earl for their revolt and Lord Deputy Chichester wrote that 'if I can satisfy these young men with a reasonable portion of land they may be preserved to good purpose to sway the greatness of others in these parts otherwise they are unfit for anything for they will at one time or other beget new troubles'.<sup>27</sup> In the end Caffar Óg fled to the Inner Hebrides off the coast of Scotland and was arrested by Chichester when he returned to Co. Donegal in 1608. The lord deputy had him executed in Dublin in 1609.<sup>28</sup>

Despite all the trouble that they caused Earl Rury's land reforms did not solve his financial problems. After the flight of the earls Lord Deputy Chichester referred to Rury as 'that needy Earl of Tirconnell, for he had neither gold nor silver ... and is besides indebted to sundry poor men to the value of £3000'.<sup>29</sup> By the time of the flight of the earls O'Donnell must have been close to bankruptcy, a fact, which no doubt greatly contributed to his decision to leave Ireland.<sup>30</sup> It is unlikely that Rury was plotting with the Spanish to resume the war in Ireland. More likely his secretary Matthew Tully was negotiating with the Spanish ambassador in London for a substantial Spanish pension to enable Rury to rectify his financial position. Although at one stage in 1606 the Spanish Council of State recommended that 8000 ducats be sent to Rury and Hugh O'Neill 'to keep them well disposed', it is uncertain if any Spanish money actually reached the Ulster earls.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the earl's innovations some aspects of traditional Gaelic lordship survived in Co. Donegal during the time of the earldom of Tirconnell. In 1604 Niall Garbh O'Donnell again attempted to seize power in the county in a traditional manner, making covenants of support with disaffected nobles such as Caffar Óg O'Donnell and seizing Earl Rury's tenants and their herds of cattle.<sup>32</sup> Rury and his brother Caffar also made use of still legal aspects of traditional Gaelic lordship to bolster support for themselves amongst their remaining supporters in Donegal. The earl installed his own foster-father as the O'Gallagher chieftain, the leader of the household families of Tír Chonaill. These families were the most loyal to the earl amongst the population of Co. Donegal and it was essential that Rury have someone he could trust in command of them.<sup>33</sup> O'Donnell then gave O'Gallagher custody of Lough Eske Castle, which was situated on a lake island and was the strongest remaining fortress the earl possessed. Both Rury and Caffar are also noted in the annals for their traditional hospitality. The earl was noted as a 'truly hospitable lord, to whom the patrimony of his ancestors did not seem anything for his spending and feasting parties'.<sup>34</sup> Caffar was praised even more highly by the Gaelic annalists as 'the Guaire Aidhne of his time for generosity and for lavishness'.<sup>35</sup> These annalistic notes may indicate that Rury and Caffar made a special effort to feast and reward their adherents to bolster support for their authority amongst the population of Co. Donegal. As an indication of Earl Rury's concern for his followers, when an English officer named Captain Ellis 'ravished a young maiden of the age of eleven years in the earl's country', O'Donnell pursued her complaint in the Donegal sessions, most likely at the request of the girl's family. However, there was a limit to how far Rury could coexist with the new English legal system. In 1605 when the earl killed some rebels and captured their chieftain and then hanged some bandits or wood-kerne he was taken to court by the English administration for over-stepping the boundary of what was now considered acceptable behaviour for an Irish nobleman.<sup>36</sup>

With his army abolished all that remained to Rury was his household and small personal retinue. This left the earl vulnerable to hostile English soldiers and officials in Co. Donegal and also to dynastic rivals such as Niall Garbh O'Donnell. Earl Rury later

accused Sir Henry Docwra, Sir Henry Folliott and Captain Basil Brooke of seizing cattle, sheep, pigs and carriage horse from his tenants, of raping their women and attacking his own personal household and wounding his servants.<sup>37</sup> On a visit to the Pale Rury was even set upon at Boyle Co. Roscommon by an English officer and twenty men ‘and all the churls of the town’, when O’Donnell was accompanied by only his page, and ‘two other his serving men’. Rury and his three servants barricaded themselves in a house and withstood constant attack throughout the night until rescued by the Gaelic population of the surrounding area. Rury later alleged that he was wounded six times in this incident ‘besides his other bruising’.<sup>38</sup>

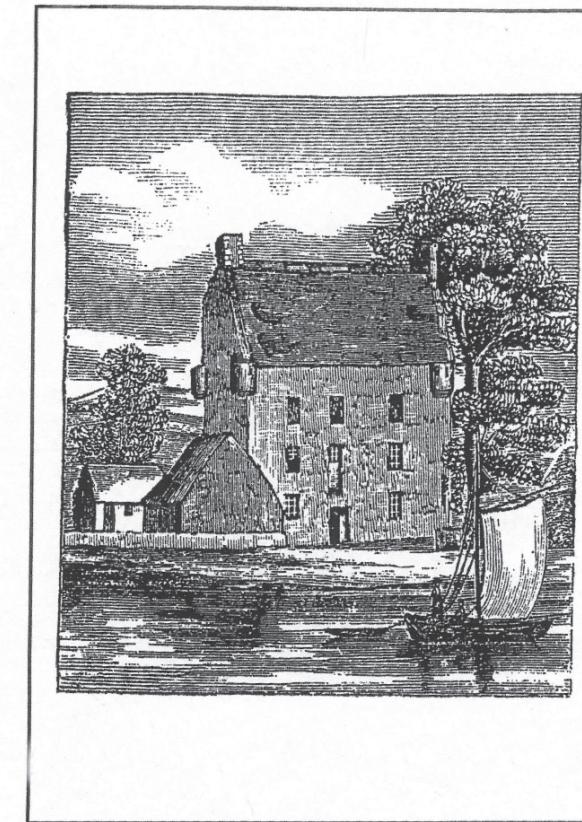
### THE REBELLION OF SIR CAHIR O’DOHERTY

The flight of the earls when it occurred in September 1607 left the traditional household followers of the Earl of Tirconnell isolated and leaderless. When Lord Deputy Chichester announced that the ‘inhabitants of Tyrone and Tirconnell will not be disturbed in the possession of their lands as long as they are peaceable’, many in Co. Donegal must have been reassured.<sup>39</sup> However, it was now that Niall Garbh O’Donnell felt that his hour had finally arrived. The flight of the Earl of Tirconnell left a dangerous vacuum in Co. Donegal and Niall Garbh attempted to fill it by encouraging the young lord of Inishowen, Sir Cahir O’Doherty, to rebel.<sup>40</sup> O’Doherty was very young, only twenty or twenty-one and was experiencing difficulties with the English administration who were withholding Inch Island from him. O’Doherty had also quarrelled with the new English governor of Derry, Sir George Paulet, who had an arrogant and abrasive personality.

When Governor Paulet physically assaulted O’Doherty at a meeting at Derry (‘inflicted chastisement of his body’ as the *Annals of the Four Masters* put it),<sup>41</sup> it drove O’Doherty ‘to distraction and madness’ so that Sir Cahir plotted violent revenge even though his suit for Inch Island was about to be granted. Earl Rury’s mother Ineen Dubh later alleged that Niall Garbh agreed that if O’Doherty seized Derry and Culmore Fort he and his brothers would take Lifford, Donegal and Ballyshannon, and also capture Sir Richard Hansard, the commander of English forces in Co. Donegal, killing his English troops in the process. However, when O’Doherty and his men stormed Culmore and Derry on the night of April 18th 1608 and the morning of the 19th, killing Paulet and most of his officers, Niall Garbh did nothing more than send an adherent Dubhaltach McGiolla Dubh (probably an O’Gallagher) and some men to obtain his share of the treasure.<sup>42</sup> Ineen Dubh later asserted that Niall Garbh held aloof because his son Neachtan had failed to escape from Dublin. The failure of the Castlefinn O’Donnells to join O’Doherty’s revolt doomed it to failure. Sir Cahir’s main support came from his traditional followers led by Phelim Reagh McDaid. Outside Inishowen the only important Donegal noble to join O’Doherty’s rebellion was another first cousin of the earl’s Shane McManus Óg O’Donnell of Tory Island. Indeed, this O’Donnell noble proved to be a much more dangerous threat to the English interest in Co. Donegal than the young lord of Inishowen, who was soon killed near Kilmacrennan in July 1608.

### CONSEQUENCES OF 1608 REBELLION

In the aftermath of O’Doherty’s seizure of Derry Niall Garbh O’Donnell panicked. He sought five protections from English commanders within fifteen days leading one English official to state that he would only confirm them ‘if you or they are not guilty of the late treacherous and bloody stratagem at Culmore or the Derry’.<sup>43</sup> When Lord Deputy Chichester campaigned in Co. Donegal to mop up the remainders of O’Doherty’s revolt he arrested Niall Garbh and his brothers Hugh Boy and Donnell.<sup>44</sup> Lucky to escape with their lives, Niall Garbh and his son Neachtan were imprisoned in the Tower of London where they were to remain captive for the rest of their days. Neachtan died there in 1624 and Niall Garbh in 1626.<sup>45</sup> Because Niall Garbh never took out a patent for his lands in Glenfinn ‘expecting greater qualities and pretending title to the whole country’ as Lord Deputy Chichester put it,<sup>46</sup> his family lost their lands and he had to live in poverty in prison<sup>47</sup>.



An old view of Mongelvin Castle from the Dublin Penny Journal dated January 23, 1836.

As has been stated, the rebellion of Shane McManus Óg O'Donnell was potentially quite dangerous for the English administration in Co. Donegal. In 1608 Shane McManus Óg gathered 240 ‘well armed’ men and based himself on the islands off the Donegal coast where Chichester reported he ‘hoped to lie safe, far off and difficult to come at: and thereby to increase in number and reputation after our departure’.<sup>48</sup> Shane McManus Óg too had ambitions to become lord of Tír Chonaill. As Lord Deputy Chichester recorded: ‘Shane McManus Óg O'Donnell, who holdeth the island of Tory from us, and is ambitious to be created O'Donnell after the manner of the country’.<sup>49</sup> In the post-war years he had built up a powerful position in western Tír Chonaill and on the offshore islands, where he extended his authority over local O'Donnell nobles such as Shane McTurlough O'Donnell. Nevertheless, the lord deputy pursued O'Donnell's small army, forcing it to break up although Chichester admitted that ‘the ways were hard and almost impassable’. Shane McManus Óg retreated to Tory Island with sixty men but was pursued even there by the lord deputy. Although Shane was able to resist Chichester’s first siege due to the natural strength of Tory Castle and the care with which he had stocked his fortress,<sup>50</sup> the castle eventually fell when a second English force landed on the island forcing O'Donnell to escape by boat. Shane was pursued to Aran Island and then to the Donegal mainland. The last time Shane McManus Óg appears in English records was when the officer in charge of the pursuit wrote to Lord Deputy Chichester that he hoped to ‘hear of the loss of his head’.<sup>51</sup>

The revolt of Sir Cahir O'Doherty in 1608, coming so soon after the flight of earls in 1607, changed the nature of traditional Gaelic lordship in Co. Donegal irrecoverably. With the earl gone, the revolt eliminated the last two strong centres of Gaelic lordship in the county at Castlefinn and in Inishowen. In the plantation of Ulster carried out in 1610 only the earl's major sub-chieftains, Donough McSweeney Banagh, Donnell McSweeney Fanad, Mulmurry McSweeney Doe and Turlough the son of Tadhg Óg O'Boyle received substantial 2000 acre estates in the barony of Kilmacrennan. However, even they had to forfeit their much larger original lordships in Banagh, Fanad, Boylagh and Doe.<sup>52</sup> Although some minor O'Donnell nobles received small 128 acres grants, only Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell and the earl's mother Ineen Dubh received substantial estates, Rathmelton Castle and the surrounding 1000 acres in the case of Hugh McHugh Dubh and 596 acres for Ineen Dubh, but only for the term of their lives.<sup>53</sup> During the plantation the English administration continued to demonstrate its fear of the lure of the institution of O'Donnell by withholding any substantial grant to the O'Gallaghers who by right should have expected a 2000 acres grant for their chieftain.

In conclusion therefore it is clear that the lure of the institution of O'Donnell was strong amongst various branches of the dynasty well into 1608. Following the death of Red Hugh O'Donnell in 1602 two claimants made bids for the chieftaincy, these being Red Hugh's second cousin, Niall Garbh O'Donnell, the leader of the O'Donnells of Castlefinn, and one of Red Hugh's first cousins, Shane McManus Óg O'Donnell of Tory Island. Earl Rury

O'Donnell and his adherents, his brother Caffar, his granduncle Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell and the O'Donnells of Portlough were more realistic and acknowledged that with the loss of the Nine Years War in 1602-3, traditional Gaelic means of government had ended or at least had to be drastically modified. The realistic assessment of these branches of the O'Donnell family led to five years of relative peace and stability in Co. Donegal, although some northern areas remained quite lawless. However, with the flight of the earls in 1607 more traditional and violent O'Donnell leaders came to the fore leading to rebellion and much bloodshed in 1608. This also led in turn to the loss of most of Co. Donegal to the native population in the plantation of Ulster in 1610. The Gaelic landowning community of Co. Donegal continued to live on for a further thirty years in the barony of Kilmacrennan. However, it was in a very reduced condition and was very different to the traditional way of life that had gone before.

## APPENDIX

### SOME CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS



(1) Letter translated from an Irish original from Sir Cahir O'Doherty, to O'Gallagher, chief of his name, at Lough Eske, 28 June 1608

*The commendations of O'Doherty unto you O'Gallagher,*

*I would have you understand that if you have any hope at this present or hereafter in your foster-son and your earthly lord, or the good of O'Doherty, then cause your sept and yourself to aid O'Doherty. You may the easier perform this because the churls have no courage, but what encouragement Niall, Art Óg's sons and Tír Chonaill men have given them. Now that we have given them over we make no reckoning of them. Let no man imagine that we are anything the weaker for loosing Burt Castle, unless he may take thought for the un-constant-ness of such as he trusted of his own people, whom now he little regards. Be it known unto you O'Gallagher that O'Doherty desires you should possess anything which the earl makes accompt of, rather than any man else of Tír Chonaill, because the earl so desires it: what answer you make to these matters and concerning Lough Eske, send it in writing or by word of mouth betwixt this and the next morning.*

*From Bally Agh Tranyll*

*Cahir O'Doherty*

*Truly translated out of Irish. This letter was written the 28th of June, about which time sir Henry Folliott had Lough Eske delivered unto him by O'Gallagher, chief of his name.<sup>54</sup>*

(2) Letter in Irish from Ineen Dubh to George Montgomery, bishop of Derry, Raphoe and Clogher, 1608, Carte Papers 61/251~373.

*My Lord,*

*Be it known unto your Lordship that sir Niall Garbh O'Donnell and O'Doherty began to go in treason against his Majesty, thus: O'Doherty have promised to take the Derry and the Culmore; and sir Niall promised to send his brother, Donnell McConn, to take Lifford, and that he had his brother, Hugh Boy, should take Ballyshannon and Donegal; and he have send Dubhaltach McGiolla Dubh, and certain number of soldiers, with O'Doherty, to receive half the goods of Derry for sir Niall, and sir Niall promised half the goods of the other towns unto O'Doherty; and the cause sir Niall had not fulfilled his promise was, that his son came not out of Dublin at the time he thought Donough Boy O'Shiel should steal him thence; more-over sir Niall have send Edmond O'Mullarky and Donnell Fanadogh to the Culmore with Diarmaid McDaid and Cormac McDaid, to divide the treasure that was there, and after they divided it they locked it in a trunk, and they brought the key with themselves; and there is another way sir Niall promised to serve the King's subjects, he gathered all that were obedient unto himself in the country of Tir Chonaill and brought them to Croaghan, and desired sir Richard [Hansard] to go with him to do service upon O'Doherty, and if he should go with him then he and O'Doherty will murder them all, but sir Richard, in hope to have his son for him. And the town of Lifford should be with sir Niall; more-over, another agreement betwixt sir Niall and O'Doherty that sir Niall should possess the castle of Burt, and O'Donnell's duties upon Inishowen, as long as they were able to maintain it themselves. My Lord be it known unto you the fear of my soul will not suffer me to accuse anybody in the world with such, unless I were sure of it.*

### **[Ineen] Dubh**

A further note in English after this letter states:

*This lady also allegeth that one of her servants was informed by one of O'Doherty's company, that a messenger had been with O'Doherty from sir Niall Garbh the night before the army went upon him in Glenveagh, whereby [he] was advised to leave his fastness and not to fight.*

### **3) Covenant signed between Niall Garbh O'Donnell and Caffar Óg O'Donnell January 1604**

*This is the covenant upon which Niall O'Donnell doth pass and promise to Caffar Óg McCaffar O'Donnell viz that he will support the said Caffar being weak or strong, and that he will follow no man in the world's advice to prejudice Caffar, and that he will not abridge Caffar of anything that his father had, if the command of Tir Chonaill should*

*happen to fall to him. Caffar in like manner doth hereby take his oath and promise-eth to spend all that he hath in the defence of Niall whether any of them be weak or strong, and that he will follow no man in the world's advice to prejudice Niall.*

*Lifford 9 January 1604*

*Niall O'Donnell  
Richard Burke witness  
Donough O'Shiel witness.<sup>58</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> This article has grown out of a series of papers I gave in 2007 to the Donegal County Library and the Rathmullan and District Local History Society to commemorate the flight of the earls. Although R. J. Hunter wrote an excellent article ‘The end of O’Donnell power’, which was published in W. Nolan et. al. (eds) *Donegal: history and society* (Dublin, 1995), pp 229-265, I feel that I have something additional to add, and hence this article. I would like to thank everyone who attended my lectures in 2007, which I hope they enjoyed.

<sup>2</sup> AFM, 1602;

<sup>3</sup> Fynes Moryson, *An history of Ireland*, ii (Dublin, 1735), p 226-27 and 231

<sup>4</sup> Pardon to Rory O’Donnell of Tirconnell, 26 Feb. 1603, *Irish Fiants 1586-1603* (Dublin, 1994), pp 602-06

<sup>5</sup> Indenture between Sir Henry Sidney and Lord Calvagh O’Donnell, 20 Oct. 1566, CM 614/160-61.

<sup>6</sup> Grant to Niall Garbh O’Donnell, gentleman, chief of his name, 18 Mar. 1601 *Irish Fiants 1586-1603*, p. 399; Richard Hansard to Lord Cecil, 23 June 1603, *Cal. Salis. MSS XV*, pp 145-46.

<sup>7</sup> Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Lord Cecil, 30 May 1603, *Ibid.*, pp 111-12.

<sup>8</sup> AFM, 1603.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Sir Niall O’Donnell to Lord Cecil, 1603, *Cal. Salis. MSS. XV*, p. 383.

<sup>11</sup> AFM, 1602 and 1603.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Hansard to Lord Cecil, 23 June 1603, *Cal. Salis. MSS. XV*, pp 145-46.

<sup>13</sup> AFM, 1603.

<sup>14</sup> Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Lord Cecil, 30 May 1603, *Cal. Salis. MSS. XV*, pp 111-12.

<sup>15</sup> Grant from the King to Rury O’Donnell, 10 Feb. 1604, *Irish patent rolls of James I* (Dublin, 1966), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> A note of the several wrongs wherewith the earl of Tirconnell is grieved, 1607, SP 63/222/308-314/ 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>18</sup> The earl of Tirconnell to the earl of Salisbury, [After Sept.] 1605, *Cal. Salis. MSS. XVII*, p. 444.

<sup>19</sup> Donegal, Appendix V, *Inquis. Officio Rotul. Cancell. Hib. Report.* ii, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> The earl of Tirconnell to the council, 1605, *Cal. Salis. MSS. XVII*, pp 644-45.

<sup>21</sup> J. Casway, ‘The decline and fate of Dónal Ballagh O’Cahan and his family’, in M. Ó Siochrú (ed.) *Kingdoms in crisis: Ireland in the 1640s* (Dublin, 2001), pp 44-62; N. Canny, ‘Hugh O’Neill, earl of Tyrone, and the changing face of Gaelic Ulster’, *Studia Hibernica* (1970), pp 7-35.

<sup>22</sup> Donegal, Appendix V, *Inquis. Officio Rotul. Cancell. Hib. Report.* ii, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> P. Walsh, *The flight of the earls by Tadhg Ó Cianáin* (Dublin, 1916), pp 8-9.

- <sup>24</sup> A note of the several wrongs wherewith the earl of Tirconnell is grieved, 1607, *SP 63/222/308-314/26.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.
- <sup>26</sup> Lord Deputy and council to the lords of the council, 21 Jan. 1607, *SP 63/221/17-20;* Sir Arthur Chichester to the earl of Salisbury, 20 Feb. 1607, *SP 63/221/21~52;* The lord deputy and council to the privy council, 2 Mar. 1607, *SP 63/221/29~78.*
- <sup>27</sup> Sir Arthur Chichester to Salisbury, 28 Mar. 1607, *SP 63/221/34~88/89.*
- <sup>28</sup> *AFM*, 1609.
- <sup>29</sup> Sir Arthur Chichester to Salisbury, 2 Oct. 1607, *SP 63/222/150~175.*
- <sup>30</sup> N. Canny, ‘The flight of the earls, 1607’, *IHS* (1971), pp 380-99.
- <sup>31</sup> Letter of the Conde de Punorostro to Philip III, 28 Nov. 1606, A.G.S. Estado 1797, in M. Kerney Walsh, *Destruction by Peace Hugh O’Neill after Kinsale* (Armagh, 1986), pp 175-76
- <sup>32</sup> Covenant between Niall Garbh O’Donnell and Caffar Óg O’Donnell, 9 Jan. 1604, *SP 63/217/14~2C/3;* Sir John Davies to Sir Robert Cecil, 19 Apr. 1604, *SP 63/216/15~46.*
- <sup>33</sup> An Irish letter from Cahir O’Doherty to O’Gallagher, chief of his name, at Lough Eske Castle, 28 June 1608, *SP 63/224/181;* Sir Arthur Chichester to the privy council, 12 Sept. 1608, *SP 63/225/184~18.*
- <sup>34</sup> *AFM*, 1608.
- <sup>35</sup> *NLI MSS G 488*, p. 9/261.
- <sup>36</sup> A note of the several wrongs wherewith the earl of Tirconnell is grieved, 1607, *SP 63/222/308-314~200/21, 27, 38.*
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 3,14,16,41.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.
- <sup>39</sup> By the Lord Deputy and council 7 Sept. 1607, *A bibliography of Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns, 1485-1714*, ii (Oxford, 1910), p. 18.
- <sup>40</sup> Letter in Irish from Ineen Dubh to George Montgomery, bishop of Derry, Raphoe and Clogher, 1608, *Carte Papers* 61/251~373.
- <sup>41</sup> *AFM*, 1608.
- <sup>42</sup> Letter in Irish from Ineen Dubh, *Carte Papers* 61/251~373.
- <sup>43</sup> Sir Thomas Ridgeway to Sir Niall O’Donnell, 20 May 1608, *Hastings MSS. IV*, pp 3-4.
- <sup>44</sup> *AFM*, 1608.
- <sup>45</sup> *NLI MSS G488*, p. 4/256.
- <sup>46</sup> Sir Arthur Chichester’s instructions to Sir James Ley and Sir John Davies, 14 Oct. 1608, *SP 63/225/225~110.*
- <sup>47</sup> Petition signed by Cormac O’Neill, Niall O’Donnell and Neachtan O’Donnell to the king, May 1621, *Fourth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Part 1, Report and appendix (London, 1874), p. 277.
- <sup>48</sup> Sir Arthur Chichester to the privy council, 12 Sept. 1608, *SP 63/225/184~17-18.*
- <sup>49</sup> Sir Arthur Chichester to the lords of the privy council, 3 Aug. 1608, *SP 63/224/232-235.*
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>51</sup> Sir Henry Folliott to the lord deputy, 8 Sept. 1608, *SP 63/225/42-43.*
- <sup>52</sup> G. Hill, *An historical account of the plantation in Ulster* (Belfast, 1877), pp 327-29.  
*Ibid.*, pp 328-29.
- <sup>54</sup> Letter translated from an Irish original from Sir Cahir O’Doherty, to O’Gallagher, chief of his name, at

Lough Eske, 28 June 1608, *SP 63/224/181.*

- <sup>55</sup> I am very grateful to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, for permission to copy and publish this letter.
- <sup>56</sup> A mountain near Lifford.
- <sup>57</sup> The English text of the letter, given here, is a modernized version of John O’Donovan’s translation, which appears in volume six of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, pp 2364-65.  
*SP 63/217/14~2C/3.*

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PHOTO – John Beattie.

FIGURE 1 – State Papers; FIGURE 2 - Bodleian Library, Oxford.

DRAWING – *Dublin Penny Journal* 23 January 1836, reproduced from *Donegal Annual No. 34*, 1982.

# A TALE OF TWO STONES

*Belinda Mahaffy*

*Two Stones in Clonleigh parish that were not recorded in the 1983 Donegal archaeological survey of Donegal.*

*"Sermons in Stones and Good in Everything", Shakespeare, William, "As you Like It."*

## Glencash Table Stone

**Location of Stone A:** Glencash Townland

**Meaning of townland name:** Literally, the Glen of the causeway. There used to be a road running through this townland which was used by slipe carts, i.e. carts without wheels which ran solely on runners.

**Measurements of Stone A:** Length 50 inches, Width 32.80 inches, Height 19.68 inches

**Description:** The Glencash stone lies beside another stone, which is more or less the same shape but slightly smaller. There are also four smaller stones which are rectangular in shape. These smaller stones may have acted as supports for the other two larger stones. All six stones lie in a thicket on the slopes of a small ravine which is approximately twelve feet high. The stones were originally on the top of this ridge. They may have been part of a Stone or Bronze Age burial connected in some way with the nearby cashel at Drumleene.



*King James' Table, Glencash. Length 50.00 inches.*

**Situation of Stone A:** In a field in Glencash named Carraig na nEan, i.e. the rock of the birds. When the birds are not named in place-names, this signifies that the unnamed bird is dangerous – so perhaps this bird was a type of hawk or raven.

Glencash townland lies on a slope near the base of Binion Hill. The view looks north

towards St. Johnston. The McAuley family who farm Glencash say that these six stones were originally built in “a platform shape” at the top of the ridge which overlooks the field named Carraig na nEan. A number of years ago, the stones were “tossed” by treasure-hunters. They now lie concealed in a thicket.

**Folklore:** In 1950, the McAuley family bought Glencash from the Moore family who had lived on the farm for almost three hundred and fifty years, i.e. since shortly after the Plantation. The Moore family passed on to the McAuley family the oral history of the farm. They said the stone platform was known as “King James’ Table.” James II had sat at the largest flat stone which he had used as a table from which he paid off his soldiers when the siege of Derry was over. The McAuleys think that the soldiers were assembled below the table in the field of Carraig na nEan. Perhaps these soldiers were the dangerous birds who were about to fly away, or was it the fleeing king and his court who were the dangerous birds?

Glencash is only a few miles further south of the townland of Clashiegowan near St. Johnston in Taughboyne parish where James II is said to have camped his army. The king used Mongevin Castle near St. Johnston as his base during the siege. Here he stayed surrounded by his French officers, probably some loyal courtiers and his natural son, James, Duke of Berwick who was in charge of a battery over-looking the ford at Lifford.

Most of Clashiegowan townland became the farm of the Rankin family – a surname which can be Scottish but which can also derive from the Huguenot name Racine. William of Orange used the Huguenot businessmen to supply his army with staples. Another Anglo-French family named Crockett lived not so very far away from Clashiegowan in the townland of Bogay in the parish of All Saints near Derry. The Crocketts were grain dealers. Perhaps both families had supplied the mostly Dutch regiment which came to Derry.

## Masshill Mass Rock

**Location of Stone B:** Masshill townland.

**Meaning of townland name:** Literally the hill of mass. Penal masses were held here and the spot may have been venerated as a place of early Christian worship.

**Measurements of Stone B:** Length 52.49 inches. Height is 15.30 inches. The width varies from 45.93 inches to 24.24 inches and to 32.80 inches

**Description of Stone B:** This large rock is shaped like an anvil, narrowing into a point measuring 32.80 inches across. It narrows into a “neck” measuring 24.24 inches and then broadens out to 52.49 inches. The stone is of grey granite.

**Situation of Stone B:** The stone was situated on the highest point of an escarpment known as, “the Rock”. The base of the escarpment was covered in blackthorn bushes and holly trees. Bluebells flourished there in the month of May. In the late seventies, Mr. Elvin Thompson bought Masshill farm and while he was removing hedges, he tidied up the Rock removing the mass rock with a digger and placing it beside a gateway which opened on to the Back Lane. The stone was also deposited upside down so that one looks today at the base of the rock.



*Masshill Rock 52.49 inches long, 15.3 inches high and 45.93 inches wide at its widest point. Photo: Mrs Marion Thompson*

**Folklore:** King James II stopped here to hear Mass on his way from Ballindrait to Derry. The Mahaffy family were living on the farm then and were presented to the king. In memory of that visit, the Mahaffy family have kept the Christian name James in every generation since.

The first Mahaffy at Masshill was a nephew of a John Mahaffy who was a King's Messenger in Scotland. John had become involved with the Duke of Argyll in organizing the Monmouth Rebellion in Scotland. The Duke of Argyll was later beheaded for his actions and John Mahaffy was transported to America where his descendants still live.

King James II may have wished to worship at this rock because there is a school of thought which believes that it may have been an altar in the early Celtic church founded in this area by Saint Cairneach. Local people say that Clonleigh should really be known as “an Cloc Liath” which means the grey stone. In the adjacent townland of Boyagh were healing stones, so perhaps an early monastery of the Celtic church was active here.

Even in early Christian times, the Rock may have been venerated for pre-Christian uses. In the early Fifties, a local man was ferreting around the Rock and he saw a fairy woman near the Rock. When he approached her, she disappeared.

It may have been a pre-Christian gathering point as Muckish, Errigal, Grianán of Aileach and Knocklayde in county Antrim are all visible from here. Given the Viking settlement in the area, and the anvil shape of the rock, could it have been used by the Vikings, a gathering spot dedicated to the Norse god Thor, lord of thunderstorms who rides through the storm clouds in a chariot pulled by goats and throws his hammer named Mjollnir everywhere to create lightning.

The Rock was well used in Penal times for holding Masses. The surrounding scrub land on three sides would have hidden people from sudden raids by Red-coats. Glencash and Masshill townlands lie adjacent to each other. King James also climbed to the top of Binion hill. When he looked at the view, he said that it was a land worth fighting for. This quotation has also been attributed to his son-in-law William as he looked over the Boyne valley.

While most people know that he had a picnic with the Keys family under a chestnut at Cavanacor, many are unaware that James frequently called upon Mr. Cowan in St. Johnston who was the local representative in the area. Mr. Cowan lived in a long, low, thatched house at the end of St. Johnston street. Here king James was given “a boul o’ tae” at a long refectory table. The table was kept in the family as a treasured heirloom. During the late Twenties of the last century, the Cowan family decided to emigrate to the U.S.A. Four brothers disputed who was entitled to take the table. As a compromise, the table was sawn into four quarters so each brother took his share with him!

There is a family named Millar in the St. Johnston area who owned a mill. Towards the end of the siege of Derry, James II stayed with them for three nights. He had no money to pay them so he left his sword with them. Very little if anything has been researched about this period of the life of King James II in Ireland. Perhaps this article will stimulate more research.

The king’s palace at St. Cloud in Paris burned down and if any memoirs existed, they were probably burnt too. His loyal son, James, Duke of Berwick, became through his grandson, the ancestor of the Dukes of Alba in Spain. While I was working with the committee on Lifford Court- house some years ago, I wrote to the present Duchess of Alba for any information. Her secretary replied that their palace in Madrid which contained the family documentation had burnt down in the early twentieth century and they did not know of any connections with Lifford. James followed his father in the retreat to France. His first wife was the widow of Sir Patrick Sarsfield.

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Mrs Elizabeth McAuley and her family at Glencash.

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#### Photos – Mrs Marion Thompson and Belinda Mahaffy

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# THE ADAIRS OF DONEGAL: TOWARDS A TRANSATLANTIC GAME PLAN

*Robert Spiegelman*

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*For May McClintock and Eoin Mulhern*



Glenveagh Castle

This two-part essay<sup>1</sup> joins a decades-long project in Donegal and more recent efforts in Laois and Texas<sup>2</sup> to revive interest and re-assess the legacy of John George Adair (1823-1885), and his less known, but formidable spouse, Cornelia Adair (1837-1921). Whereas the Adairs figure in Donegal and Laois accounts, their exploits in London, New York and Texas have gone largely unnoticed by the Anglosphere. New research, however, indicates a saga far greater than the sum of its far-flung parts. (For one example, John Adair re-emerges as the biggest *Irish-born* landowner of his day, among the largest ever.) While Donegal is its north star, the research sheds fresh light on the international stage on which they operated<sup>3</sup>. Surely, they embodied a transatlantic plutocracy that spanned the Victorian Era and Gilded Age America. Indeed, should their foundations ever crack, they proved agile (and lucky) enough to stay landed and gentry - by any means necessary. Still, the inescapable fact is that their lifestyle was rooted in serial dispossession of native Irish

and American peoples. That said, valuable insights can be drawn from their too little-known epic journey, whose footprints lay hidden from plain sight on three continents.<sup>4</sup>

## MURDERS UNSOLVED

In Donegal today, two victims of unsolved murders moulder in unmarked graves at Trentagh Presbyterian Church.<sup>5</sup> James Murray and Adam Grierson<sup>6</sup> numbered among a host of shepherds and managers, mostly Scots, who, since the mid-1850s were brought to post-famine rural Donegal. The objective was to integrate Scottish blackface sheep<sup>7</sup> into the “rationalizing” economies of post-famine estates. In Scotland’s Highlands, such schemes dismantled the crofter’s way of life. In Donegal landlords’ importation of highly-adaptable docile quadrupeds would supplant the more troublesome, less cost-efficient Irish bipeds. Ironically, Murray and Grierson’s luck in landing “the work” only hastened their deaths. The job, perforce, would “cleanse” the land of long-standing tenant communities, and feather the nest of the employer of record - Donegal’s most infamous landlord to-be - John George Adair.

“From time immemorial,” tenants could access common pastures to graze their animals. The emerging new order imposed a zero-sum regime of sheep-runs and codified law, which would undo the “moral economy” of the commons by fining “errant” owners and impounding their “trespassing” beasts. In 1856, Lord George Hill had destabilized northwest Donegal by renting to scores of Scottish settlers bringing hundreds of black-faces to Gweedore, which sparked a brutal sheep war. In 1857 (when Adair first saw Derryveagh), a British commission found: “[A]n erroneous opinion exists in the minds of these people as to their rights over the mountains near which they reside, and their not being well-advised on this point has led to the outrages that have been committed.” But while high-toned commissioners proclaimed that “No attempt has been made...to take from them any land over which they had *real rights*,” stewards were being tasked with the “dirty work” of implementing the makeover.

In April 1861, stewards Murray and Grierson played fateful roles in silencing Derryveagh’s townlands.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Murray and cohorts would neglect or sequester Adair’s new sheep; thereby bloodletting Adair’s cherished new order, while deflecting the blame on his tenants. When Murray, for his part, was brutally murdered, suspicion fell alternatively on the Sweeney’s (descendants of the region’s Gaelic chiefs), or on Scottish shepherd, Dugald Rankin, a boarder at “Chez Murray” and Mrs. Murray’s likely lover.<sup>10</sup>

In response, Murray’s successor, Adam Grierson, led a “crowbar brigade” (in from Tyrone) through three hellish days<sup>11</sup> that levelled Derryveagh. While Murray’s unsolved murder provided “legal” grounds for wholesale eviction, Grierson, on the eve of sailing down under<sup>12</sup> was shot for enacting the plan. With 200 armed police (from three counties<sup>13</sup>) on stand-by, Grierson collectively punished 244 people from 47 families, “cleansing”

11,600 acres – their ancestral *home*. Neither Gartan clay nor proximity to St. Columcille’s birthplace could ward off the battering ram, or soothe the *keening* of unrequited loss that “language was never made to describe.”<sup>14</sup> Many took to the roads, or entered the workhouse at Letterkenny, the most traumatized disintegrating by drowning, madness or prolonged exposure. Visiting in 1990, Father Tony Doherty of Sydney – Derryveagh’s first returning descendant – offered its epitaph: “April was the month of the shattered hearth.”<sup>15</sup>

The next May, Derryveagh’s young “opted” for the Donegal Relief Fund’s (DRF) 114-day “assisted emigration” cruise to Australia, to start the proverbial new life. That Adair’s maternal uncle, W.S. Trench, helped pioneer that strategy<sup>16</sup> *may* have factored in his planning. (Alternately, an Adair run-amok *may* have been “relieved,” with the elder advising, if not stage-managing the aftermath.<sup>17</sup>) Trench wrote, like “[h]alf Ireland was completely paralysed by the suddenness of the calamity.” “I therefore resolved,” he crowed,

to put into practice a scheme which I had meditated *for a long time previously*, namely to go myself to Lord Lansdowne at Bowood, to state to him the whole circumstance of the case, and to recommend him to adopt an extensive system of voluntary migration as the only practicable and effective means of relieving this frightful destitution. This plan, accordingly, I carried into effect. (Author’s italics)<sup>18</sup>

As news of Derryveagh spread like bracken, the DRF applied remaining money from Gweedore’s relief fund (1858) and raised money in Australia.<sup>19</sup> Its good ship *Abyssinian* would tie-up at Plymouth to await its cargo – the recent “future” of Derryveagh.<sup>20</sup> Those deemed eligible for the passage were aged 18-28. One reached Plymouth, but never left: Brigid Doherty, aged 6-months, died of convulsions.<sup>21</sup> Seven others would die in transit.

The epic departure from Donegal – the first time most left home – was described by A.M. Sullivan:

On the day they were to set out for Liverpool, a strange scene was witnessed. The cavalcade was accompanied by a concourse of neighbours and sympathisers. They had to pass within a short distance of the ancient burial-ground, where “the rude forefathers” of the valley slept. They halted, turned aside, and proceeded to the grass-grown cemetery. Here in a body they knelt, flung themselves on the graves of their relatives, which they reverently kissed again and again, and raised for the last time the Irish caoine or funeral wail. Then – some of them pulling tufts of grass which they placed in their bosoms – they resumed their way on the road to exile.<sup>22</sup>

Sullivan’s otherwise wrenching account (1877) nearly ends with this bromide: a report from Mr. O’Grady that “Every one of them was ‘doing well.’”<sup>23</sup> Nothing of the voyage itself, or the dread it inspired, or that Australia long-signified “the worst kind of exile...the exile of chains.”<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Australia’s own Thomas Keneally strips away the varnish:

[T]o be transported so far [away], the chance of ever coming back is so minute that it was almost as absolute a fate - Australia - as death is. It's the same as sending someone into another plane of being. And people were very conscious of it.<sup>25</sup>

On the brink of leaving, Derryveagh’s young were implored by their spiritual shepherd, Rev. James McFadden: “[D]on’t forget the old people at home, boys... [T]hey will be counting the days till a letter comes from you.”<sup>26</sup> Not one has surfaced. For, as links were broken, family-by-family, Derryveagh was stripped from the valley it once adorned, and *almost* forgotten by history.<sup>27</sup>



John George Adair

## ENCHANTED BY BEAUTY

John George Adair was born into established, second-tier gentry in Ballybrittas, Queen’s County. Known locally as “The Wood,” it was a flashpoint in the Irish Confederate Wars (1640s), where England’s Gen. Monro met defeat; and, “after which,” quips Laois publ-can Sean Ward, “England retaliated for the next 300 years.”<sup>28</sup> His father, George Adair, was an acclaimed agronomist-improver, whose state-of-the-art farms in Ballybrittas<sup>29</sup> and Tipperary were operational since 1852 (that is, once their prior tenants were ousted).<sup>30</sup>

Adair’s mother, Elizabeth, was born a Trench, “one of the most remarkable landed families in nineteenth century Ireland.”<sup>31</sup> Their best-known (if notorious) scion was her brother, William Steuart Trench, Agent-in-Ireland for Lords Digby, Bath, Lansdowne and Shirley – the foremost of absentee landlords. Tragically, Elizabeth died within days of John’s birth. Considering his future exploits, it seems not farfetched to imagine a life-long wounding: a bottomless sense of loss demanding consolation, compensation and callousness; an appetitive void requiring continual acquisition and pre-emption of further ambush.<sup>32</sup> To wit, riding as a gentleman-jockey for Lord Drogheda at the 1848 Emo Races, Adair chose an illegal route – *twice* – to snatch victory and spoils for his sponsor. His knavery sparked a gruelling 3-year controversy which absolved him in court, but effectively ended the meets.<sup>33</sup>

Adair’s mix of private entitlement and legal opportunism would explode in Donegal; where he’d again command attention, and undo a way of life. By then, a damaged psyche

and class- entitlement had blunted his conscience. Indeed, one's dread of vulnerability is easily projected on to *others*; especially on those more vulnerable, with little remorse for their ordeal. Now another ambush, his prized-sheep's "disappearance," had tripped his wires. And, surely, as the barbarians were inside his gates \_ there, just over the hill - could eviction be far behind?

Nor did it finally help those more vulnerable when Adair<sup>34</sup> stood for Parliament and lost. He ran in Limerick in 1857,<sup>35</sup> where Trench's owned land,<sup>36</sup> but, interestingly, as a (sic) "tenant-right" candidate. Though the apparent irony is appealing, the Tenant-Right party chronically needed candidates,<sup>37</sup> and Adair stood only for "such measure of Tenant-Right as will secure to the Landlord the legitimate right of property, and to the Tenant the fruit of labour and industry."<sup>38</sup> The real irony is that a parliamentary career *might* have channeled his energies away from the tenants he would finally torment. Then again, Adair would soon make his mark on Westminster.

The little known fact of Adair's famine-era life is that the Great Hunger punched his meal ticket. Positioned to muster financing and advice, he made hay by speculating in derelict farms, and "practiced his art with great aplomb."<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the post-famine 1850s were an "invigorating" time for new landlords, when "about one-seventh of Ireland's estates changed hands, often at bargain prices."<sup>40</sup> To wit, between 1852 and 1857, as "one of a new generation of Irish-born speculators,"<sup>41</sup> Adair lavished £35,000 on nine buys in Tipperary, Kilkenny, and Queen's County, totalling 4,800 acres.<sup>42</sup> By evicting 25 families in Tipperary and others in Laois, it helped stamp "land-jobber"<sup>43</sup> on "Black Jack's"<sup>44</sup> resumé. Yet speculation may have become the back door out of Dad's farm for an "active and energetic son;"<sup>45</sup> relegated to showing its model in 1853 at Dublin's Great Exhibition,<sup>46</sup> then showing off the farm to "live visitors" in 1855. Whereas George, the father, had won praise as a "resident, non-absentee, stay-at-home proprietor,"<sup>47</sup> John George, the apple, would fall *far* from the tree.

Seizing the day, Adair's *bona fortuna* was to lay eyes on Derryveagh during a 1857 "tour of Donegal." Whether hunting for trophies or land, Adair heard opportunity's knock. "Enchanted," he was, "by the beauty of the scenery;"<sup>48</sup> which in translation meant "mine." Surely, the area's topographical kinship with the stunning Scottish Highlands could sway any buyer. Victoria's purchase (1852) and makeover (1855) of Balmoral had so geared elite imaginations towards owning fantasy landscapes (that buffered industrialization and escaped the great unwashed).<sup>49</sup> Eventually, Adair's Glenveagh Castle, (purportedly) designed as a mini-Balmoral by his cousin J.T. Trench (uncle William's son), would consummate the vision. Duly impressed, Adair launched into a four-year (1857-1861) gala buying spree of 28,012 acres,<sup>50</sup> linking Glenveagh, Gartan and Derryveagh into one great estate. Moreover, Adair's plan to evict *may* have been there all along. As early as May 1857, he "proposed putting all the tenants off the mountain... with a view to selling it thereafter."<sup>51</sup>

But why Donegal? Failure to ask leaves only "chanced to pass through,"<sup>52</sup> or "on a tour of the area..."<sup>53</sup> McClintock, in contrast, ponders whether Adair was tipped off by John Stewart, a Gartan landlord with holdings in Tipperary<sup>54</sup> (where Adair's and Trench's held land). In fact, Adair's luck at drawing the lucky tip was a lifelong pattern. Whether Stewart ever rued that day,<sup>55</sup> Adair, by tempting class warfare, had unified Gartan against him, from traditional landlords, like Johnson and Humfry to the entire clergy, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic.<sup>56</sup>

## PARLIAMENT PONDERS

Derryveagh's fallout stopped even Adair from another eviction at Ballylehane (Queen's County). With Pandora's box ajar, mounting outrage also forced Parliament to consider stripping away his titles. Being a Trench-linked J.P., Sheriff and D.L. in Tipperary, Kildare, Queen's and Donegal, would naturally ease entry into Dublin's Kildare Street Club, an Ascendancy bastion since 1782.<sup>57</sup> Conversely, such public humiliation could put Adair "beyond the Pale" and curtail his future.

Derryveagh was now a *cause celebre*, commanding Parliamentary debate and press coverage from Donegal to Australia and New Zealand. In Westminster's drama,<sup>58</sup> victims and perpetrator became more symbol than human,<sup>59</sup> in a ritual dance to reaffirm property. Leading Derryveagh defender, M.P. William Scully, noted the unprecedented "thrill of horror" the evictions sent through Ireland. His opening salvo cast Derryveagh as, "A case of oppression that could not be paralleled in any part of the world out of Ireland." Its "scenes," he railed, "were a scandal to civilization and to any form of Christianity." But in demanding a full-scale inquiry, Scully narrowly framed the issue as Adair's impeachment \_ not Derryveagh's *restoration*: "Whether it was fitting that Mr. Adair should continue to hold her Majesty's Commission."<sup>60</sup> Edward Cardwell, the Secretary for Ireland, instantly begged to differ. Reminding MPs of the "delicate matter" of private rights, his Government expected that: "[A]s Mr. Adair had not acted in excess of his legal rights, and had not been guilty of a breach of his duty in his capacity of a magistrate, it would be unusual, and too strong an exercise of power, to deprive him of the Commission of the Peace."

"The indignation of Parliament," countered Mr. Monsell, "ought to be brought on every man who was guilty of such a barbarous outrage... [and] the atrocity itself called for exceptional treatment." Because Adair's allegations were "totally untrue," Scully resumed, "the case [has created] more sympathy in Ireland than any other I have ever known." Nor did Mr. Maguire mince words in declaring, "Mr. Adair, by throwing out 244 people helpless on the world, had been guilty before God and man of a great outrage and a great wrong."

Where Maguire invoked God, Mr. McMahon sought \_ for property's sake \_ a "Gentleman's Way" to renounce Adair: "If honorable Gentlemen wished to maintain the

rights of property,” he advised, “they ought to keep a broad and clear distinction between the acts of humane, gentlemanly landlords, and those of mere land jobbers, who, with the rank and station of gentlemen, combined the feelings of bum-bailiffs.” “[For] having acted in so inhuman and cruel a manner as to punish hundreds for the crime of one or two,” Adair must be shorn of his titles.

With Adair teetering, his defenders launched a counter-offensive. Some like Mr. Foster insisted that, in Donegal, “two classes were at war.” Others like Mr. Connolly conjured the era’s terrorist threat: “The evictions here, although severe and perhaps extreme, were necessary under the circumstances... [because] Mr. Adair was so hemmed in by the Ribbon conspiracy.” Indeed, had Adair not so acted, “he must either have given up his estate entirely or have held it subject to the control of these assassins.” “Nothing could be more painful,” Connolly postured, “than the idea of turning out a multitude of poor people into the road.” However, “another idea quite as painful [was] the existence of such a state of terrorism as prevailed in that part of Donegal.” As the Landlord’s painful duty was to end that “dreadful state of things,” Adair had duly “acted the part of a courageous and independent man.” Self-blinded to the criticism lodged by Adair’s fellow landlords, Connolly concluded: “It was not Mr. Adair who drove the people to desperation, it was the people who drove him to extreme measures... and he would not flinch from it.”

Prime Minister Palmerston, for whom “tenant right was landlord wrong,” gave the defense’s summation. “It would be a most outrageous and dangerous abuse of the power of the House,” he intoned, “to interfere with the *private* transactions of any individuals within the limits of their legal rights...[or] to inquire into the motives from which an individual has exercised rights that none deny.” That would engender “abuses so intolerable that the whole country would rise in indignation against the proceedings of this House.” Indeed, “[T]here is no proper ground for inquiry.”

Undaunted by gravitas, Mr. Isaac Butt rose to summon his wrath on the Government via Adair. “I must deny,” he rebutted, “that the conduct of Mr. Adair was a *private* transaction.” Indeed, “Upwards of 200 policemen, who were supported by the country, were brought to the aid of Mr. Adair for the purpose of ejecting his poor tenants. Was that not a *public* transaction?” “The people of Ireland,” he threatened, could now infer “there was not sympathy for them in that House;” and Palmerston, he threatened, would “soon lose all Irish support.” But *demanding* the inquiry, Maguire would cut to the chase: “[As] there is no [longer] Parliament in Dublin;” then, “if the voice of oppressed and persecuted men is not to be heard in this house, where, in God’s name, is it to be heard?”

At roll call, “the house divided:” Parliament voted 88 to 23 not to inquire; thus, not to revoke Adair’s titles.<sup>62</sup> And, without a proper inquiry, there could be no restoration.

Though barely “legalized” by thousand-year old *Saxon* law,<sup>63</sup> with innocence presumed as guilt, and however disproportionate its result, collective punishment remained a landlord’s prerogative. Adair’s “infernal combination called the Ribbon Society,”<sup>64</sup> remained on tap, to both exaggerate and contend with. And, for all their verbal fisticuffs, Scully and Cardwell each kept restoration out-of-play. To wit, Scully concedes *early-on* that, “It might be *impossible* for the Government to apply any effective remedy in the case.” And Cardwell, straight-faced, then “confides” his relief not to have heard of “any failure of humanity as regarded relief of the people under the Poor Law... especially the aged and the young, who were necessarily involved in the sufferings, [...] albeit with] no share in the guilty transactions which led to them.” In the end, Parliament’s four-to-one majority refused to erode Ascendancy power over a **lawful**, if maverick deed by – however distasteful – one of their own. The Opposition that day would stay loyal and Derryveagh stay dispossessed.

Back in Donegal, Westminster’s verdict roiled public opinion. Murray’s killers – be they Sweeney’s (arrested, then released) or not – were never turned up. (Sweeney’s had been twice- dispossessed: as Gaelic chieftains of the region and in Derryveagh by Adair.) And, notwithstanding that Grierson – on his deathbed – named Francis Bradley as his killer, three successive juries nullified his prosecution and set the jailed man scot-free.<sup>65</sup> (This, after thirty-six Bradley’s were evicted at Derryveagh.) In 1862, when Adair sought “normalization” by proposing a Geological Exhibition in London, Donegal landlords ignored his call for rock samples, and an editor suggested he bring “stones from the derelict houses in Derryveagh!”<sup>66</sup> Indeed, once Donegal “voted,” he’d join the pantheon of hated landlords.

W.S. Trench’s *Realities of Irish Life* appeared in 1868. While casting himself as the Ribbonmen’s scourge, Trench skips ahead from 1858 to 1865, eliding Derryveagh, Adair and the DRF. If meant to insulate his legend from a nephew’s stain, this silence was broken in America by Dunkineely-born Patrick Sarsfield Cassidy’s *Glenveagh, or the Victims of Vengeance*. It is a scathing jeremiad with as much poetic license as well-aimed indignation. Its preface, written in Brooklyn, accuses Adair of conspiring to murder Murray, to legalize his plans. If Adair had “muscle” in London, Cassidy’s was in the Boston Archdiocese. Indeed, from January-April of 1870, *Glenveagh* was serialized in *The Pilot*, its influential weekly, then published as a book.<sup>67</sup> But however incendiary were Cassidy’s words, they failed to evoke a law suit,<sup>68</sup> or halt Adair’s ambitions.

## MAIDEN VOYAGE TO AMERICA

By all received accounts, John Adair reappears in 1866 New York as a loan broker. But as major decisions don’t just “happen,” the question *why* he went is posed in this paper and analyzed for the first time.

In 1866, America's emergence from Civil War re-ignited its westward expansion; drawing men of means to Manhattan, to finance long-deferred railroad and resource-extraction projects. Across the pond, by contrast, economics roiled the Anglosphere. H. L. Beale notes that these so-called “good years”... were not equally good for everybody, and they were punctuated with events and behaviour which were not consistent with the benevolent and busy-bee character usually ascribed to our Victorian ancestors.”<sup>69</sup> In 1868, the *Edinburgh Review* looked back upon,

[t]he collapse in railway finance; the inflated operations of 1864 and 1865 which led to the crisis of 1866 and the long commercial, financial, industrial and railway crisis of 1867; the decreased exports; the Court of Chancery “blocked with the liquidation of companies bankrupt or dying of atrophy;” the depreciation in the value of foreign stock; the phenomenon of “capital on strike” and so forth.

As for rural Ireland, the early 1860s were depression years marked by “[u]nusually wet weather ruined pastures, cash crops, potatoes and turf, thus injuring graziers, commercial tillage farmers, subsistence cultivators, and labourers alike.”<sup>71</sup> Well-aware of near-famine conditions, in 1861-64, landlords evicted at rates 65% above the previous four (in the midlands and west), whereas Donegal saw a 309% jump in male emigration.<sup>72</sup>

Worst of all, the Anglosphere suffered “The Great Cattle Plague” – a massive outbreak of rinderpest that overleaped Eurasia into England and Scotland. “One out of every ten head of stock perished,”<sup>73</sup> even as hymns implored God “bid the grievous murrain cease.”<sup>74</sup> “We hope and trust that we shall escape the cattle plague,” quaked the far-away *New York Times*, but “if we do not, let us all be forewarned and forearmed.”<sup>75</sup>

Thomas Baldwin’s<sup>76</sup> remarkable first-hand account<sup>77</sup> details how the plague in England “carried off about one-third of a million of beasts;” and that the cure “was to kill not only every beast which became affected, but every beast which came within its influence.” “It was a violent remedy,” Baldwin admitted, “and it was apparently as barbarous as it was violent.” Still, while it was “a rude interference with the rights of property,” he insisted, “it was inevitable, and the owners of property soon began to see that, in the present state of our knowledge, it was the only way to protect property in cattle from utter destruction.”

Ireland’s gentry went on high-alert. The initial outbreak “near Lisburn in the north, and near Enfield in Meath,” Baldwin noted, “was the same disease which I saw in England,” and required the same “violent remedy.” Going forward, he prescribed: “The landed gentry, the graziers, and farmers of Ireland, should accept this [cure] as an established principle, and in every possible way aid and assist the executive for the time being in putting it into practice.” By following suit, “They will thus save themselves from great loss and the country from the ruin, which would inevitably follow if cattle plague were allowed to spread through Ireland.”

While the plague was arrested, it came perilously close. Though largely spared, Ireland’s loss of livestock to *all* diseases from 1865-1868 was still five percent. Noting total taxes were £2,632,977, cattle diseases imposed “upon the gentry and farmers a sum very nearly equal in amount to county cess, poor rate, and all other local taxes put together.” “This statement,” Baldwin affirmed, “will at first sound incredible; [but] it is nevertheless true.”

No gentryman could fail to notice.<sup>78</sup> As ensuring one’s positions meant hedging risks and diversifying assets, Adair and cohorts arguably took *necessary* steps to opportunist on America’s revival. Spared *official* opprobrium and seeking “value-added” rehabilitation, Adair set sail for resurgent Manhattan. With a “cleansed” past and a financial strategy - borrow cheap in Ireland, lend dear in America - Adair re-materialized as a New York loan broker.

## TRANS-ATLANTIC ALLIANCES

Touching down at a New York society ball, Adair was further “enchanted” by a well-born socialite, Cornelia Wadsworth Ritchie, a widow emerging from mourning. Fourteen years younger, Mrs. Ritchie was eligible and, with two fatherless boys, anxious to secure their future. Tragically, in May, 1864, the war took her father, Gen. James Samuel Wadsworth; in November, it took her husband, Capt. Montgomery Ritchie.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, she’d already endured the sudden death of her beloved aunt Elizabeth, who perished within days of childbearing. Adair, of course, was no stranger to such ambush, having lost his mother, also Elizabeth, within days of his birth.

Cornelia was born to owners of a New York land empire; whose wealth derived from investment by one Jeremiah Wadsworth in the Genesee Valley, ancient homeland of the Seneca Indians. In 1779, they were uprooted by the scorched-earth Sullivan<sup>80</sup>-Clinton Campaign – new-born America’s first invasion of sovereign territory. As its commissary general (then Supplier for America’s French allies), Wadsworth became the wealthiest man in Connecticut. He soon bankrolled resettlement of the Seneca heartland by his cousins, William and James Wadsworth, Cornelia’s grandfathers-to-be. The latter’s son, James S., would become Cornelia’s father.

In 1837, Cornelia’s birth-year, her father held reservation land, power of attorney and a one-third interest in the nationally-infamous Ogden Land Company<sup>81</sup> – America’s most predatory Indian-remover. As his lucky stars aligned, Wadsworth became a devoted Anglophil: touring London on honeymoon; modeling the family seat after a London (Regent’s Park) mansion; with a daughter (Cornelia!) born when Victoria accedes the throne. His sister, Elizabeth, Cornelia’s role model, would marry a Scottish aristocrat, Charles Augustus Murray. After a failed run for Parliament (like Adair!), Murray was “consoled” with an appointment to Victoria’s court. In 1774, his grandfather, John Murray (Lord Dunmore), a hated New York and Virginia governor<sup>82</sup> had won England’s last anti-

Indian War in colonial America.<sup>83</sup> And, coming full circle, James S. would give sister Elizabeth away to Gov. Murray's grandson, at Westminster Abbey.<sup>84</sup> Her leaving the nest this way, moreover, enabled Cornelia to follow suit and eventually become a naturalized citizen.



Cornelia Adair is seated second from right.

Details of the Adair's marriage have been elusive until now. They were wed on 30 May 1867, in “*transnational style*” – in Paris, at the British Legation, and presided over by Richard Chevenix Trench, archbishop of Dublin and a family relation.<sup>85</sup> With Gilded Age flair, New York and London society columns reported her dowry at \$300,000,<sup>86</sup> the basis for long-held, but overstated claims that Adair “took Manhattan.”<sup>87</sup> A half-century later, their union was remembered as “one of the first international alliances of the sort.”<sup>88</sup> The Adair's, in fact, had pioneered the wave of “transatlantic marriages” that captivated the epoch and its literary giants.

The Adairs security now rested on each other's actual and *perceived* wealth. Their stage for perception-management was London, the West's leading cosmopolis. Residing at Curzon Street (and/or Portman Square), they swanned through its salons and soirees of “The Season” – the annual fox hunts at Melton Mowbray, oft-attended by Victoria. In 1870, bearing the “spirit of the age” and the means to materialize it, Adair commissioned Glenveagh Castle, ostensibly for Cornelia, across the mountain<sup>89</sup> from silent Derryveagh.

## AMERICAN REDUX

In 1873, as their Shangri-la reached completion, shockwaves from financial collapse in Vienna and America's “Panic of 1873” struck Great Britain hard. Back in America, moreover, Cornelia's brothers, as Adair discovered, were siphoning her inheritance.<sup>90</sup> Then, on 30 August 1874, the Adair's rushed from Ballybrittas to catch “the only quick train in Ireland”<sup>91</sup> – the karmically-named “Great Southern & Western Railway” – for Queenstown. Indeed, however detested, industrialism's inevitable infrastructure was sure-

ly adaptable to buy space-time enough to escape it. Then off to America, on safari for near-extinct buffalo, with the Indian's commons fair game. Was this a mere Victorian lark? Or was more at stake than a trophy for Glenveagh's mantel? Again, as transatlantic jaunts didn't just “happen,” Adair's hunger for “Sport” begs the question *why*?

Saving these details for part two, the broad strokes remain compelling. In Depression-ridden America, Adair would once again harvest dispossession. And while the adventure nearly cost his life, it made him the biggest Irish-born landowner of the era – if not ever. The seeming safari did confront their “how-to-stay-landed-and-gentry” crisis. And, by going “outside the Irish box,” they acquired (to parody) “a Bonanza of one's own.” Whereas Gael-free blackfaces had bitter-sweetened his Donegal, Commanche-free Herefords would enrich them in Texas. And yet – wheels within wheels – just as Adair had lived by cattle, he would fatefully come to die by them.

## A DONEGAL CODA

“The great thing,” Cornelia declared, “is to miss as little as possible, *and* to share as much.”<sup>92</sup> Surely her credo projects the effervescent sense of possibility of Victoriana at its best. But to ensure part one, part two was violated: and not only by “John the Bad;” but, objectively (, if indirectly), by “Cornelia the Good.” While Mrs. Adair's kindly reputation lingers in Laois, Donegal and Texas, few will recall the “acid test” at Derryveagh. On 9 June 1897, at Columcille's 1300th Centenary, an appeal by Rev. James McFadden was read to Mrs. Adair:<sup>93</sup>

[S]tanding here today 35 long years have elapsed. I feel saddened beyond measure to see those homesteads still desolate and not one of the evicted tenants reinstated. Would it be going to far on my part to suggest that an effort be made to approach the landlady (Mrs. Adair) as to the restoration of such of those tenantry as still survive or the representatives of those who died? Who knows, but Colmcille may intercede and secure us a happy issue.<sup>94</sup>

McFadden's plea fell on deaf ears. But nine years later, “the landlady” replied in her style. Down the lane inside her estate gates at Lacknacoo, she raised the Celtic High Cross that looms over Lough Gartan today. *There*, mere footsteps from Colmcille's (purported) birth site,<sup>95</sup> its inscription reads, “Adair.”<sup>96</sup>

In 1922, during Ireland's civil war, Cornelia longed “to breed Polo Ponies” and pined “to get back to the ranch.”<sup>97</sup> While everyone exhorted “Rest!,” she hungered to leave England for a final glimpse of Glenveagh. “My head man up there,” she confided, “always wanted me to go to show that I was not afraid. But I should not do so, for I really am afraid to go.”<sup>98</sup> Civil war again had ambushed her dreams; her Castle infested with “Bolsheviks.” I heartbroken,”<sup>99</sup> she wrote. But perhaps then, if only then, could Derryveagh's fate hit home.

*To be continued.*

- <sup>1</sup> The author warmly thanks Donegal's May McClintock and John Mulhern, who each introduced "Derryveagh" in 1997. The web trilogy – Derryveagh.com, StakedPlains.com and Dedrryveagh.com – illustrates his contribution to date.
- <sup>2</sup> In 2007 alone: Donegal saw the launch of McClintock's *The Silent Land* (Letterkenny, 2007), Charles Orser's continued archeology at Glenveagh Castle, and Glenveagh Park's filming a Derryveagh segment for its new visitor orientation; Laois saw the evolving research and website of Michael Dempsey and widening research and photos by Ronnie Mathews; Texas hosted a major JA Ranch exhibition, and a lecture by Glenveagh's Sean O Gaoithin (Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon); New York State received its first permanent Sullivan-Clinton Campaign exhibit (Roberson Museum, Binghamton); and the author's views on Derryveagh were presented in Letterkenny, Galway, Ballybrittas and Manhattan.
- <sup>3</sup> Fintan O'Toole, "History Needs no Narrative Thread," in The Irish Times, 3 November 2007. On the author's paradigm.
- <sup>4</sup> The fact that the basic works are all out-of-print has lowered its profile in Ireland. These are: May McClintock's *After the Battering Ram* (Letterkenny, 1991); Liam Dolan's *Land War and Eviction in Derryveagh, 1840-65*, (Dundalk, 1980); and W. E. Vaughan's *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen: John George Adair and His Derryveagh Evictions*, (Belfast, 1983).
- <sup>5</sup> Locally, their burial in Trentagh is an open secret. The author learned it from McClintock, who learned it from others.
- <sup>6</sup> McClintock, *The Silent Land*, p. 66 fn.3 and p. 64. McClintock establishes Murray's birthplace as Perthshire, Scotland; whereas Grierson, long-thought of as Scottish, became (one shudders) "the 12th and last child" of minor Irish gentry. Adair's evicting uncle, William Steuart Trench was the 15th and last child of the Dean of Kildare. Adair was left motherless since birth. It is hardly a secret that childhood neglect impacts psyches going forward.
- <sup>7</sup> By tradition, Scotland's 13th century Seer, Thomas of Erceldoune, is said to have prophesied of the Highlands: "The teeth of the sheep shall lay the (useless) plough up on the shelf." In 1762, Sir John Lockhart-Ross of Balnagowan found that blackface sheep could adapt year-round to the upper reaches where his cattle grazed in summer. This catalyzed events from the Highland Clearances to blackface importation into Donegal; which, in turn, paved the road to Derryveagh.
- <sup>8</sup> K. Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, (Oxford, 1998).
- <sup>9</sup> Of Derryveagh's 16 townlands, those dispossessed include: Altadogue, Ardaturr, Bingorms, Casheltown, Claggan, Drummalifferney, Maghernashangan, Staghall, Shruhangarrow and Warrentown.
- <sup>10</sup> W.E. Vaughan, *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen*, p. 42.
- <sup>11</sup> The Derryveagh Evictions took place April 8-10, 1861.
- <sup>12</sup> Grierson was leaving for New Zealand (McClintock, p. 70) or Queensland (Vaughan, p. 47). Either way, his killing removed a player with probable insider knowledge of whether Adair premeditated the evictions, etc.
- <sup>13</sup> The crowbar brigade came from Killyman, Tyrone; police from Leitrim, Roscommon and Donegal. (Dolan, 113).
- <sup>14</sup> The phrase is lifted from John Mitchel's 1854 *Jail Journal*. May McClintock's *The Silent Land* confronts both silence and forgetting by recovering Derryveagh's *individual* lives.
- <sup>15</sup> Doherty's phrase adorns a plaque on an eviction cottage at Loch Gartan. Public access is restricted by the landlord's barbed-wire and overgrown field; and because someone destroyed a road sign that had pointed

- its way.
- <sup>16</sup> Before Derryveagh, Trench "relieved" Lansdowne's Kerry estate, and Lords Bath and Shirley's estates in Monahan.
- <sup>17</sup> Trench and Adair "were almost certainly in touch with each other in these years." (Vaughan, p. 18)
- <sup>18</sup> W. S. Trench, *Realities of Irish Life* (London, 1868). If, indeed, Trench had "meditated a long time," he may have been considering assisted emigration even *before* the famine so "suddenly" erupted.
- <sup>19</sup> In Australia, DRF relief was led by Sydney's Archdeacon John McEncroe; its man in Donegal was J.H. Scott-Durbin.
- <sup>20</sup> The *Abyssinian's* manifest is elusive. Comparing it with arrivals suggests not everyone reached Australia. It is *possible* that some slipped away when the Dublin ferry hit Liverpool; and that others, for political reasons, went unlisted.
- <sup>21</sup> M. McClintock, *The Silent Land*, p. 104.
- <sup>22</sup> A.M. Sullivan, *New Ireland*, (London, 1877), pp. 229-230
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 231
- <sup>24</sup> T. Keneally, *The Great Shame: and the Triumph of the Irish in the English-Speaking World* (New York, 1999), p. 33.
- <sup>25</sup> "The land itself," Keneally observes, "was like an argument against remembrance, utterly removed from anything...familiar. ...Its trees perversely bloomed in any season and were not stripped by autumn." (p. 44)
- <sup>26</sup> A.M. Sullivan, *New Ireland*, p. 231
- <sup>27</sup> McClintock details the long-term struggle to restore Derryveagh's links with Australia in *After the Battering Ram* and "The Derryveagh-Australia Connection," in The Donegal Annual of 1988.
- <sup>28</sup> Cromwell's forces soon raised the Catholic church. In 1875, Adair had its planned reconstruction site moved well beyond his sightlines.
- <sup>29</sup> T. Dobson, owner of a Trench mansion in Laois, has told the author that local landlords regularly entered their best 1,000 acres into annual competitions for best "improved" model farm. Unmentioned was any cost to displaced tenants.
- <sup>30</sup> Ballybrittas historian Michael Dempsey notes: "The Adair's built a "State of the Art" farmyard at Belgrave in 1851. To justify their investment they ejected their tenants from the best land in Ballyaddan, Rathroinsin, Belgrave, etc; expecting to run the land more efficiently in a large unit, rather than depending on what they could extract from their tenants." See: <http://www.abbeyview-selfcatering-ireland.com/history.asp>.
- <sup>31</sup> W.E. Vaughan, *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen*, p. 16. In Ballybrittas, the Trench's, Adair's, Warburton's were the leading families. Adair's mother Elizabeth and uncle William (aka Richard) Trench were the 7th and 15th children of the Very Rev. Thomas Trench, Dean of Kildare, and niece and nephew to the first Lord Ashtown, one of Ireland's biggest landlords. He represented Portarlington in Dublin; then was granted an "Ulster peerage" for supporting the Act of Union.
- <sup>32</sup> Ironically, Adair's relative invisibility as a person is likely the result of "ambush": the accidental 1887 fire that destroyed his family seat at Rathdaire and consumed any posthumous papers. While this may hinder three-dimensional understandings of Adair, *far-reaching* insights are still possible. A potent "tool kit" exists that includes: the psychohistory of Erik Erikson; the social psychology of Martha Stout; the cultural anthropology of Jules Henry and Anthony F. C. Wallace; a study of young Teddy Roosevelt by David McCullough.; and the example of May McClintock.

- <sup>33</sup> Ronnie Mathews, "Emo Hunt Races, 1848-50," in *Laois Heritage Society Journal*, Vol. 2, 2004, pp. 33 - 48
- <sup>34</sup> Before 1800, Trenches sat as Irish MPs from Galway, Maryborough (Portaloise), Newtown Limavady and Portarlington. In 1800, Frederick Trench's controversial vote helped dissolve the Dublin Parliament. After 1800, there were far fewer Trench MPs in London, so a win by Adair win could have bolstered family interests.
- <sup>35</sup> W.E. Vaughan, *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen*, p. 45
- <sup>36</sup> Griffith's Valuation of 1857 lists many Trench entries for Limerick, for lands held mainly by an F. C. Trench, Esq.
- <sup>37</sup> "In recruiting parliamentary candidates," the tenant party was in "a fix." It "had to accept whoever came along." In T.E. Hachey, J.M. Hernon, L.J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience: A Concise History*, (Armonk, London, 1996, p.112
- <sup>38</sup> Dolan, *Land War and Eviction*, Appendix II, p. 178
- <sup>39</sup> Dolan, *Land War and Eviction*, p. 31. Such speculations were enabled by Dublin's Encumbered Estates Court.
- <sup>40</sup> K. A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, (Oxford, 1985), p. 384
- <sup>41</sup> K. Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 40
- <sup>42</sup> See W. E. Vaughan, *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen*, p.15, and L. Dolan, *Land War and Eviction*, pp. 179-180.
- <sup>43</sup> "The land jobber and not the farmer gets paid in the end, in the price of the land, for the capital invested by the latter. Indeed the history of the pioneers and land jobbers in the United States often reminds one of the worst horrors taking place, e.g., in Ireland." K. Marx to F. Engels, 26 Nov 1869, in *Marx and Engels Correspondence*, (Moscow, 1968).
- <sup>44</sup> For his acts of dispossession, Adair is still known as "Black Jack" in Ballybrittas, his former ancestral seat.
- <sup>45</sup> *Farmers Gazette*, "Farming at Bellegrove, The Seat of George Adair, Esq.," 29 April 1855
- <sup>46</sup> *Irish Farmers Gazette*, "Farming at Bellegrove, The Great Dublin Exhibition 1853," 17 September 1853
- <sup>47</sup> *Irish Farmers Gazette*, "Farming at Bellegrove, the Seat of George Adair, Esq.," 29 April 1855
- <sup>48</sup> Dolan, *Land War and Eviction*, p. 110; and, Heritage Service, *Glenveagh National Park: A Visitor's Guide*, (Dublin, 1996), p. 112. With few contenders, it is Adair's most-cited quotation. Adair used it to justify the evictions to the Donegal clergymen (Reverends Kair and Maturin) who tried to stop him.
- <sup>49</sup> For Victoria's impact, see I. R. Mitchell, *On the Trail of Queen Victoria in the Highlands*, (Edinburgh, 2000). She first visited Balmoral in 1848, purchased the 17,000 acre estate in 1852; then demolished the castle and rebuilt it in 1855.
- <sup>50</sup> W.E. Vaughan, *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen*, p.14. By acreage, Adair's Glenveagh estate is at the midpoint of Dooley's sample of 100 Irish Big Houses. See: T. Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland*, (Dublin, 2001), p. 289
- <sup>51</sup> Dolan, *Land War and Eviction*, 32. On 1 May 1857, Adair told this to W.C. Cornwall (who'd just sold him 15,000 acres). "The mountain" refers to James Johnston's fee-farm, which Adair now controlled (but did n't own).
- <sup>52</sup> A.M. Sullivan, *New Ireland*, p. 219
- <sup>53</sup> Heritage Service, *Glenveagh National Park*, p. 12
- <sup>54</sup> Griffith's Valuation of 1857 lists a John Stewart with 8 holdings in Gartan parish. In Tipperary, there are holdings for a John Stewart in Burncourt (Shanahan parish), and a John Stewart, Esq. in Dundrum (Ballintemple parish). In St. Columba's churchyard, Churchill, Gartan parish, John Stewart lies behind the

- <sup>55</sup> Rev. Henry Maturin who defied Adair. Alternatively, Liam Dolan's front map depicts holdings, northwest and east of Derryveagh, of a Rev. Charles F. Stewart.
- <sup>56</sup> Alternatively, Stewart, whose neighboring estate had seen tenant unrest, may then have sized-up Adair (as nephew of Ribbon-scourge W.S. Trench) as one who'd "set an example" to preempt future strife, while keeping his own hands clean.
- <sup>57</sup> In the days before the evictions, Revs. Kair and Maturin sent a letter imploring Adair to desist from "turning so many human beings to utter desolation." (See Dolan, pp. 107-9.)
- <sup>58</sup> Adair, John George (D.L. and J.P. Co. Donegal, J.P. counties Kildare and Tipperary), Rathdaire, Monasterevin, Glenveagh Castle, Glenveagh, Co. Donegal; Kildare Street Club, Dublin.
- <sup>59</sup> This account is distilled from *Hansard, House of Commons Debates*, "The Derryveagh Evictions," April-July 1861.
- <sup>60</sup> See footnote 14 for the antidote.
- <sup>61</sup> Adair then was D.L. and J.P. in Donegal, and J.P. in both Kildare and Tipperary.
- <sup>62</sup> E. A. D'Alton, "Ireland", in C.G. Herbermann, ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York, 1913), p. 110
- <sup>63</sup> Cynics may ponder whether any votes for Adair were cast in homage to Lord Ashtown, the Trench family notable whose controversial vote for the Act of Union helped dissolve the Dublin Parliament.
- <sup>64</sup> Adair avowed using "one of the oldest principles of English law, now recognized in the 'Malicious Injury Act.'" (Dolan, p. 110). Dolan terms it Saxon law (p. 113). Scully said "Normans had acted upon it", but it isn't Saxon or Christian.
- <sup>65</sup> J. G. Adair Letter to Revs. Kair and Maturin, in Dolan, *Land Wars and Eviction*, p.110
- <sup>66</sup> On the Bradley trials, see Dolan, *Land Wars and Eviction*,pp. 158-170; and McClintock, *The Silent Land*, pp. 65-76
- <sup>67</sup> McClintock, *The Silent Land*, 56.
- <sup>68</sup> More research is needed about the author and *Glenveagh's* origins; perhaps in archives of the Boston Archdiocese.
- <sup>69</sup> Coincidence or not, the series and book appeared in the period that Adair launched a law suit in New York against two of Cornelia's brothers for stealing from her inheritance.
- <sup>70</sup> H. L. Beales, "Revisions in Economic History: I. The "Great Depression" in Industry and Trade" in *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (October 1934), p. 65
- <sup>71</sup> H. L. Beales, "Revisions in Economic History: I. The "Great Depression" in Industry and Trade" in *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (October 1934), p. 65
- <sup>72</sup> Edinburgh Review, 1868. Cited in H. L. Beales, "Revisions in Economic History," p. 65
- <sup>73</sup> K. A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 360
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> It is likely that both were absent that day; but the appeal was a noted public event.
- <sup>76</sup> May McClintock, "The Derryveagh-Australia Connection," *Donegal Annual*, 1988, pp. 3-10
- <sup>77</sup> The Raphoe Diocesan website relates that Mrs. Adair erected her cross there "in all sincerity... to commemorate what she believed to be the saint's birthplace." Authentic or not, people used the place to ease childbirth and soothe loneliness.
- <sup>78</sup> The possible significance of Mrs. Adair's gesture begs further analysis and discussion. Or does it speak for itself?
- <sup>79</sup> Letter of C. Adair to T. D. Hobart, 27 June 1921. Library of Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas
- <sup>80</sup> Letter of C. Adair to T. D. Hobart, 31 May 1921. Library of Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas

<sup>99</sup> Letter of C. Adair, 1921 folders, Archives, Library of Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas

Dr. Robert Spiegelman, who holds a doctorate in sociology from City University New York, has an international reputation as a freelance author, film producer and screen writer. Following his research on the Sullivan-Clinton campaign and parallel indigenous histories in Texas, China and Ireland, he has lectured on the Adair family and Derryveagh both in Ireland and New York. A regular visitor to Donegal, he is currently writing his next book on the Adairs. Further information on the international projects in which he is involved can be found on his website, [sullivan-clinton.com](http://sullivan-clinton.com) and [derryveagh.com](http://derryveagh.com). The second part of this article will appear in the next issue of *Donegal Annual*.

Photos – Glenveagh National Park website



## MARY ROSALIE BOYD – SOUTH AFRICAN POET

May McClintock



**A well-known Letterkenny landmark, Ballymacool House was the home for many generations of the Boyd family, who played a central role in the affairs of the county. But little is known about its links to the world of international poetry .....and the Beatles.**

Mary Rosalie Boyd was born in Ballymacool House, Letterkenny in 1880, the eldest child of William Henry Porter Boyd D.L. and his wife Charlotte Agnes Dopping, a noted public speaker.<sup>1</sup> He was a Donegal Grand Juror and promoted the development of railways in the county. Mary emigrated to South Africa with her brother, Rev William Henry at the beginning of the century. She later returned to England to study at Westfield College and obtained an MA in French at the University of London. In 1912, she returned to South Africa and accepted the post of Senior French teacher in Port Elizabeth.

During the next twenty years, Miss Boyd established herself as one of the foremost women poets in South Africa with such poems as *The Veldt* (1921), *Table Mountain* (1926), *Evening, Night and Dawn in South Africa* (1930) and *The Drought* (1931). She won the Bardic Chair of her adopted country on four occasions.(See photo above right and Boyd family crest, left) None of her poems can be described as romantic love poems but all display a passionate love for her Irish homeland and later of South Africa. She excels in writing about the moods and seasonal changes, the landscape, and the wild flowers of South Africa. She writes about the “bare, brown, barren veldt, strange tortured shapes of plants, gross flashy leaves with many a bristling spine”, comparing them to Irish and English lawns “so fragrant and so green” and the “fair dog roses in the hedge that blow”.

Her early poems show a longing for the friends she left behind in Letterkenny and her homesickness for Ireland. Indeed, the opening lines of *The Veldt* strike a note of despair:

So here my journey ends; here hope lies dead,  
Untimely slain by stark reality,  
My soul, be numb; thy tears remain unshed:

*Market Square, Letterkenny, c. 1906. ( courtesy of the National Library, Dublin)*





*Letterkenny from Leck, post-1906, following building of cathedral.*

(courtesy of the National Library, Dublin)

Let all that I have loved forgotten be,  
And look not back, my soul; go  
forward free.

For looking back, I laugh as laughs the  
man  
Condemned to death, who, stepping  
from his cell,  
Beholds the paling sky's ethereal  
span,  
Is rapt a moment by its pearly spell,  
And knows that he has bartered it –  
for hell.



*The Bard of South Africa on the  
summit of Table Mountain*

In 1926, Miss Boyd received her second *Bardic Chair* for Table Mountain. She donated the Chair to her school in Port Elizabeth, when the secretary of the school read her poem to an enthusiastic assembly in the school hall. In the poem she depicts the mountain bathed in sunlight, by the light of the moon and shrouded in mist and rain. She also refers to the war memorial where lie members of the Mountain Club who gave their lives in the Great War.

Her third Chair in 1930 was won for *Evening, Night and Dawn in South Africa*, a poem about her journeys through the countryside. She follows the great Tugela River from its source, along its undeviating course over boulders and through gorges “encompassed with battlements of stone”.

In the following year, she won her fourth Chair for *The Drought*, a stark and relentless poem as if written by the demon Drought itself, generating truths about the havoc that the drought can bring to the land. Instead of accepting a Chair for the work, Mary Boyd chose a gold medal, commenting that she had no space for more Chairs. When Miss Boyd gave up her scholastic career in 1925, she turned to social work, becoming President of the Port Elizabeth/Walmer branch of the National Council of Women and publishing a history of the Society. At the age of 58, she married Major Trehane, who was considerably her senior. He had a passion for fire-arms, a topic that must have appalled the sensitive poet.

After marriage, she seems to have lost her inspiration to write verse. She became a recluse, leading a strange and sad life. She died in 1960 and at her funeral in Trinity Church, Havelock Street, Walmer, no reference was made to her great poetic achievements.



*Girls' Collegiate School, Port Elizabeth.*

*Girls' Collegiate School, Port Elizabeth, where Mary Boyd taught for twenty-one years*

Like many Irish emigrants, Mary Boyd grew to love her adopted country but her homeland remained impressed on her heart.

So I at one with all the earth, do stand  
To greet the coming of the day new-born.  
I gaze across this dear, adopted land  
Transfigured in the glory of the morn,  
And feel my soul on wings of joy up-borne.

May McClintock lives in Glendooen Rectory, Letterkenny, a short distance from the Boyd family residence. A regular contributor to *Donegal Annual* she corresponds regularly with members of the Boyd family, who are resident in London. Her recent publication, *The Silent Land*, is reviewed in this issue. For further information on Ballymacool House and the Boyd family, visit [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie), provided by the Library service of Donegal County Council. A relative of Mary R. Boyd married George Harrison of the Beatles (See article by Brian Boyd)

Photos – Editor and Berni Campbell, [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie)



Ballymacool house c. 1940, before its sale to the Kelly family, Letterkenny.



Ballymacool House advertised in "Irish Times" as an Historic Irish Mansion



Mary Boyd Avenue, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.



Ballymacool House today....

## THE LETTERKENNY CONNECTION FOR PATTIE BOYD

*Brian Brooke Boyd*

*Pattie Boyd shot to fame in the 1960s with her marriage to George Harrison of the Beatles. Brian Brooke Boyd outlines her family ties to the town of Letterkenny and the Boyd family of Ballymacool. Both the author and Pattie Boyd are direct descendants from the first Boyd family at Letterkenny.*



*George Harrison and Pattie Boyd*



Pattie Boyd descends from John Boyd (1696-1764) who was born at Letterkenny, and became a Captain in the Donegal Militia and High Sheriff for Co. Donegal in 1740. He received the manor, customs and tolls with the mills at Letterkenny and the family Mansion House in the town of Letterkenny, by his father's will dated 1722. He claimed his descent from

the Boyd family who were Earls of Kilmarnock in Scotland and died in November 1764, aged 68. The house was built by his grandfather, John Boyd in 1672, who obtained the Manor from Sir Francis Hamilton, Bart. of Castle Hamilton, Co. Cavan, in 1679.

John Boyd's eldest son, John (1739-1810) who was born at Letterkenny, purchased the Ballymacool estate in 1783 and rebuilt the house. He was a Major in the Donegal militia and High Sheriff of Co. Donegal in 1772.

John Boyd's second son was Robert Boyd (1740-1814) who was also born at Letterkenny. He became a Judge of the King's Bench in Ireland and was Recorder of Londonderry from 1776. He resided at 8, Merrion Square, Dublin, where he died in 1814.

John Boyd's third son, William Boyd (1742-1791) was born at Gortlee, Letterkenny. He held the position of Collector of the Port of Ballyraine, Letterkenny in the King's Revenue and acted as Treasurer of County Donegal.

## SURVEYOR OF THE PORT OF GREENCASTLE

John Boyd's fourth son, Mossom Boyd, my great-great-great-grandfather, was born at Letterkenny in 1743. He became Surveyor of the Port of Greencastle, Co. Donegal, in the King's Revenue and Customs of Ireland. Later, he served as High Sheriff of the City and County of Londonderry from 1780. He died in Londonderry in November 1793.



*Colonel J.D. Boyd (1886-1958) who was the last member of the Boyd family to own Ballymacool*

John Boyd's fifth son Archibald Boyd (Pattie Boyd's great-great-great grandfather) was born in Letterkenny in 1755. He became Treasurer of the City and County of Londonderry and subsequently Captain of the Donegal militia. He died at Londonderry in 1825. His son, Captain John McNeill Boyd R.N. (1812-1861) (Pattie Boyd's great-great-grandfather) was born at Londonderry and entered the Royal Navy in 1825. He was drowned at Kingstown Harbour when in command of *HMS Ajax* in the Coastal Service on 9 February

1861 while attempting to save the lives of the crew of the brig *Neptune*. His statue can be seen in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. Other memorials can be viewed in St. Columb's Cathedral and at Dún Laoghaire harbour. His son was Colin Boyd 1853-1910, Pattie's great-grandfather and he had a son called Lt. Col. Colin Boyd 1893-1968, who was the grandfather of Pattie Boyd. He served in the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders.

Pattie Boyd achieved international recognition in 1966 when she married George Harrison of the Beatles. Following the break-up of their marriage, she subsequently married Eric Clapton. In 2006, Michelle Williams wrote an account of Pattie's relationship with George Harrison in *George Harrison and Pattie Boyd : the Greatest Love Story that almost was*.



*Ballymacool House, Letterkenny, c. 1900*



*Ballymacool House, 2008*

Brian Brooke Boyd, who resides in London, is a member of the Boyd family, founders of Ballymacool House, Letterkenny, featured in this article. He is a descendant of John Boyd of Letterkenny (1696-1764) who inherited the Manor of Letterkenny from his father in 1722. The respective great-great-great-grandfathers of both Pattie Boyd and Brian Brooke Boyd were brothers, who were born in Letterkenny. Further information on the family, together with a short bibliography, is available in "Robert Boyd of Ballymacool" by Alan Roberts and the late W.S. Ferguson, *Donegal Annual*, 1990, No. 42, pp. 24-28

**Photos – Brian Boyd.** The picture of Ballymacool House is published by permission of the National Library, Dublin. Brian Boyd resides in London.

# THE FIANNA IN THE BLUE STACKS

Helen Meehan



*Lough Eske Castle*

The most conspicuous geographical feature in the south of Co. Donegal is the Blue Stack Range which forms an arc across the northern horizon. These hills are known in Irish as Na Cruacha Gorma. A “Cruach” is a hill with a round stack or piled-up appearance and this aptly describes several of the Blue Stack peaks such as Carnaween and Silver Hill. Inglis in his tour of Ireland in 1834 describes the hills as “this fine mountain outline that bounds the horizon to the north”.

Stories of Fionn and the Fianna abound in the Blue Stack area from Lough Derg to Glencolmcille. Indeed, Fionn himself is credited with creating the most outstanding feature in the landscape – Barnesmore Gap. Tradition tells us that he threw mighty rocks, which cut the pass through the mountains. Many isolated rocks or boulders in the area are said to have been thrown by Fionn either from the peak to the west, now named Croaghconnallagh in honour of Conall Gullban of Tír Chonaill, and the peak to the east called Croagheghanach for Eoghan- Tír Eoghan – Tyrone<sup>1</sup>.

Some of these landed as far away as Laghey and Ballintra. Using only his thumb and fore-

finger, Fionn threw a huge rock that landed in the Driminin River. When blasting was being done to get stone for the new Donegal church all others were broken up but this one known as the “Glowing Rock of Barnes” proved unbreakable<sup>2</sup>. Once when a mad bull was rushing through the Gap, Fionn threw a rock to stop it. He missed and the stone landed at the Alt near Laghey<sup>3</sup>. The track of his hand can still be seen on this rock as well as on one thrown from Barnes to Ballintra<sup>4</sup>.

Erratics left during the Ice Age are said to be rocks thrown by Fionn from other peaks west of Barnesmore. When he threw three rocks from Blue Stack itself they landed beside one another in Eglish and were later used as an altar, or Mass Rock in Penal Times<sup>5</sup>. A rock thrown northwards from the same peak landed beside the Croagh School<sup>6</sup>. Fionn threw rocks across water as well as across land – one thrown from Thower near Pettigo landed south of Lough Erne<sup>7</sup>.

Many rocks in Inver Parish were said to be thrown from Carnaween by Fionn. A stone thrown by Fionn to Linn a Bhile on the river Eany between Drimarone and the part of Drimnaherk known as Béal an tSruthan is said to show the track of his hand while a stone in Coulter’s River, between Inver and Killymard, is said to bear the track of his finger. A natural space in the rocks near the summit is said to have been left when Fionn lifted a rock with his thumb and one finger and hurled it down the hill with real force. One story says that it landed miles away in Drumkeelan Quarry<sup>8</sup>.

Fionn liked to show his strength in other ways as well as in rock throwing. Once, when the Fianna were hunting near Sruthal Lake, a local warned Fionn that the water was very deep. Fionn went in and stood on a large boulder in the lake to prove that it wasn’t all that deep. Then he lifted the boulder and carried it with him as he came out of the lake<sup>9</sup>.



*Glengesh Pass*

On another occasion, when hunting in the Pettigo area, a hare hid under a rock. Fionn lifted the rock and threw it up on Meenadreen Hill<sup>10</sup>. From the tops of three piled-up rocks he put there people believed it was possible to see America<sup>11</sup>.

Others of Fionn's family had great strength as well. On one occasion Fionn and his wife were invited to a party – indeed some accounts say a “christening”. His wife was sick and unable to go. When Fionn set out he forgot to take the “meascan” of butter the wife was sending as a gift. She threw it after him and it hit the ground about twenty yards from where Lettermore School later stood. The butter was turned into a boulder<sup>12</sup>.

## PLACENAMES

Some placenames in the Blue Stack area have connections with Fionn or the Fianna. Carnaween, at 523m is the highest mountain in Inver parish. Considering the many connections the mountain had with the Fianna, it could be translated as Carn na bhFiann (the Mound of the Fianna). Indeed the Fianna are connected with many prominent sites all over Ireland such as Beann Gullban in Sligo and Beann Eadair (Howth) in Dublin, and Carnaween is the most prominent peak in the Blue Stack range. Older writers wrote the name, even when writing in English, as Carna Maooin. “Maooin” means gift, wealth, property or favour so it could mean the mound of wealth as well.

A townland near the Eany River in Inver Parish is called Drumlaghtafinn – the Ridge of Fionn’s Flagstone<sup>13</sup>. North of Barnesmore we have Cashelnavean - the Cashel of the Fianna. This fort strategically guarded the north entrance to the Gap<sup>14</sup>. The partial remains of an enclosure at Kilkenny near the Gweebarra, north west of the mountains, is also named Cashelnaveen in Irish Caiseal (the stone fort) na bhFiann<sup>15</sup>.

The Fianna spent the summer season from May Day to Hallowe’en outdoors, mostly hunting. It is said that Fionn MacCool knew by the taste of venison, where or in which particular district of the Blue Stacks the deer had been caught<sup>16</sup>. He was also said to have the same knowledge about deer killed in the twelve oak woods then growing along the Gweebarra<sup>17</sup>. Some of these deer covered vast distances, from Glenties to Barnes and on to Lough Derg before being killed<sup>18</sup>.

Once when following a deer east from Barnes towards Lough Derg, Fionn jumped from Carrickmore with such force that his heel made Finmore Lake. Two flat stones nearby were call “Fionn’s Pans” and bread was made in them, it is said<sup>19</sup>. Another version of the story says that Fionn’s heel made Fionn’s Pan and the sole of his foot made Fionnloch, later known as Lough Mara Boyle<sup>20</sup>. Another version says Fionn made these when chasing a giant back to Scotland from whence he had just come<sup>21</sup>.



*Grey Mare's Tail.*

## VISITORS AND THE CRADLE STORY

Most visiting giants were interested in trials of strength and many of the tales relate how Fionn welcomed them or dealt with them. Once when Fionn was living in the Blue Stack area he learned on sucking his magic thumb that a Scottish giant was coming to challenge him to a fight. The giant was huge so Fionn and his wife decided on subterfuge. Before lying down in the giant cradle Fionn put a stone on top of the chimney. When the Scottish giant arrived Fionn’s wife apologised saying the only one at home was the “baby” in the cot. The giant asked, “Where are the men?” She replied, “They are away hunting and it’s a pity as the wind has just changed and is now blowing in the front door.” The giant queried, “Can they turn the wind?” “Oh No!” she replied, “but Fionn can turn the house around so the back of it is to the wind”. On hearing this, the Scottish giant said he’d be back in a week and disappeared out over the Blue Stacks in the direction of Scotland and never returned<sup>22</sup>.

Additions to the basic story vary. When one giant put his finger in the “baby’s” mouth Fionn bit it off<sup>23</sup>. When the giant demanded food Fionn’s wife put grit iron in the bread and the giant broke his teeth on it. “That’s the type of bread Fionn and the Fianna always eat” boasted his wife. On another visit a giant wanted to know what passtime Fionn liked to indulge in. The wife explained that he threw rocks lying around over the roof of the house and rushed around to catch them before they touched the ground on the other side<sup>24</sup>.

The giants aren’t usually identified except to say that they came across the sea or from Scotland but in one story they are called “The Míci Gorras”<sup>25</sup>. In another story they are

call the “Fionn Dubhs” and were said to have come across the sea in ships<sup>26</sup>.

Most giants hurriedly took their leave, usually saying they would be back soon, but one giant who stood his ground was chased by Fionn, who lifted a lump of clay, the space left later became Lough Neagh. It fell into the Irish Sea and became the Isle of Man<sup>27</sup>.

Fionn is also credited with making two of the Green Islands in Donegal Bay. One day he was carrying a “burden” of clay. He let a six acre clod of clay fall and it made one island and then he let a second clod fall which made a seven acre island. He then decided not to carry the clay any farther so he let it all fall to the ground and it made Ball Hill, in the parish of Killymard<sup>28</sup>.

## HUNTING STORIES

Many strange adventures befell Fionn and the Fianna when out hunting in the Blue Stack Mountains. One night a mist came down and they felt lost. They saw a light but when they went towards it, they realised that it was an island out on Carn Lough. There was a boat at the shore and they rowed out to the island. When they knocked on the door a beautiful girl opened it. They asked for a night’s shelter. She went in and asked an old man and he said they could stay. The hunting dogs were lying at the fire. A lamb lying near the door woke up and he began kicking the dogs. The man told Oisín to tie up the lamb but when he tried to do it the lamb kicked him so much that he couldn’t tie it. Then the man told Fionn to tie the lamb but the lamb kicked him so much that he couldn’t tie it either. And when Gall tried to tie the lamb he kicked him into the fire. A cat was lying at the side of the fire. The man told it to tie the lamb with the rope of rushes that was beside him. The cat lifted the rope with its paw and tied the lamb. In the morning Fionn asked the man what was the meaning of these happenings. The man said that the lamb is the world and the cat is death and that the only thing that can tie the world is death<sup>29</sup>. The same story, entitled “An Óige, an Saol and an Bás” is told in Irish in the Edeninfagh area near Glenties<sup>30</sup>.

## DIARMUID AND GRÁINNE

The story of Gráinne, daughter of King Cormac Mac Art, who eloped with the Fianna’s hero Diarmuid, during her prenuptial feast with Fionn, is one of the best known tales in the Fenian Cycle. As they wandered around Ireland to escape the wrath of Fionn they came to this part of Donegal, then known as Gleneany – Gleann Eidhnigh – the Glen of Ivy. They made their way to Carnaween carrying sand from Inver Strand. When Fionn sucked his thumb or “ordóg feasa” he learned that they were asleep on the sand of the seashore. For several days he searched the coast around Inver in vain. Then he made his way northwards towards the Blue Stacks. In the meantime Diarmuid and Gráinne proceeded to the coast carrying armfuls of heather from Carnaween. When Fionn next sought

information from his “ordóg feasa” it was revealed to him that they were asleep on mountain heather. Fionn searched Carn and the surrounding hills for days and this gave Diarmuid and Gráinne a chance to escape from this area. The natural cavern in a cliff near the summit of Carn is marked “Dermot and Gráinne’s Bed” on the O.S. Revision Map of 1900<sup>31</sup>. North and north-west of Carnaween the story goes that they went to the sea not at Inver but at Kilclooney near Portnoo<sup>32</sup>. Farther west the pair stayed on Cranard, a mountain above Killybegs<sup>33</sup>. The actual Diarmuid and Gráinne’s bed at Straleel near Kilcar is described as “a stone box with a lid on it down below the ground”<sup>34</sup>. North of the mountains the pair were said to have hidden in a cave on the side of Gagan Mountain.

The version from this area tells that when Diarmuid and Grainne escaped, Fionn caught their followers in the area and had them put to death<sup>35</sup>. One account says that Diarmuid and Gráinne went directly to Benbulben which is clearly visible not alone from the Blue Stack peaks but the area between them and Donegal Bay. Fionn followed them there and was forced by the Fianna to make peace with Diarmuid. But Fionn was plotting his revenge. Knowing that it was one of Diarmuid’s *geasa* never to hunt a wild boar, he invited him to the chase of the boar of Gulban. Diarmuid slew it. A bristle pierced his heel and he fell down in agony, begging Fionn to bring him water in his hand, for if he did this he would heal him. In spite of repeated appeals Fionn, after bringing the water, let it drip from his hands.

Another Benbulben story tells how all the Fianna went to a feast in a King’s *dún* there. They were forbidden to bring arms. They sat down to the feast but soon found that they were unable to rise from their seats. Fionn put his “ordóg feasa” in his mouth and discovered that a bottle of liquid left under a stone outside the door would free them. Goll, who was the strongest, managed to free himself and got the liquid which freed the others. As they left the *dún* the King and his soldiers arrived but now the Fianna were up and ready to fight them<sup>37</sup>.

## THE STORY OF LOUGH FINN

This story was very popular in the Parish of Inniskeel where Lough Finn and all the other places mentioned in it lie. It was also known in other parts of Donegal but, apparently, not outside the county<sup>38</sup>.

This story is also known by other names such as “An Fearghamhain, the Calf-man” or “Mullan na Muice” in Irish. In the basic story the Fianna were hunting in the Glen of Glenties when a mist covered the area. At last they saw a light in the distance and on investigation found a bothógr or sod hut, inhabited by an old man, Leighan, his son Feargwan and daughter Finngeal. The family hadn’t food for such numbers but said there was a mad bull nearby if they could kill it. Feargwan went with the Fianna to the hunt and stood up on a rock. The bull repeatedly attacked the rock and when it had weak-

ened itself Feargawan jumped on its back and killed it. The Fianna were very impressed and invited the youth to join them. Next morning he left with the Fianna having agreed to stay with them for seven years. On their way, they passed Mullach na Muice and killed the piglets in a nest there. They missed one, just managing to cut off its tail. Seven years later as Feargawan returned he passed by the same place despite being advised not to do so. The Black Pig or the dreaded Muc Dhubh, knew him by his scent and followed him. He released each of his hounds in turn to fight the Muc Dubh but none of them were able for him. Feargawan let out a unique whistle and when his sister Finngeal heard it, she knew he was in danger. She rushed to the lake, put some large rocks in her apron and swam across towards the sound. But when she got to the other side, the sound, really an echo, seemed to be back near where she left and she swam back. As she frantically swam back and forth she became exhausted and the stones weighed her down and eventually her long hair got entangled in weed and she drowned. The lake is since called Lough Finn in her memory and the glen along the river is now known as Glenfinn. The bodies of Feargawan and the pig (for each had killed the other) were found beside an adjacent lake next morning and the lake has been known as Lough Muc ever since<sup>39</sup>.

All versions of the story agree on the names of the lakes but not on the number or names of the hounds. Some versions say there were three hounds, an Grafach for which Graffy is named, an Mharach for which Meenamara, Mín na Mara is named and the last killed, an Ghrubach, for which Mín an Ghrubaigh is named<sup>40</sup>. Some versions say there were four hounds, the fourth being an Loingseach, the place it was killed is now called Srath Loinsnigh, Stralinchy in English today<sup>41</sup>.

Some versions say that pigs were killed at Mullach na Muire both when Feargawan was leaving and returning and others only mention one episode of pig slaying<sup>42</sup>. Another version doesn't mention Feargawan going off to serve with the Fianna at all, rather it tells us that the Calf Man was on his way from Glencolmcille to visit his sister in Fintown when passing the Black Pig's lair he killed two piglets<sup>43</sup>. This version tells us that Finngeal was combing her hair when she heard the whistle, hence her long hair was loose and got entangled in the reeds<sup>44</sup>. Other versions say she was knitting when the summons reached her<sup>45</sup>. Unlike all the above versions that portray Leighan as an old man living in a hut, a Glenfinn version says he was a chief<sup>46</sup>.

## BURNING THE WOMEN

Some of the Fianna stories have a cruel primitive streak and none more so than the story variously called "Goll Burning the Women", "The Death of Goll" or "Goll Sa Cheo". When hunting in the Blue Stacks in the summer the Fianna, accompanied by their women, lived in a large wooden construction on the top of a hill south of Ardara known as Mullach an Tigh Mhóir, the height of the big house<sup>47</sup>. Some accounts describe the fine timber used in the edifices, the elaborate saddles and harnesses of the horses, etc.<sup>48</sup> One day when the

Fianna went hunting Conan was left to guard the women. As he lay asleep on a bed of heather the women decided to play a trick on him. They tied his long hair to the rafters of the house and then, going outside, made a deafening din that wakened him. He jumped up in such a hurry that his hair remained stuck to the rafters and he was left completely bald – hence the name Conan Maol. Conan was in a fierce rage and he quickly gathered wood which he piled around the doors of the dún. Then, locking the doors, he set the place alight.

In the meantime Fionn put his "ordóg feasa" in his mouth and discovered that there was a dangerous fire burning at 'home'. They rushed back but were too late, the women were dead and Conan was gone. They followed him to the Caves of Maghera where he went into hiding. Conan's son was very annoyed at what happened as his mother was one of those burned alive. He volunteered to go in and fight Conan. In the darkness Conan didn't recognise his own son but wondered who the good fighter was. Conan himself had taught him all the skills. Conan eventually killed his son and when he discovered whom he had killed Conan died of sorrow<sup>49</sup>.



Carnaween Mountain in the Blue Stacks

The Fianna buried the women in nearby Bracky in a place known as Cill na mBan to this day. Their ghosts frequented the place according to the locals<sup>50</sup>. One of the many other versions of the story say that Conan spent the first night hiding in Glencoagh near Ardara and then escaped to Connacht. Eventually the Fianna traced him to Connacht and told his son that the noise coming from his hiding place was that of a wild beast. The son volunteered to enter the cave and killed Conan but his hand was so swollen from the fight that he too dropped dead<sup>51</sup>. Another legend though says that Conan lost his hair when he

was swallowed by the “Peist” or monster of Lough Derg. He was the last to be freed when Oscar slew the monster and the heat inside the monster’s stomach caused him to lose his hair<sup>52</sup>.

## THE END

Many of the more common stories of the Fianna are localized in the Blue Stack area, especially those concerning the latter days of the Fianna. The Fianna were said to have their main *dún* on the Hill of Allen in the present day Kildare but in several stories, such as the Calf-man, Glencolmcille is said to be their main stronghold<sup>53</sup> and their main hunting area Gleann Fada a Sealga – the Great Glen of Glenties.

The story “The First Decline of the Fianna” is also set in the Blue Stacks. A youth, the only son of a widow, went with the Fianna for seven years to learn the skills of war. At the end of the seven years he came home and built a castle that was large enough to hold all of the Fianna. The castle had many fireplaces.

One day he invited all the Fianna to a feast. When they sat down all the fires were lit. Soon the Fianna discovered that they couldn’t move and at the same time the hosts men began throwing sand and cinders over them. Goll was the strongest of the Fianna and managed to free himself – then he freed Fionn and together they tried to rescue the others but many were already burned to death by then. This was the first decline of the Fianna<sup>54</sup>. The death of Goll continued the decline. This story about his death has many similar ties with Goll Sa Cheo including the “loss of hair” episode more usually associated with Conan Maol.

In this version the Fianna and their household were in Glencolmcille. One day Goll refused to go hunting with the others but remained at home with the women. He spent the time sleeping. This annoyed the women, who tied his hair to the pillars of the *dún* or house. They then made a great noise that wakened him and jumped up in such a hurry that his hair and scalp remained fastened to the pillars. In a rage he went out and gathered a huge pile of sticks and set fire to them. One by one he threw the women in and they were burned to death.

Fionn noticed the smoke in the distance and using his magic thumb discovered what was happening. The Fianna rushed back but the women were dead. Goll had rushed off north over the Blue Stacks and the Fianna pursued him. When he reached the northern coast of Fanad he jumped out onto a rock. The Fianna remained at the coastline so he couldn’t get off it. For many days he clung to the rock with no sustenance, only sea water<sup>55</sup>. The Fianna threw him a chunk of meat but instead of eating it he threw it back at them with such force that it killed nine times nine of them<sup>56</sup>. Goll died on this rock nine days later.

Another story tells of the approaching end of the Fianna and it took place after Oisín had

gone off with Niamh to Tír na n-Óg. Before leaving, Niamh had given the Fianna a “Scian Ranna”, a magic knife which would ensure that they would always get enough meat when the knife was used as a carver.

One night when Fionn put his magic thumb in his mouth he saw a magic castle nearby. This castle always disappeared in the day time. When the Fianna went to get a closer look they lost the “Scian Ranna”. Then they drew lots to see who should go to search for it. Conan and Goll drew the short straw. Conan went first and saw little men jumping around in the castle and passing the knife to each other. Conan joined in, got the knife and when he tried to leave they tried to stop him. So he killed them all. Next Goll went and he was met by a little man wailing in pain and asking to be killed or “finished off”. A witch next entered the picture with Goll and Conan blaming each other for the trouble and a fight began between them. Soon all the Fianna were involved and many were killed. Goll regretted killing his companions and in a fit of remorse threw his weapons into a lake. Immediately Conan and his followers jumped up and chased Goll. The end of the story is the same as the Death of Goll and again many of the Fianna died then<sup>57</sup>.

Although the Battle of Gavra is generally believed to be the final battle of the Fianna according to this story they didn’t fight any battles after “their first decline”. It is usually believed that on Oisín’s return to Ireland, when helping the men to lift the stone he fell from his horse in Gleann na Sról. But in the story “Oisín i nDiaidh na Féinne” or “Oisin after the Fianna” he was helping men in Ballykerrigan in Glenfinn when the strap of his horse’s harness broke<sup>58</sup>. St. Patrick must have been in that area at the time because according to his story the men brought Oisín to him. Eventually Oisín was baptised and like the baptism of Aongus King of Munster the Saint stuck his crozier in the neophyte’s foot by mistake. Like Aongus, Oisín thought that this was part of the ceremony<sup>59</sup>. Oisín had great difficulty believing that not alone were the Fianna dead and gone but that many people hadn’t even heard of them.

Although legends of Fionn and the Fianna are of great antiquity, some were made up much later. The Pipes of the Fianna prove this. The custom of smoking tobacco was unknown in Europe before the discovery of the American continent by Columbus in 1492. Although the habit was only introduced to Europe in the 16th century, stories tell of the Fianna smoking pipes in the Blue Stacks. One day two of the Fianna were smoking, one on top of Carnaween and the other on top of Silver Hill. They chatted for a while and then proceeded to exchange pipes. One of the pipes fell into the bog in the valley between the hills. The pipe sank down so far that they were unable to get it and it lay in the bog for hundreds of years. When people began building houses in the area they dug down in search of bog timber for the roofs. They found the pipe and it was so big that they had enough timber for nine houses and some to spare. Hence the place was called Mín an Ghúis – the mountain plain of the fir.

A similar story is told of two of the Fianna sitting on the peaks on each side of Barnesmore, smoking, chatting and passing their pipes to each other. In their case they did so successfully and they were able to smoke each other's pipes – like Pipes of Peace<sup>60</sup>.

These stories were easily assimilated into the numerous Fianna stories known around Barnesmore and in the Blue Stack area in general because they were in the same vein as the other stories.

<sup>1</sup> H. Meehan, *Inver Parish in History* (Letterkenny, 2005) p. 470, 32.

<sup>2</sup> IFCS 1035 – 263 (Schools Folklore Collection)

<sup>3</sup> IFCS 1031 -394

<sup>4</sup> IFCS 1031 - 395

<sup>5</sup> IFCS 1031 - 59

<sup>6</sup> IFCS 1049 - 251

<sup>7</sup> IFCS 1030 - 395

<sup>8</sup> Meehan, *Inver Parish in History*, p. 33

<sup>9</sup> IFCS 1031 – 58-59

<sup>10</sup> IFCS 1035 - 202

<sup>11</sup> IFCS 1035 - 201

<sup>12</sup> IFCS 1037 – 223-4

<sup>13</sup> Meehan, *Inver Parish in History*, p. 471

<sup>14</sup> H. Meehan, *The Blue Stack Way*, p. 48

<sup>15</sup> L McGill, *In Connell's Footsteps* (Kerry, 1992), p. 33

<sup>16</sup> IFCS 1032 – 272-273

<sup>17</sup> McGill, *In Connell's Footsteps* p. 20

<sup>18</sup> IFCS 1032 – 270-271

<sup>19</sup> IFCS 1035 - 200

<sup>20</sup> IFCS 1032 - 273

<sup>21</sup> IFCS 1032 - 275

<sup>22</sup> Meehan, *Inver Parish in History*, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> IFCS 1031 - 133

<sup>24</sup> IFCS 1041 - 204

<sup>25</sup> IFCS 1037 - 170

<sup>26</sup> IFCS 1035 - 79

<sup>27</sup> IFCS 1039 - 129

<sup>28</sup> Meehan, *Inver Parish in History*, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> IFCS 1036 – 341-43

<sup>30</sup> IFCS 1050 - 372

<sup>31</sup> Meehan, *Inver Parish in History*, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> IFCS 1051 - 305

<sup>33</sup> IFCS 1039 - 102

<sup>34</sup> IFCS 1042 - 2

<sup>35</sup> IFCS 1049 - 57

<sup>36</sup> W. T. Rolleston, *Myths of the Irish Race*

<sup>37</sup> IFCS 1052 – 316-317

<sup>38</sup> S. O'Cathain, *Uair an Chloig Cois Teallaigh*, p. 85.

<sup>39</sup> IFCS 1051 – 254-259

<sup>40</sup> IFCS 1042 - 36

<sup>41</sup> IFCS 1051 - 340

<sup>42</sup> IFCS 1048 – 20-20

<sup>43</sup> O'Cathain, *Uair an Chloig Cois Teallaigh*, p. 70

<sup>44</sup> IFCS 1031 – 169-9

<sup>45</sup> IFCS 1049 - 9

<sup>46</sup> IFCS 1095 - 111

<sup>47</sup> IFCS 1040 - 65

<sup>48</sup> IFCS 1041 - 287

<sup>49</sup> IFCS 1040 - 66

<sup>50</sup> IFCS 1049 – 70-71

<sup>51</sup> IFCS 1041 – 298-9

<sup>52</sup> IFCS 1051 - 290

<sup>53</sup> O'Cathain, *Uair an Chloig Cois Teallaigh*, p. 85.

<sup>54</sup> Ni Dhíoraí, Áine in “Na Cruacha”, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> IFCS 1053 - 81085

<sup>56</sup> IFCS 1053 - 85

<sup>57</sup> IFCS 1050 – 269-283

<sup>58</sup> Ni Dhíoraí, Áine in “Na Cruacha”, p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> IFCS 1038 134-5. IFCS 1049 – 253-6

<sup>60</sup> Meehan, *Inver Parish in History*, p. 34.

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## PHILIP MacDEVITT BISHOP OF DERRY 1766-97

*Fr. Philip Donnelly*

Philip MacDevitt was born in Creslagh, in the parish of Fahan in Inishowen. His year of birth is given as 1710 by Brian Bonner<sup>1</sup>, or 1719 according to the introduction to his will<sup>2</sup> or 1724 if we accept James McLaughlin's figure.<sup>3</sup> There is a great discrepancy among these estimates of his year of birth. Brian Bonner also points out that for over seventy years, 1752 to 1823, the diocese of Derry was governed by prelates born in Inishowen.<sup>4</sup>

Philip Mac Devitt had two brothers and four sisters, as we learn from his will which contains details of his bequests to his siblings William and John, and their children.<sup>5</sup> His sisters, one apparently called Nelly, or their daughters, chose husbands called Dougherty, Green, Houton, Carlan and Nulty, and their children were called Winifrede Houton, Anne Dougherty, Maryana Nulty, Nelly Green, Anthony Dougherty, Catharine Carlan née MacDavett, Mary Dougherty, James Dougherty, Philip MacDavett, William MacDavett and Denis MacDavett. These are relatives mentioned in his will. It was a large family connection and one senses bonds of affection. He mentions as well his two grand-nephews, Charles and William O'Donnell of Rushville. These would have been the children of his niece Margaret, who became wife of Owen O'Donnell. Owen was brother of the succeeding bishop of Derry, Charles O'Donnell.

The MacDevitt family was held in much respect among the Irish. They might be described as members of the old Gaelic minor aristocracy of Inishowen. In the will mentioned above the bishop speaks of bequeathing his watch "on which is engraved the coat of arms of our family", probably the same coat of arms carved on his tombstone in Fahan. Father James McLaughlin quotes a phrase concerning him as "a well-bred gentleman"<sup>6</sup> Brian Bonner states that he was "a member of a distinguished Clann Fiamhain sept which had a long and historic association with the land of O'Dochartaigh. In the late sixteenth century and the seventeenth, the MacDaibheid family had played a notable part in the last fight of Gaelic Ireland for survival. Dr Mac Daibheid was proud of his family background and of his native peninsula. The story of Inishowen and of its ruling families were part of the oral tradition of the Gaelic-speaking society into which the future prelate was born".<sup>7</sup> Thomas Colby, leader of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland tells us that Bishop MacDevitt was of an ancient family, tributary to the O'Dohertys of Inishowen. Their nickname, Colby says, was "Burnderry", on account of an exploit by Cahir O'Doherty, leader of the O'Dohertys in 1608.<sup>8</sup>

The young man from Fahan who intended to be a priest set out for the Irish College in Paris. His predecessor John McColgan had travelled by sailing boat and his successor Charles O'Donnell travelled by road. The means of transport for Philip MacDevitt in the 1740s was, as we are told by Maghtochair (Michael Harkin), "a friendly vessel" He enrolled in the College des Lombards (once an Italian seminary) where the Irish seminarians studied along with other Irish students working towards "law, medicine, surgery or



*Irish College in Paris*

the Irish Brigade".<sup>10</sup> Colby, writing over a hundred years later, states that he attended the Irish College in the Rue du Cheval Vert. The name of the street has now become Rue des Irlandais. McDavitt studied at the Sorbonne nearby, specialising in arts and theology, and was ordained priest in 1752.<sup>11</sup> He obtained a doctorate in theology from the Sorbonne. He remained in France, it is thought, for some ten years, perhaps surviving as did many other Irish priests by teaching or in employment as chaplain to some institution or noble family. Maghtochair believes he was chaplain to a foreign embassy, possibly with a superior life-style, linked perhaps with courtly manners, balls, wigs, perfumes and stately music and that he stayed in France for twenty-four years, a period that does not harmonise with other dates.<sup>12</sup> Many of the Irish priests who studied at the Irish College never returned to Ireland, where life as a Catholic priest was far from comfortable or safe, as Oliver Plunkett, coming from another seminary in Europe, had found a hundred years before.



Courtesy of Irish College

Theological life in Paris at the period was lively in an intellectual way. Gallicanism was widespread, enjoying patronage from official bodies and the clergy, and Jansenism also with much governmental and ecclesiastical support, such as from the Parlement of Paris. The Papal bull *Unigenitus* did not have the desired effect of destroying Jansenism and many French clergy remained sympathetic, leading to accusations that the original French academic and clerical staff of the new St Patrick's College at Maynooth were influenced by Jansenism. A thesis of 1733 by the Irish priest Madgett supporting the bull *Unigenitus* and claiming that the decrees of the Pope should apply to all churches aroused clerical fury in Paris. Priscilla O'Connor offers strong evidence that the Irish scholars of Paris opposed the two heresies of Gallicanism and Jansenism.<sup>13</sup> It is safe to assume that Philip MacDevitt was not greatly influenced by either.

At length he returned to his diocese with a reputation as a teacher and preacher. He first lived and worked as a priest at Ballybrack, Moville, revealing a culture and courtesy which greatly impressed his fellow countrymen, especially Protestants. Returning to his native Fahan, he found "his aged mother is still living, but is surprised to find that the little black-haired boy, who left her roof some twenty-four years before, is now a grey-haired man".<sup>14</sup> A Protestant planter family in the Moville area, called Carey, harassed him severely and compelled him to move. Appointed bishop in 1766, he took up residence as parish priest in Urney on the Finn near Strabane. He was fortunate enough to have a curate, Donal Phillips, who later left for studies in Salamanca and eventually became parish priest of Glendermott (Waterside).

While Dr MacDevitt had suffered some harassment from Protestant landowning families in Inishowen he met better fortune in west Tyrone as parish priest of Urney. "He finally secured the lease of a farm and house from Richard Maxwell, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Donegal Militia. The property was situated in the townlands of Dunnigowan and Hunterstown close to the town of Strabane. Here he resided. Because of the poverty of his flock, the farm was practically his only means of support".<sup>15</sup> McDevitt used his farmhouse as a seminary, something very significant and radical for the diocese. It was the first institution for the training of priests in the diocese and is dated about 1778 by Brian Bonner. The opening day is remembered with affection: "A number of young men were soon collected under its roof.....A logic class was formed, consisting

at first of about twelve students ... On the first day the logic class met the good bishop began to deliver his first lecture. His big heart was filled to overflowing and the warm tears came trickling down his cheeks. They were tears of joy. Twelve students in a logic class in Ireland during the last quarter of the eighteenth century was a great event ....It reminded the worthy prelate also of the schools and the colleges and the many happy days he had spent in "lovely France". The little seminary formed the nucleus of the priesthood of the diocese in which it was situate, and furnished some worthy priests to a neighbouring diocese besides".<sup>16</sup>

The previous bishop John McColgan held office from 1752 to 1765. He led a wandering life, was never allowed to reside in Derry City and lived at times in hiding. He died on the 21 December 1765. Notice was taken in some quarters of the vacant see. After his defeat at the Boyne and withdrawal to St Germain, James II instructed his agent at Rome to ensure that his right to nominate Irish bishops would continue ('nominate', not 'appoint', for that was for the Pope). The curia was not happy as were many clerics in Ireland, for the king's choice for a bishopric might not always be in the best interests of the Catholic religion. Pope Innocent X11 issued a rescript in 1693 which praised James's services to the Catholic religion and assured him that whenever a bishop was being promoted to a see in Ireland special consideration would be given to his royal wishes. James continued to nominate. He nominated Lawrence Fergus Lea as bishop of Derry in 1694. James 11 died in 1701 giving way to James 111, the Old Pretender, aged thirteen. There was still criticism of the nomination procedure in Ireland, alleging that it brought only persecution and suffering to the people of Ireland. James 111, the Old Pretender, made a final nomination, that of Philip Mac Devitt to Derry on the 21 December 1765, thus ending a practice that lasted seventy-eight years. The successor of James 111, Bonnie Prince Charlie, never exercised the privilege. It has to be said that this royal right did produce overwhelmingly worthy, upright men.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Colby, supervisor of the Ordnance Survey of 1834, asserts that it was the influence of Hervey Bruce, the generous, eccentric and aristocratic Protestant bishop of Derry, that helped the appointment of MacDevitt as bishop. MacDevitt and Bruce had known each other intimately, he says, on the Continent.<sup>18</sup> This is not impossible, for the Earl of Bristol travelled in much style in Europe, having an entrée to episcopal palaces, embassies and courts in Paris, Rome and Naples.



St. Patrick's Church, Irish College, Paris

Nothing is known of MacDevitt's episcopal ordination except that it was in 1766.<sup>19</sup> There was no Catholic church in Derry at the time and very few elsewhere. He did not live in Derry, still a quite unsafe place for a Catholic bishop. We learn something of social conditions in Derry at the time, which was a strongly Protestant and anti-Catholic town except among the upper classes. From the time of the siege Catholics were not permitted to live there, and indeed were obliged to move outside the walls at the curfew bell. Gradually Catholics began to creep in. A great number of labourers came from the mountains of Donegal and lived in sub-human poverty, mostly in the Bogside. Much dissipation existed and poitín was highly available. Those who had some income lived in huts at a rent of £3 per year. The poor inhabited garrets or outhouses at a rent of 1s 3p per week and yet they let shares of their rooms at 6d per week. Most of the labourers from Donegal worked for masons from May to November amid severe handicaps of poverty, disease and a polluted water supply. Pawnbrokers were an essential element of the community. Curiously, in rural parts high wages were paid for a 'd'ark', a day's work by one man in the bog. "Traces of the ancient religion observed among the Roman Catholic inhabitants are but faint."<sup>20</sup> "A short time after his consecration the bishop held a Confirmation in his native parish of Fahan".<sup>21</sup> The spot in Fahan could be pointed out years later, in a field along a hedgerow, in the open air of course. Officially he was parish priest of Templemore, the traditional name for the parish of Derry City, with the energetic Father John Lynch as assistant. This Limavady man was a historic figure in Derry, guided by Philip MacDevitt. His grave lies beside the Long Tower church for which he directed the building. The inscription reads: "Here grew the hawthorn tree under which, during every lull of the persecutions from 1595 to 1784 Mass was frequently offered. The last Penal Mass was offered here by Father John Lynch who partly rebuilt the Long Tower church in 1784 and whose remains lie beneath. He died December 22nd 1786"

In 1783 he began raising money to build a church among his far from wealthy people, a fascinating practice familiar to all pastoral clergy. Frederick Augustus Hervey, Earl of Bristol, a wealthy member of the Established Church and Bishop of Derry, gave him 200 guineas, valued at over £40,000 in today's money.<sup>22</sup> The Catholic bishop, Philip MacDevitt, was no doubt the impulse behind John Lynch's heroic efforts. It was the bishop who secured legal title to the site of the Long Tower, an essential, though not dramatic step in the development of the diocese.<sup>23</sup> This success, purchasing a site almost within the walls, not a hundred years after the siege of Derry, marks him surely as a man of ability, courtesy and subtlety, befitting some one who had learned from his experiences in a nation which had produced a Talleyrand and a Francis de Sales. It is revealing to compare this quiet coup with the uproar which ensued at the purchase of a site in Pump Street by Bishop John McLaughlin in 1840. *The Londonderry Standard* of the time was appalled at the advances of Popery in Derry. A local newspaper reported on 28 June 1783: "On Friday last several gentlemen, accompanied by the Rev Mr Lynch, the Roman Catholic clergyman, solicited subscriptions from the inhabitants, for the purpose of building a chapel, or place of divine worship for the Roman Catholics – when, in the course of a few

hours they got subscriptions to the amount of about 500 guineas. At the head of the respectable list appears that illustrious friend to the religious and civil rights of all mankind, the Bishop of Derry – who gives £200, the corporation £50".<sup>24</sup>

Also in 1783 Father Lynch publicly acknowledged the decency of his Protestant fellow-citizens. This advertisement was printed in *The Londonderry Journal*:

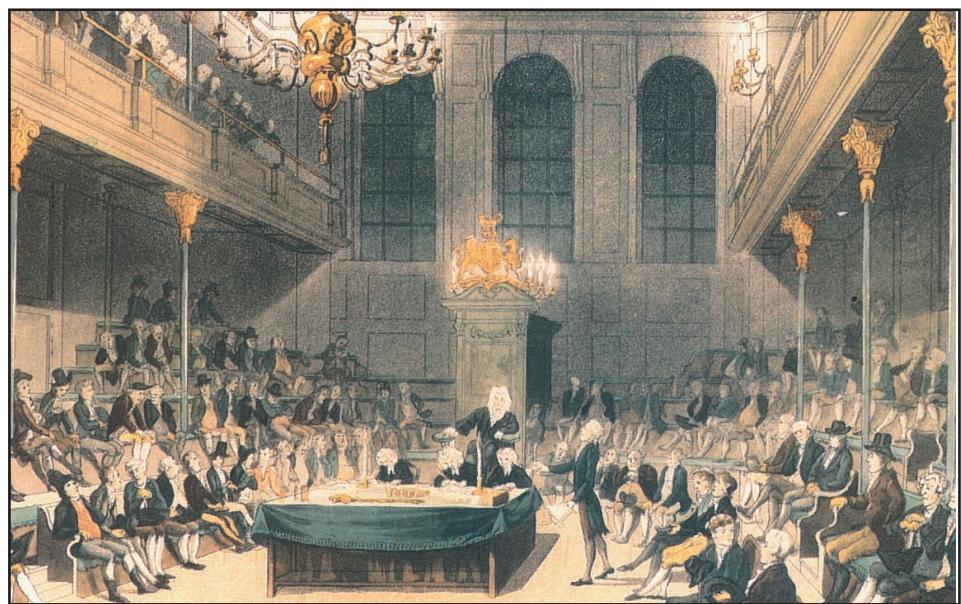
Whereas the gentlemen of the City of Londonderry in Common Council assembled on the 7th day of April, 1783, actuated by principles of humanity and benevolence peculiar to themselves, having taken into consideration the uncommon hardships that their Roman Catholic neighbours have laboured under for a long series of years, by being exposed to the inclemency of the weather during the time of public worship, and having unanimously and most generously resolved to grant a sum of not less than £50 sterling for the purpose of erecting a chapel for their use, we, the Roman Catholics of Derry, do think ourselves called upon to testify in the most public manner, the deep sense of gratitude that we shall ever entertain for so very humane and liberal a donation, which we deem to be the more laudable in itself and more honourable to the Corporation as it was unsolicited on our part.

Signed on behalf of the Roman Catholics of Derry ,

John Lynch PP<sup>25</sup>

This was the age of the Enlightenment, the triumph of reason. There is no mention in the Lynch statement of religious motivation, only of humanity and liberality. Both the donation and the acknowledgment are conveyed with lofty moral quality, expressed in elegant and Augustan prose, in one weighty sentence of 150 words. The Protestant dean, Dr Hume, gave 10 guineas. The Protestant people raised £321 (perhaps £59,000 today). Communal relations must have been improving. Father Lynch died in 1786, before his church was finished. His replacement was well chosen and - if possible - even an improvement - Dr Charles O'Donnell, gifted nephew of Dr McDevitt, and later to become bishop of the diocese. And Derry, city of Colmcille's monks and angels, had its first Catholic church since the Reformation.

It was MacDevitt's conscious policy to secure communal peace and foster better relations between the Catholics, so inferior in society, and the established and very powerful and impregnable Protestant majority in the city. MacDevitt was of a generation that had endured the barely tolerable life under the Penal Laws which could be re-enacted in full at any time. There was plenty of anti-Catholic feeling. So the bishop and his people for the most part led very cautious lives, co-operating fully in political matters with the regime to demonstrate that they were trustworthy members of the state. They were mindful probably of Canning's ominous remark that what a government gave it could take away. They were not a confident community; they just wanted to be allowed to exist. Modern Irish patriots pour scorn on the unduly compliant policies of Philip MacDevitt,

*Interior old House of Commons, 1808*

Charles O'Donnell and Peter McLaughlin, Catholic bishops of Derry who felt responsible for the safety of their defenceless people. The bishops of Derry and of the rest of Ireland for that matter had to be conscious that they were treading on very treacherous ground. Eugenio Pacelli likewise felt baffled in the 1940s as he thought about issuing strong protests at the German atrocities against Catholics – and Jews, and is assailed for not speaking out.

In 1783 Bishop MacDevitt made the Church's position very clear on revolution, at a time of alarm following reports from Paris:

When the public mind seems much agitated, when sentiments inimical to good government, hostile to civil society and subversive of all order and regularity begin to be manifested by unlawful and tumultuous associations .... Riotous and unwarrantable proceedings we.....remind you of your obligations both civil and religious, a deep sense of which we have constantly endeavoured to impress on your minds from our respective altars.<sup>26</sup>

A tangible sign of the bishop's support for the establishment was conveyed in the presentation by himself and thirteen of his clergy (which was a large proportion of the Catholic clergy of the diocese at the time) of the sum of £39 16s 3d to Lieutenant Colonel Charleton of the Strabane Battalion of Volunteers. The money was to be used to buy gunpowder. Their accompanying address read:

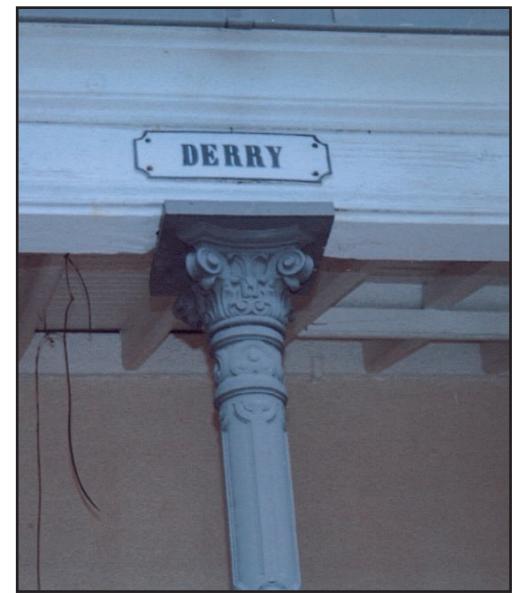
Sensible of the services already rendered to the public by the Volunteers of Ireland and of the advantages that may arise to the kingdom from the union of so many brave men, con-

ducted by commanders of tried experience and known integrity and patriotism, we as members of the same community, as lovers of our fellow subjects, and friends of our country do hereby beg the acceptance of the sum annexed to our respective names which we gratefully offer as an acknowledgement of their services and tender as our mite towards the expenses that must necessarily attend the execution of their laudable proceedings'.<sup>27</sup>

The activities of the United Irishmen received no support from the Catholic Church in Derry. There was activity by United Irishmen in South Derry, (remember Roddy McCorley and Watty Graham), harshly cut down by the Government, though no Catholics were involved.

Around this time the revolting American colonists inspired fears of a similar situation among the rebellious Irish, and dangerous revolutionary ideas were spreading from France. The English government then passed in 1774 an Act of Parliament to give Catholics an opportunity to testify their allegiance. A Catholic would have the right to take a prescribed oath before a magistrate, swearing faithfulness to the reigning sovereign, supporting the succession of the House of Hanover and repudiating the opinion that heretics might be lawfully murdered, that the Pope had or ought to have "any temporal or civil jurisdiction, power, superiority or pre-eminence directly or indirectly within this realm".<sup>28</sup> The Act contained nothing that conflicted with Catholic faith, but Catholics resented the offensive wording of the oath and were slow to come forward to swear. The outspoken and sympathetic Protestant Bishop of Derry, Hervey Bruce, friendly towards Catholics, was disappointed at the poor response and thought that Catholics were missing an opportunity to improve their position and so "cluded themselves from all further indulgence" or advancement. Bishop Hervey Bruce, Earl of Bristol, exhibited his sympathy for Catholics by providing space in his Mussenden Temple at Downhill for local Catholics from Magilligan and Coleraine to gather for Mass.<sup>29</sup>

The Catholic bishops of Ireland saw this as an opportunity to pave the way for a relaxation of the Penal Laws, took the oath and Catholics hastened to swear their loyalty before the magistrates. The law now tolerated what had been the practice, that a priest might publicly perform the rites of the Church – but such ceremonies could not be held in a

*Collonade Irish College in Paris showing dioceses of Ireland.*

building that had a steeple and bell (Hence the importance attached in later days to providing a steeple and bell to a church like St Mary's, Limavady. Dr Edward O'Brien, the learned parish priest of Limavady at the end of the 19th century, made sure to add such features to his parish church.) Bishop MacDevitt with his dean Dr O'Donnell and various other Catholic clergy appeared before Mr Justice Lill and in open court took the oath of allegiance as demanded by the 1782 act which regularized the presence of catholic clergy in the country. Thereupon Father Hugh O'Donnell, parish priest of Belfast, praised the government for its enlightened and liberal policies.<sup>30</sup> It seems certain that the Catholic population shared their bishops' support for the ruling Protestant class, partly no doubt in the interests of self-preservation. No one at the time made any protest. Nationalism was a much later discovery.

The Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 removed most restrictions on Catholic education and on regulations on land ownership and inheritance. MacDevitt and those who thought like him could see their conciliatory policies working successfully before their eyes. An outspoken priest of Down and Connor, Hugh O'Donnell, PP of Belfast, spoke for many in 1789 in a sermon praising the government 'for its enlightened and liberal policy'. The policy would enable Catholics to be of use to king and country. Some Protestant and Presbyterian opinion was inclined to be hostile to the Relief Acts. The Synod of Ulster in June, however, debated the declaration of the Presbytery of Killyleagh and Bangor. The Synod then presented an address to the king which approved universal tolerance in religious matters. Pitt, the Prime Minister, succeeded in forcing more concessions from the 1793 Catholic Relief Act upon the Irish Parliament, inspired by the fear of economic catastrophe and a renewed war with France. Rafferty believes that by the end of the decade of the 1790s the concessions granted achieved fully the government's hope ie the complete loyalty of the Catholic community.<sup>31</sup> The Battle of the Diamond in 1795 in Armagh and the foundation of the Orange Order consolidated sectarian division at a time when there were hopes of a greater Catholic-Protestant rapprochement.

## ON PARADE

No doubt the best-remembered conciliatory incident in MacDevitt's career was his participation in a Protestant/unionist parade to St Columb's Cathedral on 18 December 1788 in celebration of the shutting of the city gates by the Apprentice Boys 100 years before. The event is remembered today by the ritual burning of the effigy of Governor Lundy just as the opening of the gates eight months later on the 12 August 1689 is remembered.

Several accounts of the twin events survive:

In that centenary year (1788) the Commemoration of the Shutting of the Gates was celebrated for two days with great vivacity and splendour... At four o'clock the mayor and corporation, the clergy, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, the officers of the navy

and army, the gentry, volunteers, citizens, scholars and apprentices dined in the town-hall.

1789 August 12th. The centenary of the deliverance and opening of the gates of Derry in 1689 was celebrated in the same spirit of general concord as that of the Shutting of the Gates in the preceding year. On this, as on the former occasion, there was a public procession of all the citizens to the cathedral, where they offered up their united expression of gratitude to God the Deliverer. It was marshalled in the following order:- The Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry, accompanied by Dean Hume, and a numerous body of the Clergy of the Established Church. Dr Mac Devitt, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry, and several of his clergy. The Presbyterian Minister, and Elders. (*Colby's version*)

Thomas Colby, be it said, was an admirer of MacDevitt's gifts : a literary man, of great scholastic learning, knowledge of natural philosophy. But, he regrets, he published nothing. Derry would have to wait another century for a publishing bishop, John Keys O'Doherty. Another account reads thus: **Secular Commemoration 18.12.1788**

At 4 o'clock the Mayor and Corporation, the Clergy, the Officers of the Navy and Army, the Roman Catholic Clergy, the gentlemen from the country, the Volunteers, Citizens, Scholars, Apprentices, etc. sat down to a plain but plentiful dinner in the Town Hall – the toasts were constitutional and well suited to the occasion – the assembly was necessarily mixed and extremely crowded, the guests amounted to near a thousand persons .... Religious differences, in particular, seemed to be buried in oblivion and Roman Catholics vied with Protestants in expressing, by every possible mark, their sense of the blessings secured to them by our happy Constitution, and the cordial part they took in the celebration of this joyful day.<sup>33</sup>

A third account reads : **1788 December Commemoration, Shutting the Gates**

No religious animosity or jealous sentiments were felt. The Roman Catholic joined his protestant fellow-citizen in celebrating the triumph of liberty and justice over intolerance and oppression with those feelings of sincerity towards each other which should ever be the proudest and most predominant characterisation of Irishmen.

A fourth and more recent account of the celebration of the centenary of the opening of the gates presents a rather different view. Father William Doherty while Administrator of the Long Tower wrote using oral tradition :

Happening to be in Derry on the 12th August 1789 he (MacDevitt) was going along the street with one of his priests when at the corner they came upon the municipal procession proceeding to the Protestant Cathedral. Lord Bristol immediately recognised him and commenced a conversation. Unwilling to block the onward march of the processionists Dr MacDevitt and his companion turned and proceeded with Lord Bristol as far as St Columb's Court. This chanced to catch the eye of the Journal reporter and in the next

issue he labelled the Bishop and priest as taking part in the procession. The real facts as I give them were gleaned from an eye-witness – Mrs Hassan – by very reliable authorities and have been fully corroborated from various streams of tradition'.<sup>35</sup>

Father Doherty's version has a basis of fact, for MacDevitt certainly joined the parade, but it was written more than a hundred years after the event and lacks the journalistic reliability of the contemporary newspaper accounts. There is also the possibility that MacDevitt, who sprang from the old Gaelic nobility of the O'Doherty family's rule in Inishowen, felt enough fellowship with the English nobleman, the Earl of Bristol, to associate himself with the city's celebration. His attitudes may have been formed also by his experience of life in a foreign embassy in Paris as a young priest, encountering a cultivated and elegant society of which that same Earl of Bristol, his benefactor, formed a distinguished part. After all it was the Earl of Bristol who used his influence to obtain the bishopric of Derry for MacDevitt, according to Colby. Probably one reason that the Catholic section of the population never raised the smallest complaint at the bishop's striking compliance with civil authority was that they were totally cowed by the preceding century of the Penal Laws.

In 1995 Hugh Fanning unearthed some previously unknown letters of MacDevitt in the Vatican Archives, which reveal a taste for something akin to intrigue and gossip. His publication is entitled '*Documents of Irish interest in the Fondo Missioni of the Vatican Archives*'. On the 7th October 1766,

nine months after his appointment as bishop in January that year, Philip MacDevitt writes along with eight priests and three bishops to Cardinal Corsini, their protector, supporting a petition in favour of the appointment of Michael Morgan as bishop of Dromore. Their proposal is related to an earlier move to merge Dromore into Armagh. In a letter dated 10th November 1766 Cardinal Corsini agrees with the bishop of Derry in opposing a union of Dromore with Armagh. We learn of a letter perhaps of late 1766 from Philip MacDevitt to Charles O'Kelly. He knows that Archbishop Anthony Blake of Armagh wants to have Dromore annexed to Armagh, and points out that Blake, a native of Tuam, scarcely resides at all in his own diocese and is not likely to leave his relations to live in



*The Panthéon, Paris*

Dromore. The idea would displease all Ulster. And it is not true that the two dioceses were formerly united - the archbishop of Armagh held Dromore 'in commendam' (sic). Anthony Blake, Archbishop of Armagh, writes on 26th February 1774 to the nuncio at Brussels, who was in charge of Church affairs in Ireland. He gives a long commentary on his suffragan bishops at the nuncio's request, including MacDevitt of Derry. We are given no information on the detailed contents of his letter.

On 23rd October of the same year 1774, MacDevitt's letter, signed as well by several other bishops and MacCartan of Down and Connor by proxy, goes to the nuncio. They met 'in this city' (Dublin?) to consider the abuses afflicting Ulster since Anthony Blake became archbishop of Armagh. They regret the non-residence of bishops, the Dundalk dispute and particularly the indifference of the primate himself. They ask that vicars or coadjutors be appointed to the Ulster dioceses whose bishops do not reside.

On the 20th December 1774, season of good will, MacDevitt with some fellow-bishops set forth the origin and progress of the Dundalk dispute entitled *Species Facti*. This letter was intended for Propaganda Fidei. It might be remarked that MacDevitt began to take part in this correspondence in October 1766 as a recently ordained bishop (January 1766), which must say something about his personality. The last letter we have (1781) shows us Bishop MacDevitt warning Hugh McMahon, president of the Irish College, that Stefano Borgia, secretary of Propaganda, transmits everything to his confidant James Crawley of Armagh. It is an allegation of deliberate leaking of sensitive information.<sup>36</sup>

These complaints against Anthony Blake of Armagh were hardly unexpected. He is alleged to have promoted his cronies to wealthier benefices. The Holy See suspended him in April 1776 pending an enquiry. Archbishop Troy restored him in the following year. Blake suspended those priests he regarded as ringleaders. He had Richard O'Reilly appointed as coadjutor and the diocese came back to normal. Blake then retreated to his native West and lived the life of a country gentleman at Carrowbrowne in Co Mayo.<sup>37</sup> In fairness it should be stated that he left only £26 as disposable income in his will. MacDevitt was a busy correspondent, often in alliance with his fellow-bishops of Ulster, and took a considerable interest in general Church affairs, not only in the affairs of his own diocese. It is noteworthy that the offices of the Vatican are dedicated to filing absolutely everything. The episcopate was a long one, 31 years from 1766 to 1797. A large number of priests were ordained and worked in the diocese during his time. A note on some of the more memorable might be of interest.

Bishop MacDevitt's first vicar general was possibly Dr Robert McCaul, parish priest of Urney, who died at the early age of forty in 1771, five years after the bishop's episcopal ordination. He was evidently a man of great ability.

**James O'Regan** was ordained about 1765, just about the time of Bishop MacDevitt's episcopal appointment. His memorable achievement as PP of the parish of Kilrea, Desertoghill and Tamlaght O'Crilly was the construction of the first post-Reformation chapel in Drumagarner, Kilrea, in 1778. It was a low building with thatched roof, gallery at one end, earthen floor and no seats. Primitive, but a wonder for those deprived people, and would make possible Mass at fixed times, be a centre for parish life and permit greater order in the administration of the sacraments.

**John McKane**, bearer of an ancient surname of the O'Cahans, was ordained about 1770 and will be recalled by many as builder of Limavady's Roe Mill Chapel in 1783. At the time he was PP of Drumachose, traditional name for that parish.

**John McLaughlin** was a Cardonagh man, born in Glentogher, who studied at the Irish College, Paris, and was ordained about 1770. He was PP of Coleraine (1776-85) and of Ballinascreen (1785-1813), and died there. He was an Irish scholar and translated part of the *Book of Lecan* before it was brought back from France to the Royal Irish Academy. He refused an appointment as first professor of Irish in Maynooth, when it first enrolled students in 1795.

**James Mongan** was born in 1761 and ordained about 1770. He was PP of Camus and Clonleigh (1774-90) and of Termonamongan (1790 onwards), possibly his native parish. His headstone stands in Urney graveyard. He built a chapel in Aghyaran in 1799, a plain thatched building, 120 feet long by 24 feet wide, holding 900 people, probably standing.

**Matthias McCosker** ('Dean') (Coscraghan, Coskeran) was a native of Maghera, born in 1745 and ordained in 1770. From 1779 to 1781 he was PP of Desertmartin, PP of Maghera, his native parish, from 1781 to 1789, of Coleraine (1789-1800), again PP of Maghera from 1800 to 1827 and there he died. He was vicar general of the diocese of Derry. The Drapers Company has a note in a report in the Halliday MSS p145 : 'Rev Mr Coskeran, priest of Maghera, allowed ten Guineas annually from 2 May 1820.'

**James Murphy** was born in Lavey in 1753 and ordained in 1780. He was PP of Desertmartin (1781-83) and Ballinascreen (1895-34) where he died in 1834, and is buried in Straw. He was known as 'Dean', perhaps because he held some office such as VF or VG.

Unusual in a political sense among the Catholic clergy was Charles O'Sheil (Sheil). Born in 1755 and ordained in 1782 he was PP of Cloncha (1790-94) and of Clonmany (1794-1829). He died in that year, 1829. There cannot have been many like him who saw advantages in the proposed Act of Union of 1800, which meant the abolition of the Irish Parliament. He probably thought, like some others, that the Irish Parliament was no more than a tool for the benefit of the Protestant landowning class.

**James O'Fla(g)herty** was born in 1764 in Urney and ordained early, most likely by MacDevitt in 1795 after incomplete studies. He entered higher studies for three years in Maynooth, which opened to students that same year of 1795. He is described at matriculation as 'priest'.<sup>38</sup>

**Charles McBride** was born n 1759 and ordained priest about 1785. He became PP of Ardstraw (1790-99), and of Donaghmore (1799-1816). He was buried that year in Crossroads. He was the last parish priest of all Ardstraw, the parish being divided into East and West in 1799.

**Michael McGoulrick** was born in 1755 and ordained in 1786. He worked as parish priest in Ardstraw from 1799 to 1804. Following an invitation to serve in Raphoe by the Derry-born bishop Peter McLaughlin, he took up duty as PP of Inver, dying in 1849.

**Daniel (Donal) Phi(l)lips** was born in 1764 and attended one of the less frequented European seminaries, Salamanca. From 1774 to 1785 he was curate to Dr MacDevitt in Urney.<sup>39</sup> He was CC of Camus and Clonleigh (1790-1804) and PP of Glendermott and Lower Cumber (1804- 1815), where he died and was buried at Ardmore.

**James O'Connor** is perhaps best remembered, not for his achievements, but as great-grand uncle of the three priest brothers of Drumsurn in the 20th century, Charles, Philip and James O'Connor. Born in Drumsurn, Dungiven, he was ordained about 1785 and appointed PP of Ardstraw West. After a few months he died and was buried at Balteagh, Limavady, not far from his birthplace.

**Arthur McHugh** was born in 1767 in Termonamongan, like many others of the same surname, and was ordained priest about 1794. He was parish priest of Urney (1799 – 1808) from 1808 to 1839 parish priest of Camus and Clonleigh (Strabane) and vicar general of the diocese. He died in 1839 and was buried in Strabane at the old St John's church, now the site of the Grotto. He was one of those priests ordained before he began his theological studies in Maynooth and would probably have been ordained by Dr MacDevitt. He matriculated in the college of Maynooth in 1795, one of its first intake and of course one of the first Derry students to study there<sup>40</sup>. The practical purpose of first ordaining men before theological studies was to enable them to survive by their Mass stipends in those days of poverty. He was of a levitical family, grand uncle of Bishop Charles McHugh.

A priest known for his scholarship was **John Rogers/McRory**. Born in Lavey in 1758, he was ordained priest in 1788 in France. From 1790 to 1800 he was teaching in the newly established seminary in the city set up by Bishop Charles O'Donnell, which had a longer life than the Urney seminary founded by Bishop MacDevitt. From 1791 to 1805 he was PP of Tamlaght Ard (Magilligan); from 1805 to 1823 he was PP of Lavey, and from 1823 to 1838 PP of Kilrea and Tamlaght O'Crilly. For some reason the Mercers

Company awarded him an annual grant of £20. His ambition was to provide a new and larger church for Drumagarner, but death ended his plans. At that point Tamlaght O'Crilly became a separate parish.

**Patrick McKenna** was another priest who had an academic career. He was born in 1758 and ordained in 1788 in the Irish College in Paris. For ten years (1890 – 1800) he was teacher in the Derry seminary founded not long before. Making the difficult change to pastoral life he became PP of Dunboe (Coleraine) from 1800 to 1803, of Desertmartin from 1803 to 1806, and PP of Cloncha (Malin) from 1806 to 1820. There he died and was buried at Lagg in 1820.

**Patrick Morgan**, a little younger, was a teaching colleague of Patrick McKenna at Bishop O'Donnell's Seminary from 1790 to 1804. He was born in 1760 and ordained in 1785 in the Irish College in Paris. Then he worked in Ballinascreen for a year (1804–1805) and ended his days as parish priest of Ardstraw East, dying in 1813.

**James Murphy**, known as Dean, was a native of Lavey and ordained in 1780. He was parish priest of Desertmartin from 1781 to 1783, then PP of Ballinascreen 1783 to 1834, where he died and was buried at Straw. Why he was given the title of Dean is open to guesswork. He may have been vicar general or vicar forane.

**Charles O'Sheil (Sheil)** was born in 1755 and ordained in 1782. He was PP of Cloncha (1790-94) and of Clonmany (1794-1829), where he was buried. He built a church in Clonmany about 1795, and stipulated that no one should be buried in the graveyard until he himself was laid to rest there, a stipulation which he subsequently withdrew. Father Charles Haggerty, a native of Clonmany parish, was buried there before him. O'Sheil was one of the signatories of a petition presented by some residents of Donegal to King George III supporting the Act of Union.<sup>41</sup>

## MAYNOOTH COLLEGE

A great advance in Catholic fortunes was the establishment of Maynooth College with finance from the English government. When the legislation received royal assent in 1795 three Catholic bishops from each province were among the trustees. The first two for Ulster were O'Reilly of Armagh and MacDevitt of Derry. Evidently the Bishop of Derry was well regarded by his brothers on the bench of bishops. Of course trustees, professors and students had to swear allegiance as prescribed in the 1782 Relief Act. The Catholic Church was on the whole happy, remembering the French Revolution, for it would have state support and co-operation. Burke nevertheless warned the bishops: 'If you put your clerical education under government control then you have sold your religion for their money'. Indeed the Maynooth episcopal trustees in 1799 made the following statement in 1799: "In the appointment of Prelates of the Roman religion to vacant sees in the king-

dom such interference (by the government) as may enable it to be satisfied of the loyalty of the person to be appointed is just and right and ought to be agreed to". The Archbishop of Armagh was among the bishops who issued this statement. Philip MacDevitt was dead by then (in 1797).<sup>42</sup>

## MASS HOUSES

Despite the difficulties under which the Catholic Church suffered in the 18th century a remarkable number of Catholic churches or Mass houses was built in the thirty-one years of MacDevitt's bishopric.

These are some of them (probably) –

1759 Castlesessiagh, Castlederg.

1764 St Mary's Drumragh, Omagh

1778 Fr James O'Regan built at Drumagarner, Kilrea, the first post-Reformation chapel in the area. It was a low building with thatched roof, a gallery at one end, a clay floor with no seats.

1782 St Patrick's, Iskaheen.

1783 Fr John McKane built the Roemill chapel, Limavady.

1784 O'Donnell (later bishop) helped to build the chapel at Lagg, Malin

1785 St Eugene's, Glenock, Newtownstewart.

1795 Greenlough

1795 St Mary's, Clonmany.<sup>43</sup>

These post-penal Masshouses bore a family resemblance. They had a narrow thatched roof, whose roofing timbers were of bog fir, using blackoak couples of A shape, with splints of wood, not nails. The purlins and rafters were trimmed to shape with a pitsaw; struts and laths were placed between, and scallops to hold down the thatch. The walls would have been composed of rocks with little or no dressing, and about eight feet high. The floor was earthen, uneven and often damp, which was why people brought sods of turf or wisps of straw on which to sit or kneel on the clay, particularly necessary in wet weather. The altar was usually in the centre of the long east wall.<sup>44</sup> MacDevitt is said to have removed his see from Urney to Derry about 1780, being replaced as pastor at Urney by his vicar general Father Thomas McCawell, a graduate of the Sorbonne.<sup>45</sup> In 1797, the last year of his life, a coadjutor bishop was appointed for him, Charles O'Donnell, a nephew by marriage, and later to be next bishop of Derry on 9 February 1798.

Bishop MacDevitt died in the 78th year of his age on 4 November 1797 at his beloved Clady, Urney. In his later years he had resided in the city, the first Catholic bishop to do so since Reamonn O Gallachair.<sup>46</sup> He chose to be buried in his native district of Fahan on the site of an ancient monastery, believed to have been founded by St Colmcille in the sixth century with St Mura as first abbot. His grave is close to the well-known Fahan Cross. The gravestone is a horizontal one, with an inscription barely legible now,

at the foot of the east front of the slab-cross. It appears to bear a representation of a castle, perhaps the MacDevitt coat of arms. The O'Doherty's had several castles around Inishowen. The Bord Fáilte notice about the cross states it may date back to the seventh century. For the prominent MacDevitt family this graveyard was a holy place, where their ancestors were buried, as we learn from his will. The Fahan cross would have been a symbol of the ancient land treasured by the lords of the soil.

This cross-slab is on the site of a monastery founded in the sixth century by St Colmcille, one of whose disciples, St Mura, became its first abbot.....On the narrow side of the cross one of Ireland's rare Greek inscriptions has been judged to read: Glory and honour to the Father and to the Son and to the holy Spirit, a version of the well-known prayer sanctioned by the Council of Toledo in 633.

We have some details of the bishop's carefully planned funeral arrangements and a copy of his will. According to Maghtochair (p.65) 'the receipt for payment of the monument erected over his grave at Fahan reads: "Received from the Rev Charles O'Donnell the sum of £11 2s 8d for a tombstone, carriage of same, cutting letters, raising on a pedestal, over the remains of the Most Rev Dr Philip McDevitt".

30 October 30 1800

Present,  
Wm McCafferty'

MacDevitt also founded a bursa at the College of Maynooth for students of the diocese of Derry. Part of the money was paid by his successor, Dr O'Donnell, out of the proceeds of the sale of his library and other effects.

For this there is another receipt: "Received from the Right Rev Doctor O'Donnell £50.7s 11d. on account of the Right Rev McDavit's foundation for the Ecclesiastical Students of the Diocese of Derry in the College of Maynooth.

Maynooth, 31st August, 1802. Andrew Dunne"

The author of 'Inishowen' Maghtoghair, adds "I have also lately examined a catalogue of his library. I find it contained 354 vols. There were 71 vols of Theology and of Scripture; 180 vols. of French works; and 103 vols. of works on English literature. It contained all the commentaries of *A Lapide on the Old and New Testament*. These were bought by the late Rev Mr McHugh, of Strabane, for £1 17s 2d. Among the purchasers I find the names of the Rev Messrs Morgan, McGoldrick, McShane."

## WILL OF DR. BISHOP McDAVETT, BISHOP OF DERRY

I, Philip McDavett, of Dunnigowan, in the Parish of Urney, & county of Tyrone, Roman Catholic bishop of the Diocese of Derry, being weak in body but of sound and firm judgment do hereby make this my last will and testament. First I commend my soul to Almighty God, my body to be buried in the churchyard of Fahan, either in my father's or mother's grave, or if neither is ripe or fit to be opened, in some part of the burying ground belonging to our family, the charge of my funeral to be left to the discretion of my executors.

I order my executors, when convenient, to sell my lease of Dunigowan and part of Hunterstown, held under Richard Maxwell, Esqr., Lieut. Colonel of the Donegall Militia, and hope & request the Colonel will consent to sd sale. I order my executors to sell by public auction, as above, all my stock of cattle of every sort, also the entire of my grain and fodder, save such quantities of each as may be necessary until my executors will have settled my affairs; and if my farm shall be wrought and put in seed his year as usual, I order the crops to be sold by auction as above, likewise all my household furniture, beds and bed-cloaths, subject to any exception I may think proper to make as to the beds in the sequel of his my last will – the money that will result from the sale of all the above sd articles to be disposed of as will be hereafter ordered by me.

I bequeath all my wearing apparel, shirts excepted, to my two brothers William and John McDavett, share and share alike. I bequeath to my nephew Richard McDavett, of Tyban, six of my shirts and as many cravats or neck-cloaths – all the remainder of my shirts and cravats I order to be distributed among the sons of my brother-in-law, Richard Houten, share and share alike.

I bequeath to my niece Winifrede Houten seven guineas sterl. For her faithful services to me, also her bed and bed-cloaths, exclusive of all wages will be due to her on the 1st of May next, all wages due to her by me until the first of November last being already paid. I also bequeath to sd Winifrede the half of my table-cloaths, sheets and towels, and the other half to her two sisters.

I bequeath to my niece, Anne Dougherty, in the Lagan, six silver tea spoons. I bequeath a silver tablespoon to my niece Maryana Nulty, another silver tablespoon to my niece Nelly Green. I bequeath one guinea to my nephew Anthony Dougherty in the lagan, also a guinea to his sister, Catherine Carlan in the Parish of Lifford.

I bequeath to my niece, Mary Dougherty, of the Lagan, the two guineas which she has borrowed from me, also to my nephew, James Doherty, of the Lagan, the two guineas and a half which he has borrowed from me. I bequeath my shoe buckles, knee buckles & stock buckle, if found, to my nephew Philip McDavett of Glenlee; my two canes to my two brothers; my boots, spurs, shoes & stockings to my brother John.

I bequeath to the Revd Charles O'Donnell, Pastor of Templemore, my gold watch in consideration of the trouble he will have in the management of my affairs as an executor. I bequeath to my nephew Denis McDavitt, son of my brother William, six guineas in consideration of his trouble as one of my executors, and if that sum will appear insufficient for such trouble let him be indemnified at the arbitration of impartial, honest and judicious men.

I order my books to be sold, as will appear meet and convenient to my executors, and the money to result from the sale of them to be disposed for the use of my nephew William McDavitt and my two grandnephews Charles O'Donnell and William O'Donnell of Rushville, share and share alike, to help to defray their expenses at school.

I bequeath to my nephew Daniel McDavitt the sum of seven guineas sterl. for his faithful services to me exclusive of the wages which will be due to him the 1st of May next, his wages being paid until the first of November last. I also leave him his bed and bed-cloaths.

I bequeath to my brother William the seal of my watch on which is engraved the coat of arms of our family. I also order my embroidered suit of vestments to be deposited with him sd William in trust for the Roman Catholic chapel of Fahan, and desire that they be not drudged or carried about for the common or ordinary use of the Parish. I also desire that the silver chalice which I bought from Mrs Fulm, Dorset Street, be deposited along with sd vestments and for the same use; also my plated candlesticks I leave to the chapel of Fahan & also the small silver candlestick. I bequeath my silver stand and Buretto to the Chapel of Derry. I bequeath my other silver chalice to the parish of Urney. I bequeath my Pontificals & Mitres, with all the Episcopal ornaments to my successor in the see of Derry; also my white silk vestments.

I bequeath one guinea to each of my two servants, Roger McCafferty & Sara Carr, for their services, exclusive of their wages. I bequeath one guinea to my niece Winifrede Breslen, of Cary's-glen.

All the residue and remainder of my cash, goods and chattles & all the debts due to me in this country, as also a sum exceeding one hundred pounds sterl. which I have caused long since to be lodged in the Irish Community or seminary of Irish Clerks Established in the street called of the Green Horse in Paris, if said sum or any part of it can, or may, be hereafter recovered, allowing the person who will transact that business moderate fees for his trouble. I order to be deposited in the Royal Irish College of St Patrick at Maynooth in this kingdom of Ireland for the education of students destined for the ecclesiastical state and subjects of the Diocese of Derry, in manner and form following.' Here he outlines a rather complicated scheme for the use of burses for the education

of seminarians for the diocese of Derry, in the first place students from Inishowen (to include here Faughanvale and Glendermott), with preference for members of the MacDevitt family, secondly county Derry and thirdly Tyrone, which will include Donaghmore, Lifford and Termonamongan as well as that part of Urney lying in Donegal. All will be subject to the inspection of the Catholic bishop of Derry with the concurrence of his own relatives.

The will was probated on 12 September 1800.

The executors were the Revd Charles O'Donnell, his dean (who would succeed him as bishop and was a relative by marriage), and Mr Denis McDavitt, his own nephew. It demonstrates a strong attachment to diocese, family and his native parish of Fahan, and to the future of the Church which is connected to the new college of Maynooth and its seminarians of Derry. His memory is excellent. The will pays great attention to detail in relatives and objects bequeathed ranging from silver chalice to bed-clothes, teaspoon and spurs. He was still 'of sound and firm judgment' in 'the 78th year of his age'.<sup>48</sup>

Philip MacDevitt had found his diocese close to crisis point when he became bishop in 1766. After all, before 1720, 46 years earlier, the diocese had no bishop at all, meaning that it had been headless for 115 years since the martyrdom of Reamonn Gallagher. There had been the scandal of Bishop Brullaghan, appointed in 1749. Through the territory of the diocese there were very few churches for the people to gather, pray, offer Mass and receive the Gospel. Mass was celebrated in buildings casually found, like sheds, private houses or in the open air. There was no Catholic church at all in the see-city of Derry. Lands, buildings, churches had been confiscated and the people were ground down by the Penal Laws, underprivileged, despairing and in penury. The civic system was hostile and Catholics despised. Only the English government at times seemed to tolerate the existence or advance of Catholics. The Gaelic system of chiefs, poets, clans, monasteries and pilgrimages had been destroyed and its culture lost following the Flight of the Earls in 1607. The central authority and support of Rome seemed far away.

Bishop MacDevitt achieved a great deal. His predecessor had lived like a gypsy, on the run. Coming as he did, from a background of minor Irish nobility and something like high society in France, debating theology in the presence of royalty, he was able to restore a little pride in his depressed flock. He had the Long Tower church built, oversaw the building of many Mass houses in the diocese, kept up a regular correspondence with Rome through the nuncio in Brussels, issued pastoral letters and held clerical conferences, administered Confirmation, set up a seminary and ordained priests.<sup>49</sup> He and his proud family clung closely to the family monastery and graveyard at Fahan. True, he had to make use of his friends (and benefactors) in high places, and make himself agreeable and respected, which did not please some in later years, and he witnessed a relaxation of many laws which had borne down most painfully on the Catholic population. Well before O'Connell's 1828 Catholic Emancipation the government had removed the worst of the

Penal system, thanks to the skills and patience of MacDevitt and his like.

A modest commemorative tablet is affixed to the wall in the gallery of the Long Tower church, for which he obtained the site. It reads –

**REVMUS PD PHILIPPUS McDEVITT**  
**EPISCOPUS DERRIENSIS**  
**CUJUS RELIQUIAE IN COEMETERIO**  
**FAHAN SUP. QUIESCUNT OBIIT AD 1797**  
**ANNO EPISCOPATUS 31**  
**AETATIS VERO SUAE 77**

**REQUIESCAT IN PACE AMEN**

**Bishop of Derry**  
**Whose remains lie in the graveyard of Upper Faham**  
**Died AD 1797**  
**in the 31st year of his episcopate**  
**and in the 77th year of his age**

**May he rest in peace. Amen.**

<sup>1</sup> B. Bonner, *Derry*, an *Outline History* (Limerick, 1995), p.355

<sup>2</sup> *Archivium Hibernicum* (Maynooth, 1912)

<sup>3</sup> J. McLaughlin, *Brief Memoirs of the Bishops of Derry* (Dublin, 189), p. 57

<sup>4</sup> Bonner, *Derry*, p. 355

<sup>5</sup> *Archivium Hibernicum*, 1912

<sup>6</sup> McLaughlin, *Brief Memoirs*, p.59

<sup>7</sup> Bonner, *Derry*, p.243

<sup>8</sup> J. K. O'Doherty, *Derriana* (Dublin, 1902), 219; T. Colby, *Ordnance Survey of the Parish of Templemore*, (London, 1837)

<sup>9</sup> Maghtochair, *Inishowen, its History, Tradition and Antiquities* (Carndonagh, 1935)

<sup>10</sup> L.Swords, *Soldiers, Scholars, Priests* (Paris, 1985)

<sup>11</sup> E.Daly, K.Devlin, (editors), *The Clergy of the Diocese of Derry* (Dublin, 1997)

<sup>12</sup> Maghtochair, *Inishowen*, p.61

<sup>13</sup> *Archivium Hibernicum*, p. 90

<sup>14</sup> Maghtochair, p. 62

<sup>15</sup> Bonner,*Derry*, p. 244

<sup>16</sup> Maghtochair, *Inishowen*, p. 66ff; Bonner, *Derry*, p.244

<sup>17</sup> C.Giblin, "The Stuart Nomination of Irish Bishops 1687-1765", *Archivium Hibernicum*, (Maynooth, 1966)

<sup>18</sup> Colby, *Ordnance Survey*, p.49

<sup>19</sup> Daly and Devlin, *Clergy of the Diocese of Derry*, p.13

<sup>20</sup> Colby, *Ordnance Survey*.

<sup>21</sup> Maghtochair, *Inishowen*, p.62

<sup>22</sup> M.Collins, St. Columba's Church, Long Tower (Belfast, 1978)

<sup>23</sup> Daly and Devlin, *Clergy of the Diocese* p.12

<sup>24</sup> J. Brady, *Catholicism in the Eighteenth Century*, Press Edition

<sup>25</sup> *Londonderry Journal*, 15 April 1783

<sup>26</sup> S. McMahon, *History of County Derry* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 72-73

<sup>27</sup> J.A. Coulter, *Glendermot* (Derry, 1958), p.40

<sup>28</sup> Coulter, *Glendermot*, p. 38

<sup>29</sup> D. Mullam, P.Donnelly, *St. John's Coleraine* (Coleraine, 1992), p.39

<sup>30</sup> O. Rafferty, *The Eighteenth Century Experience* (London, 1992)

<sup>31</sup> Rafferty, *The Eighteenth Century*.

<sup>32</sup> Bonner, *Derry*, p.245

<sup>33</sup> G.Douglas, (ed.) *Derriana*, 1794

<sup>34</sup> J.Gillespie, *Annals of Derry* (Derry, 1824)

<sup>35</sup> W.Doherty, *Derry Colmcille*, quoted in Bonner, *Derry*, p.246

<sup>36</sup> *Archivium Hibernicum xliv*, (Maynooth, 1995),

<sup>37</sup> O. Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster* (London, 1994), p.84

<sup>38</sup> P. Hammell, *Maynooth Students and Ordinations 1795-1895* (Maynooth, 1982), p.139

<sup>39</sup> Coulter, *Glendermott*, p.39

<sup>40</sup> Hammell, *Maynooth Students*, p.111

<sup>41</sup> Most of the above information on priests comes from Daly and Devlin, above.

<sup>42</sup> Oliver Rafferty, *Catholicism*, p.84

<sup>43</sup> Daly and Devlin, *The Clergy of the Diocese*, McKeefry notes, diocesan archives.

<sup>44</sup> J.Lynch, master builder, Castlederg.

<sup>45</sup> P.Donnelly, *A History of the Parish of Ardstraw West and Castlederg* (Strabane, 1978), quoting *Derry Journal*, 25 September 1907

<sup>46</sup> Daly and Devlin, *The Clergy of the Diocese*, p.12

<sup>47</sup> Maghtochair, *Inishowen*, p.63

<sup>48</sup> *Archivium Hibernicum* (Maynooth, 1912)

<sup>49</sup> McKeefry Notes, diocesan archives

A native of Portrush, Rev. Philip Donnelly is a priest of the Diocese of Derry and resides in Inishowen. He has written a number of books on church history, including *St. John's Coleraine*, Impact Printing, Coleraine (1992) which he co-authored with Rev. Desmond Mullan.

#### Photos - Editor.

# CAPT. HENRY GALLAUGHER, DSO.

*Col. Declan O Carroll (Retd)*



*Captain Henry Gallaugher*

Capt. Henry Gallaugher DSO from Manorcunningham died at the Battle of Messines Ridge on 7 June 1917, on the same day and in the same place as the Irish Nationalist, Willie Redmond MP. He has been described by Kevin Myers in the *Irish Times* as an "extraordinarily brave man who is now forgotten in his native county of Donegal".<sup>1</sup> ("An Irishman's Diary", Irish Times 5 July 1996). This account of his short life seeks to address this supposition.

Henry Gallaugher was born in the family home at Greenbank, Balleighan on the shores of Lough Swilly near Manorcunningham in Co. Donegal on 9 Mar 1886 to John and Jane Park Gallaugher (née Campbell). The Gallaugher family were originally from Monglass close to the border at Killea. He was the second son and the third of seven children. The eldest in the family was William, followed by Mary (Minnie), and then Henry who, in turn, was followed by Jane, John Alexander and two younger siblings Robert and Rachel, both of whom died in infancy. Henry was christened on 23 May 1886 at First Ray Presbyterian Church in Manorcunningham by Rev Robert McMorris.

In the National Census 1901, John Gallaugher, as head of the household, recorded the presence of himself, his wife, sons Henry and John Alexander (described as scholars) and his father John (Henry's grandfather) in the family home at Greenbank. All were of the Presbyterian religion. Those employed on the farm and also named on the census return were James Reilly, John Carlin and James Doogan, who were listed as farm servants, and Annie Harley a domestic servant. All these workers were Roman Catholics.<sup>2</sup>

Henry was to suffer the loss of his mother, Jane when he was 16. She died on 6 Sept 1902. Four years later, his father, John remarried to Jesse McInnes Johnston from Curbally Farm, Ahoghill, Co Antrim. Jesse moved to the family home at Greenbank but did not bear John Gallaugher any further family. Jesse received a bible from her husband as a wedding gift. This is still in First Ray Presbyterian Church, Manorcunningham where Henry was baptised. Jesse Gallaugher was the woman referred to in Henry's letters home from the front as "mother".

The census of 1911 next shows us that the only Gallaugher residents in Greenbank were John and Jessie with Henry and John Alexander who were then both described as farmer's sons. The house and farm staff listed then were Fanny McKnight (cook) with Alexander Cowan and Robert Porter as agricultural labourers. The latter was a Catholic. Henry was 25 at this census and was still working on the family farm.<sup>3</sup>



*Window in memory of Capt. Henry Gallaugher, First Ray Presbyterian Church*

John Gallaugher farmed over 120 acres near the old Franciscan Abbey at Balleighan. Livestock, potatoes and flax were the main sources of income from the farm which was a substantial holding in the locality in those days. The potatoes were brought by cart to Derry and sold in the market at William St. and it is said that the horses travelled so often to Derry with the produce that they knew their own way home from the market! The youngest son, John Alexander exported potatoes to Cyprus.

As was the practice of the times, seaweed from the shores of the lough was often used to fertilise the land. The Gallaughers were a popular farming family and John senior was known to have a strict work ethic which permeated his family. He was regarded as being both fair and honest with those who came to work on the farm.

John Alexander Gallaugher and his wife Jane married in 1929 and moved into a pretty derelict Balleighan House convenient to Greenbank and commenced renovating it. Balleighan House has been greatly improved over the years and the present owner, Mr Brendan McLaughlin has carried out extensive renovation including to the round house adjacent to the main building where Jean Gallaugher recalls meats and milk being stored. It was known as the “cold house” when Jean lived in Balleighan House.<sup>4</sup>

The original house at Greenbank and home to Henry Gallaugher still stands on the lough shore.

William Gallaugher was to purchase a second farm at Arnaditian, Manorcunningham from John Harris for £1000. This adjoined the original family farm.<sup>5</sup>

Many locals worked in the Gallaugher farm including Charlie Flood father of Charlie Flood, Ard Colmcille, Letterkenny and his brother Daniel who were employed as horsemen on the farm. Charlie Flood senior was first engaged by the Gallaghers in May 1919 as a cart man and spent many days carting goods back and forth to Derry. Later he took over the duties of ploughman for which he earned an extra £4 per half year! In 1920 John Gallaugher bought his first tractor but for some time he didn't allow it to pull the plough on the land as he felt it would destroy the soil. That was a job for Charlie Flood and his trusted horses. Charlie was to marry Annie Kelly who also worked on the Gallaugher farm in 1920 and in 1996 he celebrated his 100th year. He continued to work for the Gallaghers up to 1956.

The Gallaugher family also hired people at the hiring fairs for work on the farm and they were accommodated in two cottars' houses on the land. They also had both a flax and cornmill at Greenbank. Henry Gallaugher spent his early life as a Donegal farmer. Whereas both William and Henry were involved in the local UVF John Alexander Gallaugher showed no interest and he was to continue to farm when his brothers left for the war.

William, the eldest son, emigrated to Canada. He felt that he was not suited to the everyday toil of farming. He was to later enlist in the 54 Bn Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario

Regiment ) Canadian Expeditionary Force after Henry had left to join the Inniskillings. There were three Irish Regiments (Regts) raised in Canada at this time, the Irish Rangers, the Irish Fusiliers and the Irish Regt. And later the 55 Regt Irish Canadian Rangers but William did not enlist in any of them. The reason for his choice of regiment is not clear. According to the family headstone at Crossroads Presbyterian Church near Killea he died 14 Jan 1946 and was buried there. He married Nellie Hutton from Downpatrick who returned to Downpatrick after his death.



*Plaque , First Ray Presbyterian Church, Manorcunningham*

The Gallaugher family were devout Presbyterians and Henry's disciplined Presbyterian upbringing and good work ethic in rural Donegal were to stand to him years later during WW1. Henry had toiled hard on the farm and was a skilled ploughman, a skill that remains in the Manorcunningham area to this day. He also put his whole heart and soul into everything he did and his local rector Rev McClean was to recall after his death that Henry led the singing in the Sabbath school and in the Reverend's words it did one good to listen to the gusto with which he sang.

John Alexander Gallaugher married Jane Patterson from Tullybogly, Dromoghill who bore him two daughters, Eileen who died in June 2003 and Jean who lives in Derry. John Alexander was to inherit the farms on the sudden death of his father at the age of 72 on 22 June 1927. He himself died at the age of 64 on 3 Dec 1954. Jane Gallaugher died 15 Oct 1982.

Mary or Minnie as she was known at home, attended school in Derry and later married local man Prof Francis James Browne who became a surgeon in University College Hospital, London. Prof. Browne served in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) in WW1. They had two sons John, a doctor, and Henry and two daughters, Olive, also a doctor, and Eileen who presented the programme "Listen with Mother" on BBC Radio. Both John and Henry served in the RAF in WW2. Henry was killed over Holland and is buried in Eindhoven. The family home was at Heath Lodge in Watford. Prof Browne was the

uncle of Gerald and Ernest Wallace, Manorcunningham<sup>6</sup>

The family lie buried in the family plot at Crossroads Presbyterian Churchyard near Killea, including Henry's father, mother, step-mother and other family members.

Typical of the strong sense of religion in the family was the reaction of John Gallaugh when he learned after some delay of the death of his son Henry. He commented: "God gave his only begotten son, I have given mine."

## EDUCATION

Henry Gallaugh was educated at the Model School, Londonderry and at Moffat's Private Academy on Upper Main St. Letterkenny. Rev Joe Moffat was his teacher. Joe Moffatt, from Broughshane in Co Antrim, was educated at Galway, Belfast, Edinburgh and Philadelphia and was ordained by Pittsburg Presbytery in the U.S.A. in September 1870. He came to Letterkenny in Sept 1874 and opened his intermediate school at Gortlee which educated pupils of all classes and creeds up to matriculation standard. He resigned in 1907 and returned to Edinburgh where he died in 1917.

## EARLY MILITARY LIFE

Henry Gallaugh was initially a member, and later, Company Commander of Manorcunningham U.V.F. This Company was part of the Donegal Regt. raised by the Earl of Leitrim. Many of his local friends also joined the UVF and were later to answer Carson's call and to enlist for the war and "for King and country". The U.V.F. had been set up in Ulster to oppose Home Rule and was almost 100% Protestant. In the South, John Redmond had organised the National Volunteers (Vols) who, by contrast, were totally Catholic dominated. However as the war progressed Redmond encouraged his Vols to enlist in the British Army. Eoin McNeill of the Irish Vols took a different view and opposed Irish involvement with the British.



*Finner Camp 1907*

As it happened Donegal was slower to mobilise than the rest of Ulster partly because

Protestant professional and business people played a major part in the economy of the county and they were initially reluctant to jeopardize their livelihood by giving whole-hearted support to the UVF. As Henry enjoyed relative wealth and good standing in his local community his destiny was to become an officer in the Army.

Weapons for Donegal U.V.F. were sourced by Lord Leitrim and were smuggled into Mulroy Bay on his boat the "Ganiamore", normally used to take migrant workers from Glasgow. The weapons were then unloaded and distributed to Donegal U.V.F. units under the guidance of Steven Bullock who was later to see action as a Company Sergeant Major with the Inniskilling Fusiliers at the front.

Gallaugh enlisted in 11 Battalion (Bn) Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers , 109 Brigade (Bde) of the 36 Ulster Division (Div) on 1 Sept 1914 in Omagh as the Bn began recruiting for the war. He was posted to B Coy of that unit. He was then 28years old. He was given the rank of Sergeant on enlistment due to his service with the U.V.F.

He commenced his initial training in Finner Camp, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal and later at Shane's Castle, Randalstown, Co Antrim. The Bn was raised in Sept 1914 from the Donegal and Fermanagh Volunteers and the other Bns of the Bde were from Tyrone (9 Bn) and from Derry (10 Bn). The Donegal Regiment became the accepted title of the battalion.<sup>7</sup>

As the Division was recruiting it was given the freedom to choose its own officers and to operate a semi-independent chain of recruiting offices to secure men for the Division. Edward Carson also insisted that the prefix "Ulster" would be included in the unit designation. Brig T.E.Hickman CBE DSO.was appointed Brigade Commander (Comd) and the Bde training commenced on 20 Sept 1914.

Gallaugh's unit in training in Finner (11Bn) was commanded by Lt Col William Hessey who was an experienced officer with service in S. Africa (1899-1902). He took over as Battalion Commander (Bn Comd) of the 11 Bn on 27 Oct 1914. Major the Earl of Leitrim, who had been the Bn Comd during transition and formation now reverted to second in command. Brig Gen Hickman remained as Bde Comd up to 27 May 1916.

Conditions in Finner, even in Sept., were harsh enough with the troops under canvas. Huts were being prepared but would not be ready for some months. Route marches, as favoured by the Div Comd, and weapons training were conducted regularly. The men trained with weights in their packs, usually steel bolts. The previous training in the U.V.F. which Henry enjoyed was a great advantage as was the fact that the units were formed on a local or territorial basis thereby ensuring a natural companionship and spirit of pride in the units. Many of Gallaugh's friends and neighbours, among whom were Robert Roulston, Gortree, Newtowncunningham and David Barnhill of Ballylawn, Manorcunningham

trained with him in Finner. By 14 Nov 1914 the Bn strength had reached 703 Officers and men.



*First Ray Presbyterian Church*

Gallaugh revelled in the training. He was in good physical shape due to his work on the farm. So neither the harsh conditions nor the long route marches were a problem to him. Nor did he complain that despite the relative proximity to his home he did not get leave from training very often to visit his parents. This was Bde policy.

The unit moved to Enniskillen on 20 November to avail of better and more sheltered billets and in Jan 1915 Gallaugh had been able to complete a physical training course and was then sent on a transport course. By mid January he was with his unit in Randalstown Co Antrim and was promoted from Sergeant to the commissioned rank of temporary Lieutenant on 23 Jan 1915. The historian C.B.Falls, who wrote extensively on WW1, was also promoted the same day. This promotion is recorded in *The London Gazette*. Having completed many different courses to broaden his education as an officer Gallaugh was then appointed Bn Transport Officer.<sup>8</sup>

In June 1915, at the Waterloo Day Brigade Sports, Lt Gallaugh is recorded as having won the “bare back mules Officers’ race” – a rare distinction indeed! At that time the Bde was in training at Ridge Camp in Randalstown. Facilities for the troops were good and morale in the training camp was very high. The 11 Bn was in good spirits as they prepared to join the front in France. B Coy under his command won the Bde Rifle Championship and the silver hip flask trophy awarded to Gallaugh by then Col., later Brig.Gen Ricardo who commanded the Tyrone, is still treasured by his niece Jean Gallaugh to this day. This flask was taken to the front and eventually inscribed by McCullagh’s Jewellers, Letterkenny. Brig.Ricardo played a vital role in the establishment of the UVF and was

married to Ella Herdman of the Sion Mills milling family.

Training continued in Randalstown until the first detachment of the Bn, a total of 800 Officers and men, is recorded as having left the North Wall, Dublin by ship for Seaford near Brighton on the Sussex coast on 7 July 1915. They had waited patiently for this day. The excitement was high as their training continued in Seaford. On 17 July they were inspected by Lord Kitchener who declared himself well pleased with the turnout. The residents of Seaford were somewhat sceptical at the arrival of these Irish troops but were soon won over.

## EMBARKATION TO FRANCE

Gallaugh, now in the army a little over a year, embarked from Southampton for France on 4 Oct 1915 with the Bn advance party of three officers and 109 men, including Lord Leitrim. They arrived at Le Havre and proceeded to Cardonette. The following day 5 Oct., the rest of the battalion arrived in Boulogne in the early hours and joined the advance party in Cardonette. They were to have a very cold and wet winter ahead of them in France.<sup>9</sup>

The Bn moved around quite a bit in the first few weeks in France. They were dispersed among many other experienced units and engaged in training and further preparation but were not to see action for some months.

In the first week of February 1916 the 36 Div moved forward to take its place in the line with the 108 Bde on the right, 107 Bde on the left and 109 Bde (including 11 Bn ) in reserve. On the evening of 19 Feb 1916 the 11 Bn and Henry Gallaugh were to come under an intense artillery bombardment for the first time. They were now engaged in battle and they were ready, but only as prepared as inexperienced troops with little over one year’s training could possibly be in the circumstances.

While in France, Gallaugh wrote home regularly trying to comfort his parents. Most of these letters were addressed to his mother (Jesse) but also to his father and brother, John. Fourteen of these letters are still extant and in the possession of his niece, Jean. Reading the letters gives an insight into the feelings and character of the man but do not give away too much about his own activities in the field. He was obviously determined not to upset those at home.

On 16 Mar 1916 in a letter to his mother, he described the morale of his men during the heavy shelling they were experiencing. He gave a humorous glimpse of their reaction in the vernacular of Donegal. His letters throughout displayed a religious content allied to a cheery and strong disposition with a concern for family life on the farm in Donegal. Then in April he wrote to his mother telling her that he was leaving the Transport Platoon to

become second-in-command of C Company (Coy). This he would have welcomed given the opportunity to command field troops.

April 1916 was of course the date of the Easter Rising in Dublin and in a further letter of 29 April 1916 he alluded to the fact that it was some news on the front and he wrote about the “*lively time over in Dublin*”. But it also seemed of little concern amongst the 36 Division in France. Most likely they were preoccupied with what faced them and would not have had too much news of events in Dublin.

All during the early Summer the Bn suffered some casualties from shell fire. Training was intensified with practice attacks on dummy trenches and rehearsing the procedure for troops advancing ahead of a creeping artillery barrage. These tactics were to be employed for real in within weeks. Capt Sproule Myles from Ballyshannon assumed temporary command during June to facilitate leave amongst the Bn officers.

At least two letters followed in June. The first on 18 June referred to the promotion of David Barnhill, his neighbour in Manorcunningham, who was promoted to Sgt and recommended for a DCM. This promotion greatly pleased Gallaugher and he wrote home that “*Manorcunningham did not send out very many but they seem to be all good ones*”. In his next letter of 27 June to both Jesse and his brother John Alexander the mood is more sombre. He was obviously concerned for the future because he wrote that she (Jesse) may not hear from him again for some time and he invoked the aid of the “heavenly father” to look after all those at home as he said goodbye.

This may be interpreted as knowing that he that he might not survive the upcoming engagement. He also expressed his sorrow that the country would be granted Home Rule, which he obviously opposed. He also wrote a second letter in June to his brother John telling him (John) that he was doing a good job on the farm at home and “*more than if you were out here*”.

A common feature of the letters is that they were deeply spiritual and a further example of his deep religious conviction. Gallaugher was forever concerned about the welfare of his men and his family in Donegal.

His unit was moving out to start relieving the 9 Bn. The fighting grew in intensity. The 11 Bn with Henry Gallaugher was now at Thiepval Wood on the Somme. Little ground was being won or lost but the British High Command was preparing for a major offensive and the troops on the ground sensed it.

The Battle of the Somme loomed ahead.



Officers and Colours Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Finner Camp. 1898

## PREPARATION FOR THE SOMME OFFENSIVE

After the Chantilly conference of Dec 1915 the principle of a simultaneous general offensive on the Western, Eastern and Italian fronts was adopted and a plan for a July attack along the Somme was prepared. This plan had originally been fixed for a 29 June D-day and was drawn up by the French. However the British General Douglas Haig was unhappy because it was to be a daylight attack and he feared that his inexperienced troops were not sufficiently trained. Essentially the plan was that for five or six days before the attack proper, a devastating artillery barrage was to be laid down on enemy lines to destroy their heavily fortified defences. The Germans had a very elaborate system of defensive trenches prepared in depth which was supported by artillery and machineguns.

The plan was that at Zero hour the troops would move forward under cover of artillery and the artillery would hop forward onto a different line ahead of the advancing troops. Therefore it was to rely heavily on the use of artillery. The original plan to start on 29 June was postponed due to heavy rain. The troops waited soaked and miserable for two days in the open assault trenches. Many of the men availed of the opportunity to write letters home – in some cases these were to be their last letters.

## BATTLE OF THE SOMME 1 JULY 1916

Early in the morning of 1 July 1916, Lt.Henry Gallaugher's unit the 11 Bn took over in the trenches from the 9 Bn to prepare for what was to be their first battle. At 6.30 am an artillery barrage heralded the attack. The Germans had been expecting it and therefore the preparatory British artillery bombardment alerted them.

The task of the 11 Bn was to support the 9 Bn who were the lead Bn in the attack on one of the best defended positions on the German front line. In all thirteen British Divisions went forward together along a front of some 15 miles. The British line advanced at walking pace and progress was slow due to the heavy weights being carried by the troops and the badly pitted ground caused by the artillery shelling.

They came under machinegun fire immediately from German trenches in the Thiepval village area and the Coys suffered terribly with many Officers and NCOs mown down immediately. The British had not been expecting the German machineguns which had a devastating affect.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the slow advance, the 11 Bn led by Capt. Sewell crossed the first line of three lines of German trenches but soon Sewell fell fatally wounded. On reaching the second line, a platoon under Lt Gallaugher was left to consolidate the position as the remainder of the battalion moved on to the third line. The scene was chaotic. Casualties were heavy. By now Lt Gallaugher was the only officer left in his Coy and, although he had only nine men standing, they succeeded in taking their objective "The Crucifix" while still under fire from nearby Thiepval. Gallaugher quickly assessed the situation and took command of the remaining survivors. He had the communication trenches leading to "The Crucifix" barricaded up and secured.<sup>11</sup>

Gallaugher then returned back to the A line to get reinforcements but encountered Germans there. He got into a shell hole and shot six German snipers with his orderly's rifle thus clearing out the trenches. He then erected a barricade and left it guarded.

All around there was confusion, noise and destruction. Gallaugher attempted to report the dire situation at the front to his superiors at Bn Hq but could not do so until some hours later. Communications by telephone, runners, scouts and flags between Bn HQ and the front line was virtually impossible because of the sheer volume of the German fire. The Commanding Officers had been ordered to command and control from the trenches and not to lead the attack. This added to the communications difficulty.<sup>12</sup>

Gallaugher, who was exhibiting extraordinary leadership and courage, realised the difficult position the Bn was in and he rallied all the troops he could muster in the chaos that prevailed and killed, or took prisoner, any Germans he encountered. He then met up with

Major Peacocke of the 9 Inniskillings and came under Peacocke's command. He had already succeeded in rescuing a wounded officer, 2nd Lt Jackson from near the enemy lines. Peacocke and he attempted to consolidate the early morning gains such as they were made by the 36 Div against the odds. They clung desperately to their positions in the third German trench line on Schwaben Redoubt which they had taken in a hand-to-hand fight. Together they held out in very grave circumstances until late in the evening before retreating to the first line of German trenches already taken until the morning of 2 July. (Peacocke, later a Lt Col., was to be assassinated by the IRA at Inishshannon near Bandon Co. Cork on 31 May 1921.)

The 36 Div were the only Div to reach the German second line but at a cost. The 11 Bn alone lost nearly 600 men by mid-morning. The Divisional casualties were put at 2,000 plus dead and 2,700 wounded that one day.

Next morning, 2 July, the weather was sunny and survivors took stock of the shocking panorama in front of them. The 11 Bn was ordered out of the front line at 11pm but that night Lt Gallaugher together with Capt.W Moore and 20 others returned to Thiepval Wood and rescued 28 wounded men. This was a personal initiative for which he was awarded a DSO. However his heroics the day before must surely have also been considered when this award was being considered. His unit then retired back from the front to Divisional Training for a period.

As a further acknowledgement of his bravery he was promoted to Captain on 2 July.

## POST SOMME

After the Somme the now Capt.Gallaugher wrote home again, to his father this time, stating that those who died at the Somme died fighting for "*the honour of the Empire and of Ulster*". He wrote, "*I am sorry that some of our boys are missing. I think the Inniskillings led the way. We are all so proud of our old 109 Bde*". He was surely understating the actions in particularly horrific circumstances.

In August, the 11 Bn moved from the Somme to the general Ypres area on the French-Belgian border and were redeployed in the trenches in Ploegsteert Wood just short of the ridgeline at Messines where they were visited by the King on 14 Aug. On this occasion Capt.Gallaugher was honoured by being presented to the King as a consequence of his actions at the Somme.

On 20 August, he was awarded the DSO for conspicuous gallantry at the Somme. The citation in the London Gazette of 22 Sept 1916 records:

For conspicuous gallantry in action. When other officers became casualties he took command and led on his men with great dash. Seeing the enemy firing on our wounded, he got into a shell hole with a private, and shot six enemy snipers with a rifle. Finally, he volunteered and with 20 men rescues 28 wounded men under very heavy fire.<sup>13</sup>

This award delighted everyone in his unit such was his popularity as an officer. One can imagine the pride it also brought to his family back home in Balleighan. He was also recommended for the French Legion d'Honneur.

Another big offensive was now planned and the first objective was to be the salient a few miles southeast of Ypres - the Messines Ridge. Preparations to attack the well fortified German positions began and were carried forward vigorously in the following months into 1917. This included extensive tunnelling under German lines.

Throughout October and November the Bn was engaged in sporadic activity but continued to take casualties from German artillery fire. The Bn were to remain in the Ploegsteert area in December and Christmas was going to be spent in the line. For the next few months into the Spring the weather continued to be miserable. There was a build up of troops to attempt to take the dominating and strongly held Messines ridge. Organisation for the attack was left to 2 Army under Field Marshal Herbert Charles Plummer who prepared very detailed plans to beat the German defences. Preparations were advanced behind the lines to stock up on water and food, ammunition and stores for the planned attack. No less than 24 mines were dug beneath the German front lines and roads and railways were constructed. As further acknowledgement of his valour in action Gallaugher was mentioned in despatches in February, 1917.

By April, it was apparent that something major was soon going to happen with all the training that was being undertaken and Gallaugher knew this as he again wrote home. His next letter to his mother on 16 May assured her that all was well with him and the local Manorcunningham lads and he asked about the crops at home. But the following letter three days later had a more serious tone. In it he revealed that he was anxious about his men and their inexperience in battle. Many of his Coy were now new replacement troops. He told her that for this reason he had spoken to the Col. and that his wish to go over the top with his men has been granted. He claimed that all the officers he had were young and inexperienced and he felt he needed to lead the way.

This particular letter revealed a man of strong character who was prepared, not from a sense of foolish bravado but of a deep concern for his men, to lead from the front. This was to cost him his life. This is the last extant letter he wrote home but may not have been his final communication.

## BATTLE OF MESSINES RIDGE 7 JUNE 1917.

Henry Gallaugher fell on 7 June 1917 in the battle for Messines Ridge. He was 31 years old.

The Ulster Division was allocated a front of just over a mile between Wyteschaete and Messines. They had on their right a Division of the Anzac Corps and on their left the 16 Irish Division. Thus the representatives of Ulster (36 Div) and nationalist Ireland (16 Div) were going to do battle side by side as comrades in arms.

The ridge today with all its war memorials including the Irish Peace Park at Messines is relatively barren and is barely recognisable as a key terrain feature. But that it most certainly was in 1917. From the British side under the ridgeline there was a gradual incline up to the village of Messines and along the road to Wyteschaete some 2 miles away. The village church in Messines dominates the skyline. It was along this line that the 36 Ulster Div and the 16 Irish Div fought side by side. The memorial to the 16 Irish Div is in the village of Wyteschaete.

The Germans occupied fortified positions on this ridge since Nov 1914. They had excellent fields of view across to the British lines. Both sides had commenced digging and the British intention was to lay mines underneath the German lines and blow them off the ridge. The Germans did not believe that the waterlogged strata would allow for extensive tunnelling in the sector. But they also dug. However their efforts in this regard did not match those of the Royal Engineers. The main concern was how to dispose of the earth taken from the tunnels in such a manner as not to reveal plans to the Germans. The miners were experienced tunnellers enlisted from the coalmines of the north of England.

When these two units, 16 and 36 Divs, trained in England close to one another, there had been the occasional incident involving "a clash of traditions" coming as they did from different backgrounds. But at Messines the bigotry of war replaced religious and political differences and all antagonism was focussed across no-mans-and at the common enemy. Just as the 36 Div was largely based on the U.V.F. so also was the 16 Div. composed almost entirely of Catholic members of the Irish Volunteers. The UVF were assimilated into the army directly and could choose their own officers. This was not the case with the Irish Volunteers who frequently had outside officers appointed to their ranks. Willie Redmond, the brother of the Irish Nationalist leader John Redmond, was given a commission in the 16 Irish Div but he too fell in this battle and significantly his body was borne from the battlefield by men of the 36 Ulster Div. He is buried nearby at Loker.

Capt.Gallaugher had already proven at the Somme that he was an outstanding and courageous leader. His was a quiet but determined personality. He was always ready to take the initiative and an unpleasant or difficult task was no problem to him. This was in contrast to many of his officer peers. He was certainly full of vigour and was prepared to do all he could for his men. He led by example and had the respect of his troops as a result. This was to be responsible for his death at Messines.

## PLAN OF ATTACK

The objective was to break the well-fortified salient on which the Germans sat in order to prepare for a great advance to the Flanders coast. There were to be five designated lines of advance which were colour coded. The final objective was to be Messines Ridge. Taking these objectives was the task given to 2 Army under Gen.Sir Herbert Plummer.

Detailed Bn Operational orders for the 11 Bn were issued by Lt Col Platt DSO Officer Commanding 11 Bn Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Primary consideration was given to the nature of the terrain over which the advance would be made. It was, and is, open ground with only limited cover. The only option was to take the position in one complete operation. This was indeed a major task involving intermediary objectives using troops in waves of attack. Getting to the top of the ridge was important but not the main task. But the carefully laid underground mines had prepared the way and aided the move forward.

On the right flank of the 11Bn advance was B Coy commanded by Capt Gallaugher. To his left was C Coy .The Bn Reserve was formed from A and D Coys. 16 Div were in the centre with 19 Western Div on the left flank. Unlike at the Somme, this time the 9 Bn (Tyrone) were to support the 11 Bn in attack and then leapfrog through their lines.<sup>14</sup>

B and C Coys would lead off and take the first objective just short of Wyteschaete village. The next objective was just beyond the village and A and D Coys were to move through and push on when Obj.1 was consolidated.

## THE ATTACK

By 6 June 1917 nineteen of the deep mines had been laid by the British and at 3:10am on the morning of 7 June they were all detonated simultaneously. The sound of the explosion was reported to have been heard back in Downing St in London. Some 500 tons of ammonal high explosive had been used. Those closer to the action did not notice the sound as much as the impact of the explosions as the earth trembled and shook in a violent manner for miles behind the lines. But the tactic worked and was to break the back of the German defences.

The attack was preceded by these great explosions which even killed some of the British troops. The artillery barrage on the German lines immediately followed. Little resistance was met in the enemy front lines. As the infantry advanced the artillery gradually lifted and lengthened their range forming a creeping barrage along their front. Shortly before 5 am the first objective had been reached and the advance halted and troops began to dig in. In the darkness of the early morn Capt.Gallaugher was hit in the left arm by a shell fragment. Although seriously injured he kept going even though he could no longer carry his rifle which he was forced to discard. He continued to exhort his men, and bearing his revolver, he kept the momentum going. The artillery fire was only some 30/40 yards ahead of the troops. It had the effect of causing severe damage to the terrain but also of spraying shrapnel on own troops causing death and injury.

The attack was going well and Gallaugher had led his men to their objective but shortly afterwards he was hit again by another shell and killed instantly. He was but 31 years old. Having survived the Somme he was to perish at an early stage in the Messines ridge assault.

At seven in the morning, some four hours after zero hour, the villages of Messines and Wyteschaete were taken by the British. But Henry Gallaugher was dead.

Capt Gallaugher was recommended posthumously for a VC by his Bn Comd Lt Col A.C. Pratt. The recommendation read,

On the 7 June 1917 in the Spanbroek sector on the occasion of the general attack on the Messines-Wyteschaete ridge this officer was severely wounded before he reached the first enemy line, his left arm being broken. He threw down the rifle which he was carrying and said “That’s all right boys I’ll do well with a revolver”. He continued to lead his men in attack, stopping them when they got too close to our artillery barrage and giving his commands as coolly as if on parade and as if he had never been wounded. He led them to their final objective but just as his position which he had gained was being consolidated, he fell, mortally wounded. His bravery has never been in doubt, he was the idol of his men and of the battalion in general, and wherever he led his men would follow. His example on all occasions, and on this day in particular, remain as an example which will always be treasured in this battalion.<sup>15</sup>

In the list of recommendations for immediate reward in order of merit submitted by Lt Col Pratt following the battle Capt Gallaugher's recommendation for a VC heads the battalion list. However it was not to be – he did not get a VC. It is this writer's opinion that such were the many individual cases of bravery in the field that the authorities were very careful and selective in awarding the VC in case in some way it was seen as being devalued. Gallaugher was certainly unfortunate in this regard.

## POST WAR TRIBUTES



*Captain Gallagher's headstone*

Many tributes were paid to Gallagher within the Brigade and back home in Donegal.

John Gallagher, his father, received the following telegram: *The King and Queen deeply regret the loss you and the Army have sustained by the death of your son in the service of his country. Their Majesties truly sympathise with you in your sorrow.*

The Gallagher family also received a letter from his Commanding Officer, Lt Col. Pratt saying “*Capt. Gallagher’s loss is keenly felt by us. He was universally beloved and was one of the finest characters I have ever met. He was a true soldier, a great leader and organiser.*”

John Gallagher’s reaction to the news of his son’s demise is already referred to in this article. It certainly was typical of the man and honoured his memory in the eyes of his father. He was indeed stoic in accepting the news of the death of Henry.

His Honour Judge Cooke addressing the Grand Jury at Lifford Crown Sessions said that Capt. Gallagher was one of the typical instances of the men who had gone from Co

Donegal to fight. The Judge sympathised with the Gallagher family in their bereavement.

The local paper carried a report on his death under the heading “A Brave Ulster Officer” and Rev. S. Watson B.A. who had been acting for the Rev. E.J. Kee in First Ray Presbyterian Church, Manorcunningham revealed to the congregation a letter received from Capt. Rev. Dr. Kee Chaplin to the Ulster Div which read,

This letter is dictated to you in loving memory of the late Capt. Henry Gallagher DSO, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers who was killed in action on the morning of 7 June. I write with mingled feelings of deep sorrow and great pride, and I know that First Ray will hear with deep regret and sorrow at his death, but be truly proud of the heroic manner in which he fell on a victorious battlefield. For me he was the link between my work at home and abroad – liaison between that as Pastor and that as Capt. When the hour 3:10 am arrived, and he led his company over the top, ten minutes would have brought me to his side, as my battalion was close to his. During those early hours of the struggle from darkness to light, from battle to victory – my thoughts were with him, and I know that he would be foremost in the leadership of the day that went so well for the Division of which he was so proud. I was not surprised to hear afterwards that he had been hit in the arm early in the action, but continued to lead his men to the objective, simply remarking “one of my wings is gone”. Later, when his work was done, he was hit again and his spirit soared up to the God that called it forth. Words are such feeble instruments to express the sense of loss sustained by his death or to enshrine the glorious spirit of one who was so brave and true and good in life and death. He was the happy warrior. One of God’s own volunteers, who said from the beginning, “Here am I, send me to his every call of duty or need”. It was characteristic of Henry Gallagher that his great desire was to lead his own company to their objective, and to no other would he give this honour when such an opportunity presented itself. In spite of the consequences we must not regret the decision that embodied such a high and noble spirit, for in that he was, as ever, true to his own self and he could not act otherwise. He carried that bright, cheery smile that was part of his nature, into the hour of battle, and the last words he said to me were, “We don’t worry Doctor, do we? The happy smile on his face had a vital connection with the light of God’s love in his heart, and with the simple trust in the God that doeth all things well. It was this fact that made him so ready to go to the land afar off. Now in a cemetery on the battlefield which I created the same day he fell, his body lies, but his soul is at peace there, near to the spot where he made the supreme sacrifice I buried him who is so dear to all our hearts, in the evening hour of the day after the battle of 7 June. On the morn of the battle he had set his face towards the rising sun as was the line of direction. “The night is dark and I am far from home, lead thou me on. O’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent till the night is gone. And with the morn those angel faces smile which I have loved long since and lost

awhile". He had been led into the light of God's presence by the Son of righteousness with healing in his wings. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Union Jack – the flag for which Henry Gallaugher died – was his shroud, and a wooden cross marks his grave. The Cross of his Master has been laid on his life and borne with heroic courage and Christian cheerfulness, and would to God that we all carried ours in the same noble spirit.

On Sunday 12 May 1918 a memorial tablet was unveiled in First Ray Presbyterian Church Manorcunningham by Rev.J.McClean. In his oration at the unveiling the Rev McClean spoke highly of the boy and man he knew in his praise of Gallaugher. The tablet reads, *Erected by the U.V.F.(Manorcunningham Company) in honoured memory of their late company commander Capt. Henry Gallaugher, DSO 11 Inniskilling Fusiliers, killed at Messines Ridge, 7 June 1917, when gallantly leading his men in action.*

Two stained glass windows depicting the scenes of devastation at Messines/Wyteschaete were later placed in his parish church in Manorcunningham at a special commemoration for Capt Gallaugher. One window, presented by his battalion, was unveiled by the Earl of Leitrim and the other, presented by the Church congregation, was unveiled by Brig.Gen Ricardo. Present were fellow comrades who had fought beside him in the war such as Major Sproule Myles of Ballyshannon. These windows remain to this day in First Ray Church.

Local poet William Joseph Gallagher of St Johnston (born 1864) who was an admirer of Shelley, Keats and Byron and who was also a contributor to the weekly *Irish Times* wrote an elegy in memory of Capt. Gallaugher.

Splendid to die with face that fronts the foe  
Speaking the word of courage, bold and high;  
Writing the deathless word that cannot die-  
For bravery is in the soul; its glow  
Lingers, as stays a glorious sunset; lo,  
It gleams till Earth becomes part of the sky:  
And then, amid the roll and rush, to lie  
A witness for the truth-how noble so  
And this our pride is greater, that thy breath  
Was drawn at first amid our Laggan vales;  
Was of the seas, the mounts strap air: the tales  
First heard by thee were such as freedom saith;  
We mourn that thou has left us ,on this side;

But as for thee, thou hast not failed, or died.

In very recent times Henry Gallaugher has been remembered in a poem written by Hilary Roulston, a granddaughter of Robert Roulston of Gortree, Newtowncunningham who trained in Finner and fought side by side with him in France and Belgium.

Harry lies in a peaceful place  
Just beyond the Pool of Peace.  
What peace back then by the crater of a mine?  
Now beasts bow down to drink their fill  
And ducks dive deep near Kemmel Hill, opposite the line  
By a rhododendron shaded lane,  
Harry and the others still remain,  
A long way from Balleighan, Manor, Donegal,  
Harry lies in a peaceful place, against a farmyard wall.<sup>16</sup>

Capt Henry Gallaugher DSO lies buried very close to where he fell in battle. His grave (No.ID2) lies up against a farmyard wall very close to the Pool of Peace in Lone Tree Cemetery, Spanbroekmolen, between Wyteschaete and Kemmel in Belgium near the French border. Given his upbringing in Manorcunningham it seems an appropriate place to rest in peace.

"Perhaps the finest soldier in the 36 Ulster Div"<sup>17</sup> (**Kevin Myers, Irish Times 7 Nov 1998**).

#### No longer forgotten.

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Further information on the contribution of Inishowen soldiers to the 1914-18 War may be found in a recent publication by Robert Thompson, *Inishowen Heroes 1914-1918*, Coleraine Printing Co., 2007.

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Museum of the Royal Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Enniskillen.

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<sup>14</sup> Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, p. 273

<sup>15</sup> R.McGill, *Battle Lines, Journal of the Somme Association*, No. 13

<sup>16</sup> *Donegal News*, 30 June 2005

<sup>17</sup> K. Myers, *Irish Times*, 7 November 1998

Col Declan O'Carroll retired in July 2005 after 42 years service in the Defence Forces. Major appointments which he held at Defence Forces HQ Dublin were Director of Administration and Director Public Relations. He had previously commanded the 28 Inf Bn in Donegal. His service abroad with the UN included Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Croatia. He finished his career at NATO HQ in Brussels (2002-2005). He has published military histories of Fort Dunree, Rockhill House, Letterkenny and Finner Camp and is a member of the Executive Committee of County Donegal Historical Society.

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Times* 5 July 1996

<sup>2</sup> *Census of Ireland*, 1901

<sup>3</sup> *Census*, 1911

<sup>4</sup> Information supplied by Jean Gallagher, niece of Henry Gallagher.

<sup>5</sup> Land Registry of Ireland, Co. Donegal folio 6226

<sup>6</sup> Information from Gerard Wallace, Manorcunningham.

<sup>7</sup> W.J. Canning, *Ballyshannon, Belcoo and Bertincourt* ((Antrim, 1996)

<sup>8</sup> *London Gazette*

<sup>9</sup> *Canning, Ballyshannon*, p.30

<sup>10</sup> T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki* (Dublin, 1992), p. 231

<sup>11</sup> C. Falls, *History of the 36th Ulster Division* (London, 1922), p. 60

<sup>12</sup> P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme* (Belfast, 1987), p. 144

<sup>13</sup> *London Gazette*, 22 September 1916

# A UNIQUE MUMMERS' PLAY FROM NORTH DONEGAL

*Alan Gailey*



*Meevagh Mummers showing tendency for players to appear mostly undisguised, 2003*

Folk drama material held at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum includes a mummers' play text from the Carraigart area.<sup>1</sup> It was recorded by Leslie W Lucas in 1970 from Mr J Logue of Leargain Riach, which is near Rosapenna to the north of Carraigart.

## Room Room

Room, room my gallant boys, give us room to rhyme,	1
And show some activity around this Christmas time.	2
Active youth and active age,	3
The like of this was never acted on a stage.	4
If you don't believe what I say,	5
Enter in King Prince George, and he'll soon clear the way.	6

## King Prince George

Here comes I, King Prince George, King Prince George is my name,	7
A champion from England, from England I have come;	8

Many's the noble deeds and valleys I have won.	9
For seven long years I was kept in a close cave,	10
From that a rocky stone,	11
England's right and Ireland's wrong,	12
And where's the man can dare me stand?	13

## Turkish Champion

I'm the man that dare you stand,	14
I'm a Turkish Champion, from Turkey land I came	15
I came here to fight King Prince George.	16
I could whip him, I could slash him,	17
I could send him to the devil	18
And after that I could make him sing dumb.	19

## Admiral

Here comes I, the Admiral, so stout and so bold,	20
That fought the battle of Quebec and won the crown of gold.	21

## Colossian

Here come I Colossian, Colossian is my name,	22
With my sword and pistol by my side, I intend to win this game.	23

## Admiral

The game sir, the game, sir, is no within your power,	24
For I could cut you down in inches in less than one half hour.	25

## Colossian

How could you cut me down in inches in less than one half hour?	26
For my body's made of iron and my head is made of steel,	27
And my two hands is made of knuckle-bone, to fight you on the field.	28

## Admiral

Save me, George, alive, sir.	29
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## Colossian

Put up your sword and try, sir.	30
---------------------------------	----

## Admiral

I'll run my dagger through your heart	31
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And make you run away, sir. 32

(*They fight and Colossal sinks to the ground*)

### **Room Room**

Now Colossal he is dead, and on the floor he lies, 33

And you'll suffer dearly for his death, I'm very much afraid, sir. 34

Through a room, through a hall 35

For a doctor I must call. 36

Five pounds for a doctor, ten pounds for a doctor, 37

Twenty pounds for a doctor and a bottle of stout for his pony. 38

### **Doctor**

Here comes I, Doctor Brown, 39

The best doctor in the town. 40

### **Room Room**

What can you cure, doctor? 41

### **Doctor**

I can cure within the plague, without the plague, 42

The scurvy and the gout. 43

If there were nine devils in I would turn eleven out. 44

### **Room Room**

How far have you travelled, doctor? 45

### **Doctor**

I have travelled through Hickory, Pickory, France 46

and Spain, Tír Lom, Roscad, Ummerfad, sin 47

agus Tír Gruagach, where they built the houses with 48

two-penny loaves and thatched them with pancakes. 49

### **Room Room**

Describe your medicine, doctor. 50

### **Doctor**

The sib, the sab, the wild bird's egg, the belly of a 51

bumbee and the pimplies of a trout. 52

I have a wee bottle here on the waurside of my 53

breeches pocket, they call it hocus-pocus-illa-complain. 54

Rub it up and down nineteen times on his belly with 55

an old cat's feather and an old woman's bladder. 56

If that doesn't cure him all the devils in Hell won't cure him. 57

(*Colossal rises and they sing:*)

**Once we were dead and now we're alive,** 58

God bless the doctor that brought us all alive, 59

We'll sing and be happy, like birds upon a tree ... 60

I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. 61

### **Oliver Cromwell**

Here comes I, Oliver Cromwell, and as you may suppose 62

I have conquered many is the nation, with my long copper nose. 63

I made the Frenchman for to tremble, and the Spaniard to quake, 64

And I beat the bloody Dutchman, his very heart did shake. 65

### **Wren**

Here comes I, the wren, the wren, the king of all birds, 66

On St Stephen's Day I was caught in the furze, 67

Although I am small, my family's great, 68

God bless you master, and give us a treat. 69

If the treat be small and doesn't agree with the boys ... 70

Put down your hand and pull up your purse and pay the gentle wren. 71

### **Jack Straw**

Here comes I, Jack Straw. 72

Jack Straw Striddle Strin, kissed the devil's wife. 73

Through a rock, through a reel, 74

Through an old spinning wheel, 75

Through a bag of pepper, 76

Through a bag of water, 77

Through a sheep shank shin bone. 78

For the kissing of the devil's wife you never saw the end. 79

### **Beelzebub**

Here comes I, Beelzebub, 80

On my shoulder I carry a club, 81

In my hand a dripping pan, 82

And I call myself a jolly old man.	83
<b>Devil Doubt</b>	
Here comes I the wee Devil Doubt,	84
With the tail of my shirt hanging out,	85
Five yards in and ten yards out.	86
Money I want and money I crave,	87
If I don't get money I'll sweep you all to the grave.	88
Rise up old woman in the corner and shake your feathers,	89
Don't think we are fools or blethers.	90
We're only gentle beggars coming once a year,	91
And we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.	92

**Buffalo Bill**

Here comes I, Buffalo Bill ...	93
( <i>Buffalo Bill plays music and they dance and sing.</i>	
<i>After collecting the money they all go out, wishing</i>	
<i>The people of the house a happy Christmas.)</i>	

**COMMENTARY**

Like all Irish mummers' plays, the text falls within the Hero-Combat category of folk drama.<sup>2</sup> A presenter seeks space for the performance. His words vary little from place to place, and he is often known only by his first one or two words. In most mummers' texts the lines (5,6) introducing the following character are spoken also by other characters who appear after the cure; their restriction to the presenter alone is most unusual.

King Prince George and the Turkish Champion have lines commonly found for these two characters in Irish mummers' plays, although George's lines are reduced in number quite considerably in Carraigart.<sup>3</sup> Line 12 is particularly interesting. Equivalents for it are found in eighteen Irish plays, including For England's right and Ireland's nation in a play from Ballybrennan in south county Wexford which existed at least as early as 1818.<sup>4</sup> George and the Turk usually are combatants, one being struck down to be revived by the doctor. In the present case George's challenge (line 13) and the Turk's insults (lines 17-19) are left unresolved due to the unannounced appearance of Admiral and Colossian to become the combatants. Such unresolved situations, coming before the combat sequence which involves two other characters, occur in only seven other mummers' plays in Ireland, all in the north-west: Inch Island in north Donegal; Donegal town; four plays in west Fermanagh; and one of three plays recorded in the vicinity of Dungiven in county Derry.

The uniqueness of the Carraigart play rests in the appearance of Admiral and Colossian as the combatants. These two, especially the latter (but usually known as Galatian or Goloschan), occur in folk dramas elsewhere only in Scottish guisers' plays. An excellent parallel for their lines in north Donegal is in a Hero-Combat play from Stirling, recorded in 1815, published in 1835 and again in 1893.<sup>5</sup> The lines involved are 20-24 and 33-36; but in the Stirling play the counterparts of lines 35 and 36 are spoken by Sir Alexander (of Macedon) who fulfills the role of Room Room, and not by the victorious combatant. Lines 23-25, 27 and 28 occur in other Irish mummers' plays: 23 and 24 twice; 25 in seven plays in south-east county Antrim; 27 in eighteen plays of which six are in west Ulster, seven in south-east Antrim; Downpatrick; and four in south Armagh and north Louth. All of these lines are also well represented in British folk dramas.

Line 29 is a similarly sounding alternative to the usual *I say, by George, you lie, sir* which is the first line of an altercation between the two combatants, leading in to their fight; lines 30-32 are three or four further lines from this exchange. The Stirling text does not have the altercation; but it is present in 66 Irish plays where, as in Carraigart, it leads into the combat. Seven other cases also occur in Ireland. In five of these the altercation comes after the cure and remains unresolved; in four of them the altercation is between St George and St Patrick, which is the pattern in the chapbook printed in Belfast between 1803 and 1810 and again between 1890 and about 1915. In two cases altercation lines are in St Patrick's rhyme spoken as a soliloquy.

Lines 33, the first part of 34, 35 and 36 have counterparts in similar language in the Stirling text, but, apart from 35 and 36, have no Irish parallels. A strange, very short play from Dublin provides the sole Irish echo for line 35 where the presenter laments the fallen hero as my father's youngest son, and then says *Through the kitchen, through the hall, and proceeds to call the doctor.*<sup>6</sup>

The cure sequence (lines 41-57) is notable for two reasons: the doctor's travels, and two items amongst the cure ingredients he enumerates. The travels were a means of authenticating the doctor's training or qualifications. Countries listed here are quite usual, but two local place names are also included, Roscad and Ummerfad (respectively about one kilometere south and east of Creeslough). Two imaginary places are also included. Leslie Lucas suggested in his material presented to the museum's collection that Tír Lom means 'bare land', and Tír Gruagach means 'hairy land'. The following words mentioning houses built of bread and thatched with pancakes are unique in Irish mumming records, but are paralleled in 'nonsense rhyming' in English folk dramas, for example in a text from Antrobus in east Cheshire.<sup>7</sup> The doctor's travels are well known in English folk dramas but occur in only six other Irish plays in Fermanagh, Donegal and west Tyrone. Travels

are absent from the Stirling text but they appear in a play from Hawick in Roxburghshire.<sup>8</sup>

Many mummers' plays include unique references to cure ingredients, unknown in other recorded plays. Perhaps they reflect some local preferences, communal or personal. 'Primples' of a trout (line 52) is one such reference. Perhaps the word refers to the black and red spots on a wild brown trout, or perhaps to the roe from a female fish. Line 54's inclusion of 'hocus-pocus-illa-complain' is a rhyming reference to elecampane. It was a plant used in traditional medicine as a tonic or stimulant. Elecampane is a perennial composite plant (*Inula Helenium*) having large radiate yellow flowers with bitter aromatic leaves and root; from enula (Classical Latin *inula campane*).<sup>9</sup> Rhyming references to elecampane are widespread in mumming, including twenty-three Irish plays.

Lines 58 and 59 express gratitude to the doctor. Counterparts exist in twenty-two Irish mummers' texts but the only west Ulster examples are from west Tyrone. The following line 60 hints at reconciliation between the combatants, a feature limited to about a dozen play texts closely concentrated in south-east county Antrim. Thanks and reconciliation rhymes are well known in British mumming, including the texts from Stirling and Hawick.

The following five characters are widely represented in Irish mummers' plays, and the first three are almost unknown outside Ireland. Cromwell (lines 62-65) characterizes about two-thirds of Irish mummers' plays, with the wording in the Carraigart text in half of them. The Wren (lines 66-71) is borrowed from the St Stephen's Day wrenhunt custom, well-known in Ireland to the south of Ulster. The Carraigart rhyme is a usual one; however the wrenhunt custom itself was little, if at all, known in north Donegal in recent centuries. 'Furze' is not the dialect word for 'gorse' in the north of Ireland, whereas 'whin' is common. The Wren appears as a character in less than one in five of Irish mummers' plays examined, all in north Dublin, and west Ulster. Jack Straw appears in about two-fifths of play texts examined, most often with words close to those used in Carraigart; lines 74-78 are a traditional rhyming riddle, the answer to which is a moth.

Beelzebub (lines 80-83) is one of the best known folk art drama characters, almost always having the Carraigart words, and only occasionally having others added. Devil Doubt is almost as well known, but his Carraigart rhyme is interesting insofar as lines 85 and 86 are not the usual ones, although his shirt tail also hangs out in three plays in south Armagh and north Louth, as it does in some English mummers' plays. Lines 89 and 90 with the feathers: blethers rhyme seem to have a Scottish origin, and they occur in Ireland mainly in south-east county Antrim. In contrast to these well-known characters, Buffalo Bill is unprecedented elsewhere, and is likely to be only a name given to a musician who

accompanies dancing and/or singing at the end of the performance. He is one of very few such non-speaking characters who occur in Ireland only in west Ulster.

A notable absentee from the succession of characters at the end of the play is Johnny Funny (or some similar-sounding name): *I'm the man that lifts the money*. He is attested in more than half of Irish mummers' play texts, and as Miss or Biddy Funny in a further nine west Ulster plays, although while her function is as the collector, she has different words. A second absentee from the Carraigart play is St Patrick. He appears in about one third of Irish plays, usually as a combatant, and always so in west Ulster. It is interesting that George, in contrast, appears in 88 plays amongst 97 examined; 40 of these show the Turk as his adversary, while 20 have Patrick in that role. Perhaps it may have been by reason of national sentiment that Patrick supplanted the Turk as a combatant; a Turk is George's commonest adversary in English mummers' plays. Thus, if in the Carraigart play Patrick was not to be a combatant, then he was not destined to appear in any other role.

## DISCUSSION

Admiral and Colossian as combatants in the Carraigart text are unique in Irish mumming. Their Scottish provenance is unarguable. Apart from the change from Galatian or Goloschan to Colossian, the Carraigart words are very closely reflected in the Stirling play text. It is only one example of the kind of source for this Scottish transposition into the north Donegal play. Many of the words appear also in the Hawick text, but differently attributed to characters, and Admiral is missing although Golaschin is the defeated champion. The source for the Carraigart Scottish element most likely was a guisers' play somewhere in the Scottish Lowlands or Borders, both being areas to which migrant agricultural workers went from north Donegal. Such an individual could well have heard and remembered Admiral and Colossian, brought the material back home, and persuaded the Carraigart mummers to incorporate it into the local tradition, thereby elaborating it slightly as a consequence. It seems possible that this could have happened as early as the mid-nineteenth century, or at any time during the two or three generations thereafter.

Removal of Admiral and Colossian (lines 20-28) and the three lines (33-35) attributed to Room Room from the Carraigart text leaves a mummers' play that is identifiably 'Irish' in its own right. Sufficient evidence for this statement is set out in the commentary above which includes only the more notable features. It would be unnecessarily tedious to cite all of the evidence showing how the Carraigart play sits comfortably in the context of Irish mumming tradition as a whole, and particularly in west Ulster. Room Room is the usual presenter and he, as often in other plays, calls for the doctor and quizzes him as to

his abilities and the nature of the cure. George and the Turk are the combatants as they are in some 40 other Irish mummers' plays. Either could be victor. Two-thirds of these plays include some or all of the altercation lines (29-32) leading in to the combat. Local variations in wording and omissions are not uncommon in mumming texts. So, George's boasting (lines 7-13) is shorter than in some other plays, but includes two interesting features. His 'rocky stone' compares with the 'rock of stone' in his boasting in the Belfast chapbook text of the early nineteenth century. That text also has George and the Turk (sic) Champion as combatants. Line 12, 'England's right and Ireland's wrong'<sup>10</sup> replaces a different line in the chapbook, but compares with 'England's right and Ireland's nation' in the Ballybrennan, County Wexford play text which existed before 1820. Both versions perhaps reflect political sentiment in Ireland in the period leading up to the United Irishmen's rebellion of 1798 and its aftermath. In this light the Carraigart line perhaps expresses dissatisfaction with the Act of Union of 1801. These two features hint that the Carraigart text stemmed from a corpus of mumming tradition current in Ireland around 1800, from which also were drawn the texts of the Belfast chapbook and the Ballybrennan play.

The only exceptional feature of the cure sequence is the inclusion of the doctor's travels, so rarely found in Irish mummers' plays. However, they, and the line with a rhyme for elecampane, almost certainly hark back to the corpus of early mumming material referred to above. Both of the travels and a full list of cure ingredients are missing from the Belfast chapbook, a fair indication of its incompleteness.

Cromwell, Beelzebub and Devil Doubt are usual characters in Irish mummers' plays. All three certainly existed between 1800 and 1820. Incorporation of the wrenhunt rhyme as a mummers' character may be understandable in Ireland where performers of the two customs were out and about at the same time of the year in places where these customs came into contact. Indeed, there are some reports that the same personnel were involved in these two customs in the southern and western margins of Ulster. Jack Straw is another example of the melting of traditional oral material from different sources, and possibly promoted longer-lasting memory of his riddle than of many others. Jack Straw existed in Irish mumming at least as early as the 1860s when his absence from the Ballybrennan text was noted and he was stated to be predominantly a northern character,<sup>11</sup> as he has remained.

Inclusion of the Scottish combatants in the Carraigart play, the otherwise typically 'Irish' nature of which is quite clear, illustrates an important point: the evident ease with which new, even extraneous material, albeit of a suitable, acceptable kind, could be accepted into a local or indigenous oral tradition.

<sup>1</sup> The writer is indebted to the Trustees and Chief Executive of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland for permission to publish this text. The museum's collection of mummers' play texts numbers in excess of 100 from all parts of Ireland where mumming was and is known. The Irish distribution of the custom is examined in Gailey, Alan, 'Mummers' and Christmas Rhymers' Plays in Ireland: the problem of Distribution', *Ulster Folklife*, 24 (1978), 59-68.

<sup>2</sup> The action in Hero-Combat plays 'consists of one or more champions overcoming one or more opponents who are revived by a doctor. Characteristic performers include: Saint George, Turkish Knight or Black Prince, "Female", Doctor, Jack Finney, Devil Doubt, Beelzebub, Big Head, though these names are subject to endless variation, and the last three, among others, do not carry the action further': Cawte, E C, Helm, Alex and Peacock, N, *English Ritual Drama* (London, 1967), 37. The only Irish exceptions are in south county Wexford where earlier Hero-Combat plays about a century ago were replaced by performances in which a succession of mainly historical characters are introduced whose only function is to perform a stick dance: see Gailey, Alan, *Irish Folk Drama* (Cork, 1969), 17-35, and Parle, James, *The Mummers of Wexford* (Drinagh, Wexford, 2001), 316-329, and passim.

<sup>3</sup> There is a full version of George's lines in chapbooks printed in Belfast in the early nineteenth century, and again a century or so later: see Gailey, Alan, 'Chapbook Printings of Irish Mummers' Plays', *Ulster Folklife*, 51 (2005), 34-53.

<sup>4</sup> See Kennedy, Patrick *The Banks of the Boro* (London, 1867), 227-229 for the Ballybrennan play, which he had published earlier in *Dublin University Magazine*, 12 (1863) 584-585; he referred the play back to 1818. A text from Enniscorthy, differing in a few respects from the Ballybrennan one, as collected in the 1940s for the then Irish Folklore Commission: Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin, MS 1859, 176-177; it is published in Parle, James, op. cit., 305-307.

<sup>5</sup> See Buchan, David, *Scottish Tradition* (London, 1984), 217-220, 247.

<sup>6</sup> This Dublin text looks like a bowdlerized version of a traditional play text, for performance by children in 'polite' company; it as recorded by Mrs R Pendleton and is noted as in the Helm Collection, MS 1959: see Cawte, E.C. et al., op.cit., 69. The writer is indebted to the late Alex Helm who provided a copy of this peculiar text.

<sup>7</sup> Towards the end of the Antrobus 'souling' play, performed about All Souls' Eve, the Driver and his Horse appear. Referring to his Horse's travels, The Driver says: .... / He's travelled the land of Ikkerty Pickerty, / Where there's neither land nor city; / Houses thatched with pancakes, / Walls built with penny loaves, / ....: Helm, Alex, *Cheshire Folk Drama* (Ibstock, 1968), 20. Other examples are in plays from Cornwall, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

<sup>8</sup> Helm, Alex, *Eight Mummers' Plays* (London, 1971), 54.

<sup>9</sup> See Praeger, R. L., *A Populous Solitude* (London, 1941), 221.

<sup>10</sup> The line 'England's right and Ireland's wrong' occurs in mummers' texts from Bundoran in south Donegal; Drumquin, Spamount and Donemana all in west Tyrone; and the parish of Ballymore near Portadown in county Armagh. A comparable line occurs in some English mummers' plays. A Berkshire example has 'For England's rights, for England's wrongs'; other examples include plays from Cornwall, Hampshire, Cheshire, and west Yorkshire.

<sup>11</sup> See an anonymous publication of Patrick Kennedy's Ballybrennan play in *The Shamrock, III* (issue for 26/10/1867), 56, where the absence of some northern characters is noted, particularly Jack Straw.

Alan Gailey worked in the Ulster Folk Museum from 1960 to 1996, holding the position of Director for his last ten years there. His research interests cover many aspects of traditional life including agricultural tools, traditional housing and seasonal customs, particularly Christmas rhymers and mummers. His published work includes *Irish Folk Drama* (Cork, 1996), *Spade-Making in Ireland* (Hollywood, 1982) and *Traditional Houses of the North of Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1984).

#### Photo – Tirconnail Tribune

## HANDLEY AIR CRASH IN 1943 IN EAST INISHOWEN

*Joe Loughlin*

Some 200 aircraft crashes took place in neutral Ireland during the Second World War. One of the earliest was that of a Blenheim that crashed near Buncrana, Co. Donegal on 21 December 1940. The crew baled out and there were no casualties. One early fatal crash was that of a Lough Erne based Catalina Flying Boat that crashed on Aunagh Hill, Glenade, Kinlough, Co. Leitrim on 21 March 1941. All of the eight man crew perished in this crash. This was one of 18 Lough Erne based Catalinas that crashed with the loss of 128 air men. In addition to that, 23 Sunderlands crashed with a loss of 192 crew members. There were 9 land plane crashes connected to Fermanagh with the loss of 35 men. Another 19 men died while serving on Lough Erne by drowning or accident. The above includes at least 15 aircraft connected to Lough Erne in Co. Fermanagh which were lost at sea, some shot down by U-boats, others failing to return for reasons unknown. Many other aircraft were lost at sea along the south coast. A check on the records shows that each of the 26 counties in the Free State had at least one plane crash, while Donegal alone had 38.<sup>1</sup>



*Harrow in flight*

### DONEGAL CRASHES

Of the Donegal crashes 13 suffered fatalities, where some or all crew members died. There were a total of 82 deaths and 126 survived. Many of the fatal crash sites throughout the country have been marked with memorial stones, engraved plaques and stone built cairns, all put in place by local people. Many sites in inaccessible places are marked by sections of the planes that were wrecked. In County Fermanagh over 12 sites have memorial stones also with the names of those who died engraved on them. For those who died at sea or on Lough Erne, a Roll of Honour with 340 names has been compiled and is on display at the former Co. Fermanagh air bases. In the southern counties where a number of German planes crashed with the loss of life, the sites have been marked in similar fashion.

Those attending the ceremonies of remembrance are wives, sisters, daughters, brothers, sons, nephews, nieces and grand-children. In several cases men who had survived the

crashes returned for the first time to visit and pay tribute to former comrades and to meet local people who had given help at the time. All those who came had one thing to say, "We never thought that the people of Ireland would remember our boys after over 60 years. Now we know the Irish cared for them, really cared for strangers dying in a land far away from their homes". In time of war when a young man died all the family received was a brief telegram informing them that a loved one had died – lost in action – with the sympathy of a commanding officer. In practically every fatal plane crash in Ireland local researchers have built up a history of the incident and talked to eye witnesses, got the official reports of the crashes and information from a variety of sources.



On several occasions elderly ladies, who as young women, had lost a fiancée in crashes could visit the site and the grave of the loved one. It has been possible in a number of cases to let elderly parents know how their son had died: this information was a source of great comfort to them. Sometimes a parent had passed away a short time before the details had been discovered. Sadly in one crash, erroneous information had been given to a young lady, whose fiancée, Leading aircraftsman Albert Edward James was killed when his plane crashed on the Inishowen Peninsula in Co. Donegal. She spent 60 years of her life with a poor opinion of the Irish people. Early in 2007 Ian Woodford, a grand nephew of Bert James decided to look for information in Ireland about the crash. His grandmother, a sister of Bert's had passed away about two years previously ; as a young man he had heard his Gran talk about the crash. Ian made contact with a number of people with an

interest in heritage and aviation history, who were able to build up a complete and factual history of the crash of the Handley Page Harrow aeroplane.

### EGLINTON TAKE-OFF

This plane had flown from Doncaster, England to Eglinton air base in Derry with supplies. Although the normal crew for this plane was three, on this occasion there were five on board, the two extra men being LAC Albert Edward James and LAC John Thurston Tabener, rigger/fitters. These men were taken everywhere because they were the only men who knew how to maintain the aircraft as it was such an old type. It took off again on the afternoon of Tuesday 14 December 1943 from Eglinton bound for Macrahanish in the Hebrides. Flying northwards along Lough Foyle it ran into heavy fog and crashed into Cnocknasmug Mountain in Co. Donegal at about 13-30 hours. The mountain is a little over twelve miles from Moville and only about twenty miles from Eglinton. Pilot Officer C.H. Brown, Flight Sergeant Arthur Shaw, Leading Aircraftsman John Tabener and Leading Aircraftsman Albert Edward James were killed in the crash. Pilot Officer J.W. Swaby survived the crash. Although injured and suffering from shock, he made his way down the mountain side to a cottage to raise the alarm. (see photo)



Cavanagh Cottage overlooking Kinmegoe Bay;  
left to right : Ian Woodford, John Cavanagh and David Clayton,  
nephew of Arthur Shaw.

Ian Woodford takes up the story: "For many years I have heard snippets of information about this crash which killed my mother's Uncle, Bert James. His sweetheart at the time –Mary- is still alive and living only a couple of miles from me in Evesham, Worcester.

Bert is buried in an R.A.F. grave in Evesham cemetery. I always thought that the plane had crashed into a hillside killing everybody on board outright. But when I finally decided to look more closely into the crash a couple of years ago Mary told me that was not what happened. She said the pilot survived the crash and that Bert was alive for a while but with a broken neck. She said that a rescue air craft took off from Doncaster but the Irish wouldn't let it land because the crew were in uniform. So they had to fly home and change into civvies. Mary believes that had they been able to land in the first instance they would have been able to get to the crash site sooner and may have been able to save Bert's life."

Aviation historians record that almost all crashes and forced landings in neutral Ireland during WW2 by Allied and German aircraft had files created from reports, messages, etc. about the crash, crew and aircraft from the date of the incident. The files also cover the subsequent events connected to it. The Handley Harrow K7005 crashed on the west side of Cnocnasmug Mountain, about four miles north-west of Moville on the Inishowen peninsula in north County Donegal. This spot is a mere 16 miles north in a direct line across Lough Foyle from Eglinton airfield, Co. Derry in Northern Ireland. In spite of this general area being unfavourable terrain there were three other airfields located on the eastern shore of Lough Foyle. For aircraft taking off or landing it could be a treacherous area, especially in fog, bad weather or at night.

Of great relevance to this story, and this cannot be overstressed, is that Cnocnasmug peak is in a boggy, mountainous landscape poorly served by roads and simply difficult to access and with views of Scotland on a clear day. The area was relatively sparsely populated due to the lack of good agricultural land



*Harrow K7011 similar to K7005 that crashed at Cnocnasmug, Shrove*

and again the poor terrain. The rough terrain, poor access and bad weather conditions are all important factors in the crash and subsequent rescue attempts. One further point to remember is that the crash occurred at the time of year when daylight is shortest. Put simply it was dark within three hours of the crash (13-30 hours, possibly slightly later) giving very little time for rescuers to be alerted, to reach the spot, render assistance and bring

the survivor and bodies down from the mountain. Sadly there were no helicopters available in 1943. As the plane crashed at 13-30 hours it would have been considerably later before the alarm was raised. Allowing for the amount of time it took James Swaby to reach the cottage and then for the family member who resided there to get to the police barracks and a phone.

Aviation researcher, Martin Gleeson continues: "I have found nothing in the Irish Defence Forces files on this incident to suggest that anyone except Swaby survived the crash, even for a short time. Apart from the pilot no details are given of the injuries to the others. Indeed few details were recorded of the rescue efforts except to note that great difficulty was encountered in locating the crash site and removing the survivor and bodies from the mountain. It was noted however that the aircraft was completely wrecked in the crash and with much of it destroyed by fire, no salvage operations were carried out due to this fact (nothing was worth salvaging and the bad terrain was of course another difficulty). Only small items of equipment were brought down including RAF code and logbooks. All were handed back to the RAF on the following day. How Swaby survived the crash is a wonder; he was a very lucky man. The 271 Squadron Operational Records book also has no mention of anyone surviving beyond Swaby. If any crewman had survived the initial crash, even for a short time, and was found by the rescuers this would have been recorded by the Irish authorities. I can state this with some certainty having spent almost 20 years examining all the aircraft crashes and forced landing files".

## LOOTING ?

On the looting of personal possessions Martin states that he found no record of such in the files on the crash. The Irish Authorities were very sensitive about the theft of personal possessions or items from the aircraft. Where theft happened, it was recorded in some detail. Where possible the perpetrators were punished (especially military) or forced to return stolen items (especially civilians). It must be stressed it did not happen often, but neither can it be denied that it did occasionally occur. The most common form of looting was the theft of 'souvenirs' from the aircraft itself, very rarely from the crew whether living or dead. Unfortunately such practices took place everywhere during the war, including Britain and the continent.

On the question of a rescue aircraft from Doncaster being denied permission to land due to the crew being in military uniform, Martin states that this simply never happened and it did not happen at any time during the war in connection with any other crash or forced landing. This is an unfortunate legend from the war years.

Martin continues, "At the outset, let me state that having checked the Irish Defence Forces files there is not a hint of a rescue aircraft, nor any problems connected with such. As I mentioned already I have seen the 271 Squadron ORB and there is absolutely NO mention of sending a rescue aircraft. Transport aircraft were not equipped for search and rescue missions, nor were there crews trained for such. It is recorded for 14 December 1943 that the aerodrome at Doncaster was fog-bound all day and that visibility was zero. Furthermore it was noted that the squadron received information about Swaby's aircraft being overdue at 15.30 hours (3.30pm). There was simply no time left in daylight to organize a crew and aircraft: let alone fly to Ireland (North or South), travel to the crash site and help in the rescue effort".

"Also consider, where could a rescue aircraft have landed? The airfields near Derry were all fog-bound too and these of course were the nearest to the crash site. How could a rescue team have assisted the rescue effort? Everything that could be done for the crew was done by local civilians and military. Scores of aircraft crashed or force landed in neutral Ireland during the war where no fatalities were involved".

RAF ground crew- and later Americans – with permission from the Irish authorities, often came over the border with their vehicles to assist in the salvage and transport of crashed or force - landed aircraft back to Northern Ireland. They were required to wear civilian clothes on crossing the border, but some times they did not have civilian clothes and were not refused entry. Some authors write about a team dedicated to rescue downed airmen and aircraft. Such books do not have the definitive word on the subject. There was not in Ireland a dedicated team of personnel whose job it was to rescue downed airmen. The rescue of crews was organized as required by the local civilians, Gardai and Defence Forces assisted by local residents. In north Donegal where a large number of crashes had occurred, the security personnel would have been very well experienced in dealing with aircraft crashes. (See photos of other crashes in Inishowen)

Ian Woodford continues: "In mid-January, I was introduced to Anne Tierney of Tuam, Co. Galway. Having worked with Anne during her research into the crash of a Halifax plane near Tuam on the night of the 7th November 1943, I was very much aware of her expertise in researching such events. Having Anne join our team was very fortunate. In her short time since June 2006 researching plane crashes she became expert in finding sources of information. She knew how to contact the RAF records in England and the Irish military records in Dublin. During her work on the Tuam crash she had gained very valuable information by placing letters in the newspapers of the home towns of crew members and checking names in telephone directories. In the case of the Harrow crash, Anne Tierney wrote to all the Swaby families in Leeds and also to *The Yorkshire Evening Post* seeking information."

## INTERVIEW WITH SURVIVOR



Ceremony in 1994 at Glengad for Liberator FL989/L that crashed on 19 June 1944 with Jim Guy, Mayor of Derry and Fr Campbell, Malin in attendance.

Ian Woodford continued his research with an interview with James Swaby. According to the latter, who was the sole survivor, the aircraft was flying from Eglinton to Macrahanish in the Hebrides, when it crashed. P/O Swaby doesn't remember the crash at all. The first thing he remembers is coming out of unconsciousness and finding himself upside down still strapped into his seat, and he has a recollection of seeing the tail-plane close by. He struggled to undo the harness and get out of his seat, but then remembers his one thought was to get help and get down the mountain. He remembers thinking that he should find a stream because they always lead you down hill, but he couldn't find one anywhere' He suspects this was because the place was all peat. After wandering around he eventually found a road. He followed the road down hill and came to a cottage, but it was empty. He continued down the road and came to a second cottage where they took him in and warmed him up. He recalls that he wasn't burnt from the crash – there was no fire – but his feet were burned by the family looking after him when they tried to warm his feet using a pan lid off the peat fire! He doesn't think he ever knew the name of the family, and he has never been back to Ireland.

An ambulance came and took him to what he recalls was Carndonagh Hospital. An RAF ambulance then came to take him to N. Ireland and he recalls how the medics had to wear civvy jackets. It transpired that P/O Swaby had fractured his spine in the crash and subsequently spent 6 months recovering. Following this period of recuperation he spent a few months instructing on a Search and Rescue Sqn., then was invalidated out of the RAF. He didn't recall seeing any of the bodies of the other crew members at the crash site.

James Swaby didn't hear any more about the crash after the war, and he doesn't have a

clue where it happened except that it was in Eire. He thinks they had probably been dropping someone off at Eglinton, but he couldn't actually remember, although he was certain that their destination was Macrahanish in the Hebrides. That would also help to explain why they were flying north out of Eglinton instead of more eastbound over N. Ireland. He told me that the Harrow lumbered along about 130 miles per hour. It got the nick name 'Sparrow' and he said it was an 'unofficial' version of the Harrow with gun turrets removed and streamlined nose and tails fitted. I only mention these historical items because it helps to explain his level of awareness for other things that happened that long ago, and therefore exposes the loss of memory he suffered as a result of the crash based on what he was able to tell me of the crash itself. He had no recollection of seeing the mountain.

## A SEARCH NEAR MOVILLE

After much correspondence and planning Ian Woodford travelled to Moville, the town closest to the crash site. At various times during their visit to Donegal they were visited by a number of people who for some time were just names on a computer screen, people who had helped in the search for the facts of the Handley crash, including members of Donegal Historical Society, including Seán Beattie. It would be safe to say that without their help a number of years ago their search would have been fruitless or at least extremely difficult. Another important member of this 'Circle of Friends' is Dennis Burke who also travelled to Moville to meet the group from England. I was sorry that it just was not possible for us all to be in Moville at the same time, but I am sure some time in the not too distant future we shall all be there when the final chapter of this unusual story is completed with the erection of a memorial plaque in memory of the men who died on Cnocnasmug so many years ago.

Members of Donegal Historical Society arranged for us to meet Johnny Cavanagh, the man who owns the cottage where Mr. Swaby was cared for. Johnny and his brother Patsy are grandchildren of the couple who looked after Mr. Swaby. Johnny also went out of his way to help us by driving with us to the cottage on the other side of the mountain from where we were staying. He is a really happy and friendly man, who chuckles as he talks and looks after sheep on the land, for a 'hobby' as he puts it. The Cavanaghs have reno-



*Plane that crashed landed near Clonmany during World War 11*

vated the cottage to its original condition (except for the addition of a tin roof instead of thatching). As a result we were able to go inside. It is essentially the same as it was when Mr. Swaby came to it after his plane crashed. Johnny has several portions of the plane which he will exhibit at the cottage.

With local help, the visitors walked up the track to the first cottage that Swaby had arrived at on that foggy winter's day in 1943. The track is no longer complete between the two cottages. As we made our way up the mountain side the top of Cnoc-nasmug was clearly visible but then the weather suddenly changed and the cloud came down. We next made contact with Jimmy McLaughlin who lives in Greencastle; he was delighted to see our group and as a young boy in 1943 remembered the plane crash well. When he went to the scene of the crash the next day the plane was reasonably intact.

Jimmy introduced us to a friend Con O'Donnell, the harbour pilot at Greencastle who took us up the mountain in his 4X4 vehicle very close to the crash site. There, with the aid of a metal detector we located several pieces of the wreckage of the Handley and so confirmed the actual place where the plane had crashed. (In photo of Cavanagh Cottage, relatives hold fragments of the plane found near the site). What struck us as we sat on the rocks and reflected was how close Handley K7005 was to missing the ridge where it crashed. Another few feet higher and it would have cleared the mountain top and been safe. For the family members, the visit was a traumatic experience as they stood on the site where their relatives died and where it is hoped a commemorative plaque will be erected in the future.

<sup>1</sup> For a listing of air crashes in Donegal, see G. Hannigan, "World War Two Air Crashes in Co. Donegal" in

*Donegal Annual*, No. 43 (Ballyshannon, 1991), pp. 26-45 and also J. Quinn and A. Reilly, *Covering the Approaches, the War against the U-Boats* (Coleraine, 1996).

- <sup>2</sup> A possible explanation for the survival of P/O Swaby may be that he was flung from the aircraft on impact and landed in one of the swampy bog holes. It is noted elsewhere that the plane caught fire on hitting the mountain; this is understandable as it was carrying a considerable amount of fuel.

Joe O'Loughlin lives in Co. Fermanagh and has written several books on local history, two of which are reviewed in this journal.

Photos – Editor, Dessie McCallion and Ian Woodford

## THE CIVIL WAR IN DONEGAL 1922-23 : SOME OBSERVATIONS

*Desmond Murphy*



*British troops at Belleek Fort 1923*

The Irish Civil War of 1922-23 was until recently a taboo subject on account of the long-term bitter divisions it produced in the Irish Republic. Donegal was no different. However the recent opening of official and private papers has shed new light on the period 1916-23.

In a recent article in *Irish Historical Studies*, Dr. Robert Lynch has published new research on the years 1922-23 in Donegal.<sup>1</sup> He has provided answers to questions which puzzled contemporaries and later generations. Why did east Donegal plunge into anarchy between April and June 1922? Why did the troops of the Provisional Government achieve such an easy victory in 1922 although the Irregulars had until then controlled the entire county? Why were there executions in March 1923 when the county enjoyed a period of peace since the end of October 1922?

## THE DONEGAL OFFENSIVE 1922

Dr. Lynch makes the following observations in reply to these questions. First, in the spring of 1922 Donegal became a part of political developments of national importance. As the split within Sinn Féin deepened over the Treaty, Michael Collins and his supporters within the new Provisional Government hoped that a military offensive against the new state of Northern Ireland would elide the divisions within Irish Republicanism. The offensive was to be launched from Donegal, spearheaded by IRA officers and men from Cork divisions under the command of Sean Lehane, who had been active in the conflict in the south of the country. As another officer, Mossey Donegan stated: "It was explained to us that our mission was to make war on the Crown forces in the north and along the Donegal-Derry border, using Donegal as a base"<sup>2</sup>

Complicated plans existed to arm this new force with weapons supplied by the Provisional Government, but in such a way that they might not be traced. The complications of the scheme and the organization of the new units delayed the projected offensive in Donegal in May 1922. However, the Provisional Government did organize an offensive within Northern Ireland at this time but it ended after a few days in a rout, forcing large numbers of IRA men to seek sanctuary in Donegal. Neither this event nor the worsening internal conflict in Dublin checked Lehane's optimism, and he continued to negotiate in the Four Courts about the composition of the units and the form of the attack even when the Civil War started on 28 June 1922.<sup>3</sup>

Somewhat surprisingly, the attack on the Four Courts did not curtail Lehane's optimism and he remained convinced that not only could the Donegal offensive proceed but that its realization could still halt the conflict between the National Army and the Irregulars. Consequently, in July 1922, many Republicans in Donegal grouped around Lehane but did not want to fight the troops of the National Army and did not therefore encourage resistance to the offensive of July 1922 against the Irregulars. Lehane tried to bring his offensive against the northern state centre stage by launching attacks on the Ulster Special Constabulary in Strabane and Claudy and by offering to assist National Army troops in the joint defense of Lifford. The attacks failed; the offer was rejected and many volunteers simply left to return home, disgusted at the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

Even Lehane was forced to admit in mid-August 1922 that his scheme had failed and that both he and his fellow officers were now regarded as the enemy by the National Army. Having been forced to go on the run in Donegal, they were finally ordered to leave in late October 1922. That left only a small band led by Charlie Daly. This group was captured

in November 1922 and four of its members were executed by the National Army in March 1923 at Drumboe Castle, Stranorlar.<sup>5</sup>

## ANARCHY IN EAST DONEGAL 1922

The anarchy in east Donegal between April and July 1922 can now be seen as a direct causation of the decision of certain members of the Provisional Government to plan an offensive in secret against the northern state. The offensive meant that the Provisional Government was prepared to ignore an increasing number of violent incidents in Donegal including the ambush and killing of its own troops and others at Buncrana and Newtowncunningham as well as looting and bank raids<sup>6</sup>. It was also ready to countenance attacks on Protestants and their property in the county and to support a commercial blockade of Derry. Throughout June 1922, reports circulated that groups of Protestants from Castlefin had fled to Northern Ireland. Other reports referred to the destruction of property owned by Protestants in Buncrana and Culdaff.<sup>7</sup> The large body of IRA men who now controlled east Donegal regularly attacked trains of the GNR line from Belfast and Enniskillen which now passed through Carrigans and St. Johnstone, which was under their control<sup>8</sup>. In mid-June 1922, tension was acute along the Derry-Donegal border. Large numbers of IRA men, many from Kerry and Cork and others forced to flee Northern Ireland, confronted Specials and in addition the British government had reinforcements drafted in to Derry.

Dr. Lynch's article established why this happened in east Donegal. As has already been mentioned, the Provisional Government was prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to get the projected offensive against Northern Ireland under way and was thus prepared to condone other acts of violence. Furthermore, the outbreak of anti-Protestant violence was not surprising. East Donegal was now full of veterans from disturbed areas of Munster. In the period 1920-1921, atrocities by all sides had become a regular feature of life. At national level, the Spring of 1922 had witnessed a significant upsurge in violent attacks on Protestants and their property in several areas, notably Cork, Mayo and Leitrim.<sup>9</sup>

However, there were also specific reasons within Donegal itself. The years 1920-21 had not seen any upsurge in either political militancy or operations against the Crown Forces; instead, personality clashes within the IRA units, parochialism and a high level of internal feuding had effectively paralysed operations.<sup>10</sup> The police and military were willing to take advantage of this by operating a containment policy against the main IRA redoubts in West Donegal through a blockade of the area, reinforced by the occasional raid. This led to severe economic distress and mounting frustration among a section of the IRA leadership in the county. This view was forcibly expressed in July 1921 in a memo from the commandant of the First Northern Division IRA to Richard Mulcahy in Dublin. Having denounced the "B" and "C" Specials and argued for their execution as spies, he

continued: “A blockade of west Donegal is virtually in existence because of the closure of the Letterkenny-Burtonport and the Stranorlar-Glenties lines. The only way to stop this blockade is to hit at the Orange centre and both stop their supplies and take away their livestock. The destruction of the railways would hit the orange population hard”<sup>11</sup>. The scheme was not authorized because of the Truce in July 1921, but it displays the mindset of a section of the IRA leadership in that year.

In early spring 1922, the nationalization of Donegal politics swept away briefly the localism that had prevented effective operations in 1920-21. A combination of government policy, an influx of radically-minded outsiders and a surfacing of sectarian tensions all promised to transform Donegal politics. Events in July 1922 rendered these assumptions false.

Irregulars had controlled North and East Donegal up to early July 1922. At the end of that month, they had been swept clear of all major towns in the county and had been reduced to small groups in the mountains. We have already noted that many republicans in Donegal had stood aside in July 1922 in the hope that, somehow or other, unity could be restored. This was not a view shared by the National Army or other republicans in the county. There were fatal clashes at Drumkeen, Glenties and Finner Camp.<sup>12</sup> These attacks did not stop government forces but they did provoke a resurgence of localism. Local republicans blamed the Drumkeen ambush on outsiders and upwards of thirty locals left the conflict.<sup>13</sup> Given that whatever resistance was being offered came from outsiders from Cork or Kerry, the resurgence of localism in Donegal left them quickly isolated and unable to offer any effective resistance after August 1922.<sup>14</sup> A lengthy memo of 27 July 1922 from Third Northern IRA illustrated the confusion: “There is now a feeling among the civil population that we are not recognised by GHQ and the priests are taking the chance to condemn all secret organizations. The people who supported us now feel deserted by the Dáil. The people who did not support us are only too glad of the opportunity of telling the police everything.”<sup>15</sup>

## DRUMBOE EXECUTIONS

After August 1922, there were few violent incidents in Donegal. Little interest was shown in politics. Then, without warning, the Free State authorities executed four men who had been captured several months previously, by firing squad at Dromboe Castle, Stranorlar. It would appear that the event which triggered these executions was the killing of a National Army soldier in an attack at Creeslough in early March 1923<sup>16</sup>. The attack had happened without warning and must have aroused in the commanding officer of Free State troops, Major General Joe Sweeney, a fear that the conflict was about to start all over again, especially as there also had been a mysterious shooting in Mountcharles. The exe-

cutions meshed therefore with wider government policy of crushing resistance with merciless force. However, Sweeney also had his own reasons. Although he had served with Pearse at the GPO in 1916 and had won the parliamentary election in 1918 in West Donegal, his career had been less than convincing. There had been a strong vote against him in 1918 and his involvement in the armed struggle in the period 1920-21 had been sporadic.<sup>17</sup> Irregulars had tried to assassinate him in August 1922; consequently it was scarcely surprising that Sweeney wished to escape the taunts that he was second rate. The tactic worked. The execution and the threat to execute all other Irregulars in Dromboe not only finally ended the republican campaign but did so in a deeply humiliating fashion for them: the prisoners were forced to urge their comrades to call off the campaign.

Sweeney in turn retired from the army to a comfortable life as a bureaucrat and was not tainted by Dromboe. Significantly, the three men who were executed came from Kerry and one from South Derry, and had no Donegal connections.

## A RETURN TO PEACE

The final act of the revolutionary period 1916 – 23, which had begun with Pearse and Tom Clarke charging the GPO on Easter Monday 1916, was in Donegal the burning of the GNR signal box in Carrigans at the end of April 1923. This minor incident showed how detached Donegal had been from events elsewhere. Localism had prevented any major social or political change. There had been moments when this localism and deliberate isolation had been challenged, notably the 1918 general election, the 1919 Labourers’ Revolt in East Donegal and the activities of Peadar O’Donnell in the Letterkenny area in 1921, but in the end, the existing social order had held firm and there had been little change. The Spring of 1922 was different. There was a heightened commitment by external forces to overcome the localism so prevalent in Donegal in the interests of an urgent national policy. Moreover, the fighters then in East Donegal had both battle experience and a committed ideology. Had the offensive occurred, it would have had major repercussions on Donegal society. Any sustained invasion of Derry would have met with fierce opposition from Unionists and as the Battle of Pettigo in May 1922 had demonstrated, the Lloyd George government would have intervened. A defeat for an IRA offensive was very probable. The consequences of same are far harder to predict; it would have led to the collapse of the provisional government, the descent of Southern Ireland into final anarchy and the return of crown colony government, but as regards Donegal it would have unleashed sectarian violence there and in neighboring Derry, with the most unpredictable consequences. It is therefore ironic that a county which had conducted its affairs in a semi-detached manner from the Irish revolution should have been spared sectarian bloodshed by a national decision: the decision to attack the Four Courts on 28 June 1922.

Dr. Desmond Murphy completed his doctoral thesis on nineteenth century Derry under the supervision of Dr. Moody, TCD. He lives in Derry and is the author of *Derry, Donegal and Modern Ulster 1790-1921* (Derry, 1981). In the course of his research for his book, he interviewed Major General Joe Sweeney in 1973.

**Photo – Donegal Annual 1982, No 34, p. 45 in “The Battle for the Belleek-Pettigo Salient, 1922” by John B. Cunningham, pp. 38-59.**

<sup>1</sup> Robert Lynch, “Donegal and the joint IRA northern offensive, May-November 1922”, *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxv, No. 138, 2006, pp. 184-200.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 189-190

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 191-192

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 194-195

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 196-197

<sup>6</sup> *Derry People* 6 April 1922; 8 April 1922 and 13 May 1922 (hereafter DP).

<sup>7</sup> DP 3 June 1922; *Derry Journal* (hereafter DJ) 2,5 June 1922.

<sup>8</sup> DJ 26 June 1922.

<sup>9</sup> P. Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies : Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* ((Oxford, 1998), pp. 273-278; and p. 289. R.B. McDowell, *The Fate of the Southern Unionists: Crisis and Decline* (Dublin, 1997) p. 125 and p. 128

<sup>10</sup> See Officer Second Brigade First Ulster Division to GHQ, May 1921 (P7/A/18 Mulcahy Papers, UCD Archives; Officer Commanding Second Unit Derry May 1921; Report from Brigade (P7/A/19), Mulcahy Papers.

<sup>11</sup> Commandant First Northern Division to Chief of Staff, July 1921, P7/A/21, Mulcahy Papers.

<sup>12</sup> DJ, 12, 28 July 1922

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 21 July 1922

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 31 July 1922, 2 August 1922

<sup>15</sup> Memo of Third Northern Division, 27 July 1922 (Mulcahy Papers)

<sup>16</sup> DJ, 12,16,26 March 1923

<sup>17</sup> In late November 1973, when I interviewed Joe Sweeney, he informed me that following an attack on a police vehicle in Dungloe in 1920, the local District Inspector could come to his house for a chat about his conduct!

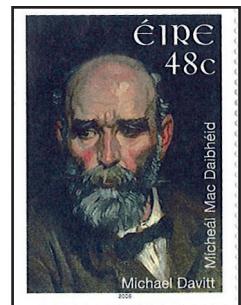
## MICHAEL DAVITT REMEMBERED

### Bernard O'Hara

It is most appropriate to remember Michael Davitt following the centenary of his death. Immortalised in Irish history as ‘the father of the Land League’, he was also a respected international journalist, the author of six books, a supporter of Home Rule, an MP, a founding patron of the GAA and a pioneer of the labour movement in Britain and Ireland. He was the founder and master organiser of the Land League, one of the most successful movements in Irish history, which transformed tenant farmers into owner-occupiers within a generation by constitutional means, and in the process brought about one of the greatest social changes ever witnessed in Ireland. The League had many active branches in Donegal, which looked to Davitt for inspiration and leadership. His sympathy and concern ranged from Irish tenant farmers to agricultural labourers, the plight of the British working-class, prison reform, social reform, the Boers in South Africa, to the Jews in Russia. A champion of the oppressed and exploited, Michael Davitt also worked for an independent, democratic, Irish State. T. W. Moody, author of *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846-1882*<sup>1</sup> wrote of Michael Davitt:

He served his fellow men under the impulsion not of any dogma but of a generous and compassionate spirit that surmounted all distinctions of class and circumstances no less than of religion and national origin.<sup>2</sup>

Michael Davitt was born at Straide, County Mayo, at the height of the Great Famine on 25 March 1846, the son of Martin Davitt and his wife, Catherine. The Davitts were probably descended from a Gaelic family of the McDevitts from Inishowen in County Donegal, several of whose members featured in the Flight of the Earls. A branch of this family had migrated in Mayo during the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> Martin Davitt was a small tenant-farmer on the estate of John Knox. Despite securing work on a local relief scheme and going to England as a seasonal migratory labourer for the summer of 1849, Martin Davitt was unable to pay off the arrears of rent which had accumulated during the Great Famine. After being served with an ejectment notice in 1849, the Davitt family were evicted, probably in October 1850, as part of the ‘great clearances.’ After refusing to go to the workhouse in Swinfold, the family emigrated to Haslingden, a small textile town in Lancashire, where several neighbours had secured employment. It was here Michael spent his youth in difficult circumstances, as a member of a loving family in an Irish colony of an English industrial town. Michael attended a local school for one year, when at the age of nine, he decided to take up employment in a local cotton mill so as to augment the small family income. On 8 May 1857, his right arm was badly injured by a



machine and it had to be amputated just below the shoulder. It was a major tragedy for an eleven year old. Maiming and even deaths at work were then common occurrences and compensation did not exist.<sup>4</sup> After Michael had recovered from the operation, his parents, with help from a local benefactor, were able to send him back to school for four years. In 1861, he started work in the local post-office where he did a variety of jobs, including printing. He made great use of the local Mechanics' Institute, where a plaque on the wall records that it was there Michael Davitt first read Irish history.

## FENIAN ACTIVITIES

In 1865, Michael Davitt joined the Irish Republic Brotherhood (IRB) in Haslingden. Given his background and the attitude of the Irish community in industrial Lancashire where he spent his formative years, it was easy for a patriotic and idealistic young Irishman like Michael Davitt to be influenced to join the Fenians. He combined his work in Cockcroft's with his Fenian activities for a period of two years. In 1868, Michael Davitt became organising secretary and arms' agent for the IRB in England and Scotland, a position that involved regular contact between the Fenians in Britain and the supreme council of the IRB. The following year, he resigned from his employment in the post office to work full-time on his Fenian activities. The position involved a lot of travel, and he became involved in arms' traffic to Ireland.

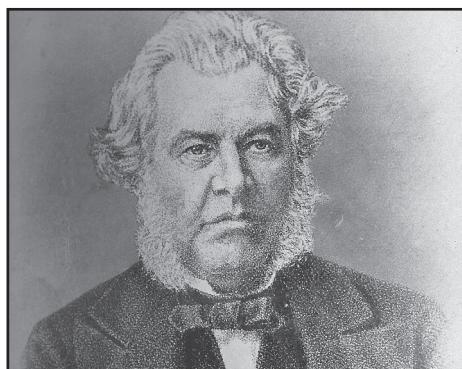
Michael Davitt and a gunsmith with whom he was dealing, named John Wilson, were arrested separately at Paddington railway station in London on 14 May 1870 and charged with treason-felony. Their trial took place in the Old Bailey in London in July 1870. Both defendants were found guilty of arms trafficking to Ireland for a Fenian insurrection. Wilson claimed that he did not know that the arms were going to Ireland or that he was doing anything wrong. Davitt made an impassioned appeal on behalf of Wilson, offering to take any punishment given to Wilson in addition to his own so that he did not suffer. While the Chief Justice was impressed by Davitt's plea, he could not accept that Wilson did not know the use to which the arms might be put and sentenced him to seven years. The plea had a mitigating influence for Wilson, but Michael Davitt was sentenced on 18 July 1870 to fifteen years' penal servitude.<sup>5</sup>

At the age of twenty-four, Michael Davitt responded to the third great challenge of his life (after his eviction and the loss of his right arm) with characteristic fortitude. After his conviction, he was removed to Millbank Penitentiary in London, where he was put in solitary confinement and employed in oakum picking. On 25 May 1871, he was transferred to Dartmoor prison in Devon, the toughest in Britain, where he remained until his release in 1877, except for a period of a month in 1872 that was spent in Portsmouth prison. His prison accommodation was a small corrugated-iron cell with inadequate light or ventilation, and he often had to kneel with his mouth to an opening at the bottom of his cell door to get some air. Work involved stone-breaking, being attached to a gang hauling a cart

around the prison yard, pounding putrefying meat bones to be used as fertiliser and operating a wringing machine in the wash-house. He was shown no compassion because of his one arm, and was strip-searched four times a day as well as enduring regular harassment from some wardens. His diet was poor in both quantity and quality.<sup>6</sup>

Due to the trojan work of Donegal-born barrister and MP for Limerick from 1871, Isaac Butt (1813-79), in his amnesty campaign, Michael Davitt was released on a ticket-of-leave after seven years, seven months and five days imprisonment. Davitt wrote to Butt requesting him, as leader of the Home Rule party from 1870 to 1879, to bring the amnesty question before the House of Commons and pleading for help for prisoners on life sentences. This ticket-of-leave authorised his release during the remainder of his term of penal servitude on specified conditions: the two most important being that he was not convicted of some indictable offence or that the ticket-of-leave was not revoked by the Queen. While the Fenians released under the amnesty in 1871 were granted a free pardon, Michael Davitt and three Fenians released in January 1878 only received remissions of their sentences, which meant that they could be incarcerated without a trial during the remaining period if they breached any condition of their release. Butt's petition for an amnesty which was submitted to Disraeli produced dramatic results.

While Davitt was still a Fenian, he had begun to question the rigidity and intolerance of the organisation. He saw the need for far more flexibility in Fenian policy, especially in its attitude to the Parliamentary Party, and deeply appreciated the role played by Members of Parliament, especially Isaac Butt, in his own early release. Despite what he endured in Dartmoor prison, Michael Davitt never showed any hostility or bitterness to any person, but strongly questioned the punitive role of the system. His health suffered while in prison, and thereafter he was never a robust person. After rejoining the IRB, he was elected to the supreme council as a representative for the north of England. Although unknown in Ireland at the time of his conviction, his prison ordeal was well publicised and, on his release, he was hailed as a national hero. With spirit unbroken, he had the interest and determination to return to his earlier objectives of working for Irish independence and the replacement of the landlord system.



*Isaac Butt MP, Donegal-born leader of the Home Rule party, helped secure the release of Michael Davitt from prison*

## THE LAND LEAGUE

After visiting Mayo and campaigning in Britain for the reform of prisons for all inmates, Michael Davitt went on his first visit to the USA in July 1878. There he met John Devoy, the leading member of Clan na Gael in America. Devoy and Davitt formulated what became known as ‘the new departure’ in Fenian policy of refusing to co-operate with constitutionists. It was proposed that the Fenians should co-operate on specified conditions with the radical wing of the Home Rule Party led by Charles Stewart Parnell in a united effort for national independence and agrarian reform. The land campaign really started in County Mayo in 1879. Some tenants on an estate at Irishtown were under threat of eviction and the editor of the local *Connaught Telegraph* newspaper, James Daly, advised them to hold a public meeting to ventilate tenant grievances in general. Michael Davitt joined the local committee in Mayo to organise a big protest meeting for Irishtown on Sunday 20 April 1879. The meeting was most successful, the eviction notices were withdrawn and the rent was reduced by twenty-five per cent. The Irishtown meeting ignited the flame that was to change the face of rural Ireland, and Michael Davitt became the organiser and inspiring genius behind a movement, supported by finance from America and elsewhere, which merged constitutionalists and Fenians, country-people and towns-people, into a war of ‘aggressive moral force’ objective of resisting evictions and abolishing the landlord system.

Other land protest meetings followed, especially a big one in Westport on 8 June 1879, and led to the foundation by Michael Davitt of the National Land League of Mayo on 16 August 1879. This served as the nucleus for a national body and it influenced Charles Stewart Parnell, MP for Meath, to accept Michael Davitt’s invitation to lead a national Land League movement. The Irish National Land League was founded on 21 October 1879, with Charles Stewart Parnell as president and Michael Davitt, its acknowledged father, as one of its secretaries. It organised a mass movement of agrarian protest and passive resistance against the Irish landlord system in what became known as ‘the land war’. Its most dreaded weapon was boycotting, a practice first employed in County Mayo in 1880. Davitt spoke at meetings all around the country. In Letterkenny on 19 January 1881, he stated that the Boyne no longer divided Ireland and that all people had to work for the improvement of their social conditions regardless of creed. Afterwards on his way to Strabane, Davitt was thrown from a car and he had to walk to Raphoe.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, the British government decided on a policy of coercion and concession, the former was coercion legislation under which all the Land League leaders were imprisoned without trial, and the latter the Land Act of 1881. This Act provided for the three Fs (fair rent, fixity of tenure, and free sale) and introduced a system of dual ownership of the land. Eventually, following an agreement between Parnell and the British Prime Minister, William E. Gladstone, the land war was called off and all the prisoners, including Michael Davitt,

released. With costs rising and rents fixed under the 1881 Act, many landlords started to question if they would be better off to sell their estates if the prices were right. This change in thinking led to a series of State-supported land purchase schemes starting in 1885 with the Asbourne Act to the important Wyndham Act of 1903 which provided the finance to enable the tenants to buy out landlords and repay the loans with interest in land annuities over a specific number of years. Gradually the days of the landlord ascendancy were numbered. After 1922 the Land Act of 1923 provided for the compulsory purchase of all remaining tenanted land. During the late 1920s, the land annuities became an emotive national issue influenced chiefly by Donegal-born socialist, republican and writer, Peadar O Donnell (1893-1986).<sup>8</sup> After Fianna Fail came to power with Labour Party support in 1932, the government withheld the land annuities payable to Britain, which led to the ‘the economic war’. The dispute was resolved in 1938 as one of the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, when a single payment of ten million pounds was agreed as a final settlement.

From 1882 onwards, Michael Davitt developed many new interests. He travelled extensively as an international journalist, covering different developments chiefly for American newspapers. He became a founding patron of the GAA in November 1884, a patron of Glasgow Celtic Football Club, and took the initiating kick at the opening of Celtic Park on 19 March 1892. Michael Davitt married an Irish-American, Mary Yore, on 30 December 1886, and lived for most of his life after that in Dublin. He left the Fenian organisation in 1882 and became a strong supporter of Home Rule, accepting that it was the most which could be attained at that time. Davitt was elected M.P. for Meath (but was unseated after complaints of clerical interference were upheld). Later, he was elected for North-East Cork and took his seat in the House of Commons but had to resign a few months later when he was declared a bankrupt. Michael Davitt was elected MP for South Mayo in 1895 but resigned in 1899 in protest against the second Boer War. He wrote six books, *Leaves from a Prison Diary*, *Defence of the Land League*, *Life and Progress in Australasia*, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, *Within the Pale: The True Story of Anti-Semitic Persecution in Russia* and his most important work, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*.<sup>9</sup> Overall, Davitt’s books reflect his international vision, his concern for humanity, and his desire to improve societies everywhere.

Michael Davitt campaigned enthusiastically to improve working conditions in Britain and Ireland, and was one of the pioneers of the labour movement in both countries. He was a strong supporter of educational reform, including inter-denominational schools. He died unexpectedly on 30 May 1906 from septicaemia which developed following the extraction of two teeth. His death came as huge shock to his wife, family (there were four living, one died at the age of seven), friends and everyone who knew or heard of him. In

accordance with his wish he was buried in Straide, County Mayo, beside the friary.

Following his death, daily and provincial newspapers in Ireland, Britain, America, Australia and several other countries carried laudatory obituaries, a reflection of his international stature. During his lifetime from 1879, no public figure commanded more respect and affection among Irish people at home and abroad than Michael Davitt. However, in Irish history he seems to have been eclipsed to some extent by the men and women of 1916-21.

Michael Davitt's legacy to Ireland was immense: a country almost free of the landlord ascendancy class, once 'the political garrison of the union,' occupying-ownership of the land by a multiplicity of Irish farmers, as well as a foundation for the development of an independent, inclusive, democratic State, and a role model for patriotic public service. The abolition of the landlord ascendancy in Ireland, Davitt's original objective, weakened the union with the United Kingdom, advanced the interests of Irish nationalism and in the process sowed the seeds of a modern democracy. His legacy should also have engendered a desire for a progressive, caring, outward looking, society, based on a first-class educational system, equality of opportunity and social inclusion. However, his radical views on social issues had little effect in the new State.

1. T.W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1816 – 82*, Oxford University Press, 1981.

2. 'Michael Davitt', in Boyle, J. W., (ed.) *Leaders and Workers*, p. 55.

3. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846 – 82*, p. 5.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-17.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-116

6. *Ibid.*, pp.145-185

7. *Ibid.*, p. 447

8. Peadar O'Donnell, a frequent visitor to Mayo, visited the county for the last time on 23 May 1984 for the opening of the Michael Davitt Museum and Centre at Straide. After his death in 1986, his cremated remains were buried in Kilconduff Cemetery, Swinford, with his wife, a native of the area, who died in 1969.

9. King, Carla (ed.), *Michael Davitt: Collected Writings, 1868-1906*.

This collection of eight volumes consists of Davitt's six books and numerous pamphlets and articles

Bernard O'Hara is Registrar of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). His most recent publication is *Davitt*, a concise illustrated biography of Ireland's forgotten hero, published by Mayo County Council (and available from Mayo County Library, [www.mayolibrary.ie](http://www.mayolibrary.ie)). His previous publications include some relating to the history and heritage of County Mayo. He is President of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society.

**Photo - Editor**

## VEC MINUTES ARCHIVED

*Sandra Buchanan*

Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee (VEC) have deposited their minutes from 1900 until 1970 with the Donegal County Archives Services, making them available to researchers and the general public for the first time in its 102 year history.

In November 2005 Co Donegal VEC celebrated one hundred years of vocational education and training in the county. One of the projects it embarked on as part of its centenary celebrations was the researching and publishing of the history of the organisation in its entirety for the first time which was taken on by Adult Education staff member Sandra Buchanan. The primary research documents used were the minutes of the monthly meetings of the Vocational Education Committee which date back to the very first meeting in November 1900, when the Committee was known as Donegal County Council Agriculture & Technical Instruction Committee. The research resulted in the publication of the book *Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Dhún na nGall 1905-2005. Súil Siar, Ceiliúradh, Mínlú na Todhchaí / County Donegal Vocational Education Committee 1905-2005. Reflecting, Celebrating, Shaping the Future*, copies of which are available in all public libraries throughout the county.

The minutes, which are almost entirely intact (the years 1903 and January-September 1931 only are missing) represent a vital record of the VEC's history and also provide a rich source of information on the social history of the county over the last one hundred years. As only the originals existed, Co Donegal VEC recognised that it had a responsibility to future generations to ensure that these records were properly preserved and also made available to the public for research purposes. Subsequently the VEC have had the minutes preserved through microfilming and digitisation and have deposited these with the County Archives Service at the Three Rivers Centre, Lifford.

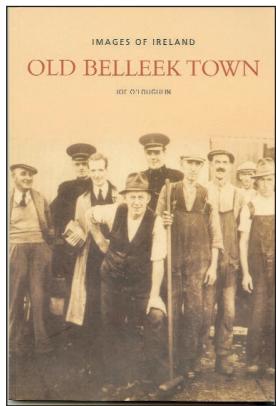
Further information is available from the County Donegal Archives Service by telephoning 074 91 72490 or from Co Donegal VEC by calling 074 91 61600 or emailing [info@donegalvec.ie](mailto:info@donegalvec.ie)

Sandra Buchanan is the author of *County Donegal Vocational Education Committee 1905-2005, Reflecting, Celebrating, Shaping the Future* (Letterkenny, 2005).

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Images of Ireland – Old Belleek Town*

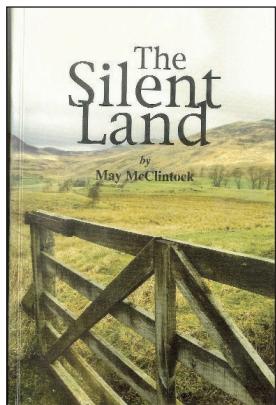
**Joe O'Loughlin, Nonsuch Ltd. , ISBN 1 84588 535 X, 2006, 124 pages, price £12.99**



The book opens with a short history of the border town of Belleek and its waterways. There are 150 photographs, many of which are associated with the River Erne, selected from the collection of a local surgeon, Horace Fleming and the author's collection. Belleek pottery and Camlin Castle, the home of the Tredennick family, are also featured. There are also fine views of Ballyshannon town and the ESB generating station. The book offers unique glimpses of everyday life, local personalities and the Carlton Hotel, which was owned by the Johnston family. There are a number of useful maps and illustrations. Jane O'Loughlin's drawings provide a humorous commentary on life in days of old. The most vivid images of the book are those which reveal the great natural beauty of the surrounding countryside, which caught the attention of a visiting English author and fisherman over a century ago. The author is commended for his onerous efforts in preserving the history of Belleek and district in this very attractive publication, which will be a source of great interest to local people and visitors to the district.

### *The Silent Land, The Story of the Dispossessed in Derryveagh, May McClintock*

**Letterkenny, 184 pages, 2007, €15.**



Memory is chronically-endangered, requiring champions who stay the course. To wit, studies of the compelling 1861 Derryveagh Evictions are now decades "out-of-print;" while its memorial cottage at Magherashangan lies barbed wired from public access. May McClintock's *The Silent Land* re-enters the fray, re-telling and defying Derryveagh's silencing by evictors John George Adair. Revering the details, McClintock weaves a rich tapestry of geography and lost custom, workhouse rosters and passenger manifests, poignant poetry and collective memory. Her sleuthing distills family profiles that restore locations, names and contexts for 244 uprooted souls, two evictors and a precious few living descendants. Indeed, her emotional-archeology yields personalized gems. Murray, Adair's sheep-stealing steward, was nevertheless "cruelly murdered." Grierson, Adair's reviled dispossessor of hundreds, was a "12th and last child" and father

of eight. Brigid Doherty, aged six months, dies of convulsions, just before her (Derryveagh's) future is "assisted" by ship to Australia. And, today, Mrs. McMahon's memory of grandparents' getting mail from Oz is our sole, if gossamer evidence of contact with Derryveagh-in-exile. But McClintock also evinces ongoing recovery: of turf-ashes from that April's shattered hearths; Derryveagh's afforestation; a documentary film; a lost pond (Loch Beagh) uncovered; her nearby oasis for visitors' repose; returns by Australian descendants; and kindred efforts of a few researchers. This quietly-essential book not only re-members Derryveagh then and now, but (as Friel said of Charles McGlinchey's Meentiagh Glen), May McClintock has "observed it with love," so a once-silenced land may continue to speak.

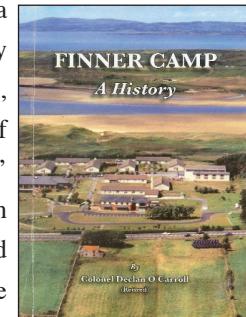
**Bob Spiegelman.**

### *Finner Camp, A History, Colonel Declan O' Carroll (Retired)*

**Published by the Defence Forces and printed by the Defence Forces Printing Press, Parkgate, Dublin 7. Cost €5**

Colonel Declan O' Carroll is very well suited to recording a history of Finner Camp, from its earliest days as a British Army Camp where soldiers were trained for the Boer War in the 1890's, to its current use as an Irish Military Camp. His hometown of Bundoran is within sight of Finner Camp and his father Lt. Jack O' Carroll was a prominent member of the Irish Republican Army in the War of Independence and was in charge of the honour guard which raised the Irish Tricolour over Finner in 1922, when the British evacuated. Declan had a distinguished career in the Irish Army, is an executive member of County Donegal Historical Society and he is to be commended on bringing a lot of new local material to light concerning the War of Independence and the Civil War. This period has been considered too sensitive for many local students of history and Col. O' Carroll's understanding of military archives gives the reader a balanced account of a troubled period in our history. The book makes excellent use of original material including; deeds, leases, poems, songs, newspapers, military records and anecdotes and stories of his colleagues in the army. The valuable collection of photographs reflects the camp from earliest days up to the 1970's and will be a nostalgic memory for many who served in Finner and the many local people associated with the camp. All the principal events of Irish history in the twentieth century are recorded and the book will give students of history many new and interesting insights. The book is dedicated to Louis Emerson.

**Anthony Begley**

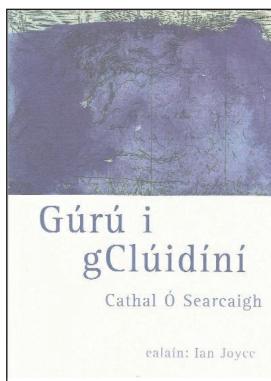


*The Irish Matryoshka : A History of Irish Monks in Medieval Europe,*  
James J. Harkins, (Florida, 2007), 154 pages, \$19.95.



The word *matryoshka* in the title of the book is explained by the author as a Russian word which is used as a metaphor to cover the work of Irish monks as they carried their mission into Europe. It is a detailed and complex story which the author, James Harkins, compresses skillfully into six major themes that escort the reader from the fields of Gartan to the gates of Rome. On his journey of discovery, the author pays particular attention to St. Colmcille, St. Patrick, Columbanus and Fergil of Salsburg, exploring philosophies, cultures and civilizations that have shaped European society, landscapes and educational institutions. The book cannot be described as an arid, uncritical historical analysis as the author introduces the complex problems which confronted Irish monks in their crusades to spread the Gospel amid peasants and prelates in medieval Europe. In setting himself a challenging and formidable task, the author engages in researching, analyzing and interpreting the outstanding work of Irish missionaries from early Christian times and succeeds in producing a work which represents a learned contribution to deepen our understanding and appreciation of our Christian heritage, from its humble origins to its impressive expansion.

*Gúrú i gClúidíni, Cathal Ó Seartaigh, ealain Ian Joyce, Cló Iar Chonnachta, ISBN 1 905560 12 5, 2006, €12.* Léirmheas gairid le Tomás Ó Cuilinn.

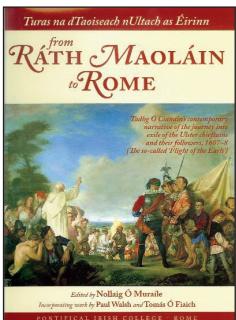


Tá Cathal Ó Seartaigh fós “ag feidhmiú mar chuisle i gcroí a chine” anseo i nDún na nGall le leabhar eile filíochta óna pheann – Gúrú i gClúidíni. Bailiúchán fealsúnach gan chung thíre ná deighilt chine atá ann. Is féidir cuisle na cruinne a mhothú ann agus fiú uaigneas na síoraíochta. Tá pléisiúr, paisean agus pian fite ann agus fulaingt an tsaoil leirithe ón bPalaistín go dtí Oileán na Marbh. Tá sólás agus dólás ann, gile agus gruaim, an ghrian agus an geimhreadh, tearmann corcra an fhraoigh, fuacht agus fiántas na ré, réalachas an tsaoil agus aisling na teangan. Tá an Chríostaíocht agus an Phágántacht ann mar atá ionainn go léir.

Tagann cumha air agus é i bhfad i gcéin nuair a chíonn sé “an ghealach bhuí in ard na spéire” agus í ar a slí chun na háite is ansa lena chroí ag bun an Eargail. Mórfhile ár linne is ea Cathal ach an bhfuil ríocht rúin a óige imithe go deo nó an dtiocfaidh Bard ina dhiaidh riagh anonn a mbeidh incurtha leis. An bhfuil glingireacht gloigíní na Gaeilge ag ciúnú?

*Tom Cullen*

*From Ráth Maoláin to Rome, Turas na dTaoiseach nUltach as Éireann, Nollaig Ó Muráile, incorporating work by Paul Walsh and Tomás Ó Fiaich, Pontifical Irish College, Rome, 2007, ISBN 978 88 901692 1 2, 704 pages, €75.*

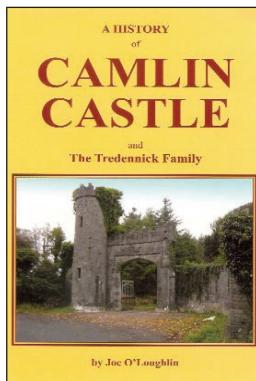


In the year in which the quatercentenary of the Flight of the Earls is commemorated, it is inevitable that the work of the Franciscan historian, Rev. Paul Walsh together with Cardinal Thomás Ó’Fiaich and Pádraig de Barra would again attract the attention of researchers and students of events in 1607. Based in NUI Galway where he lectures in Irish, Nollaig Ó Muráile and the Pontifical Irish College in Rome have marked the historic occasion by re-publishing Walsh’s translation of Tadgh Ó Cianáin diary of the journey, with Irish text, combined with the O’Fiaich/de Barra studies in a new book that illustrates the wonderment, insight and passion surrounding this iconic event in Irish history.

Issues relating to language and historical context abound in the book. First, there is the matter of the title. The editor eschews the more popular “imeacht” (flight) and also “imirce” (migration) for the less controversial, “turas”, with overtones of a journey, a mission or a pilgrimage. Second, in a translation closely modelled on Walsh, he settles for Ráth Maoláin rather than Rathmullan, as he tries to maintain the original Irish intact while he regularizes the orthography. He speculates on the status of Ó’Cianáin, and concludes that he was not just a mere scribe but a sophisticated linguist, capable of producing the first diary-style text in the Irish language. Acknowledging the great achievements of Ó’Cianáin/Walsh and Ó’ Fiaich/ de Barra, while deftly imprinting his own scholarship firmly on the work, Ó’Muráile records the history of the manuscript and its obscure journeys. Apparently, the Inishowen Franciscan, Fr. John Colgan had charge of the manuscript before 1658, a fine detail from the story of a remarkable sojourn from Louvain and Rome to its present haven in UCD. In a year when the Flight of the Earls has been remembered with great ceremony, not to mention learned seminars and academic publications, Ó’Muráile’s passion for the subject has ensured that this beautifully produced book stands apart as an invaluable asset to be treasured by future generations of historians long after the celebrations have ended.

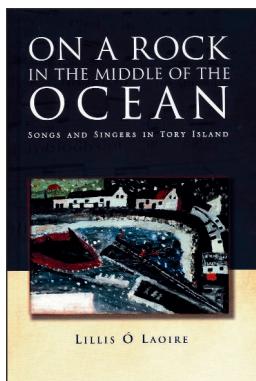
*Seán Beattie.*

*A History of Camlin Castle and the Tredennick Family, Joe O'Loughlin, Viking Publications, ISBN 0 9546605 1 X, 49 pages, 2007.*



Written in memory of the tragic death of a young student journalist, the book is in two parts, the first of which records the history of Camlin Castle, now demolished, and its former inhabitants, the Tredennick family, who also owned land in Donegal. The author outlines the history of the landed families in the area, the Folliets, Nesbitts, and the Caldwells. John A. Tredennick built Camlin Castle in 1831 and it was sold in 1942. The book is illustrated with fine photographs of the castle and historic sites in the area. In the second half of the book, the author pays tribute to Donna Ferguson, who achieved much in her short life. The book is a useful contribution to the history of the north-west.

*On a Rock in the Middle of the Ocean, Lillis Ó Laoire, ISBN 978 1 905560 14 1, €35 Hardback.*



Why do people sing? That is the deceptively simple question that Lillis Ó Laoire sets out to answer in his new book, *On a Rock in the Middle of the Ocean*, which explores the singing tradition of Tory Island, Co. Donegal. A small island of 165 people, it has a rich musical tradition that dates back 200 years. Ó Laoire, a native of Gortahork and a lecturer in Folklore in NUI Galway, explores the occasions on which people sing, the significance of the songs and the singers chosen to perform. He details the way in which the tradition is handed down from one generation to another in Tory and the criteria upon which the singers are judged, and he also explains how songs act as a mediator of the dilemmas and tensions of island life. The author has been visiting Tory at intervals since 1984 and has established close ties with many of the islanders, in particular, Éamonn Mac Ruairí, Teresa McClafferty and Séamas Ó Dúigáin, each of whom has had a lifelong interest in song, music and other cultural traditions of the island. He attributes part-authorship of the book to them, and also to Belle Mhic Ruairí, Gráinne Uí Dhúigáin and John Ó Duibheannaigh. First published in Irish in 2002, this English version has been substantially revised and updated and includes a CD, lyrics, maps and many photos.

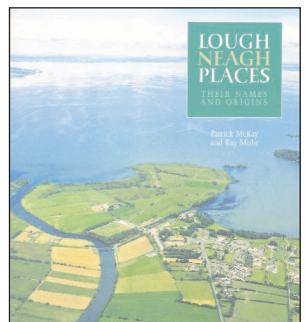
*A DICTIONARY OF ULSTER PLACE-NAMES, Second Edition, Patrick McKay, Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, Queen's University, Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN*



Dr. Patrick McKay is a senior research fellow at the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project at Queen's University, Belfast. Dr. McKay tells us that `Ulster's rich and diverse cultural heritage is reflected in its place-names, which have their origins in many languages including Irish, Scots, English, Old French and Old Norse.' Without a doubt, this fascinating book remedies the long-standing need for a reliable and up-to-date dictionary of Ulster place-names, supplying the derivations and meanings of around 1300 names in nine Ulster counties. I didn't know, for example, that there was a Rathmullan in County Down and the derivation of this place-name, Maolán's fort, is the same as that of Rathmullan in County Donegal. We also learn that no bird is reputed to have sung in the Poisoned Glen near Dunlewy Lake in County Donegal since Lugh of the Long arm killed his grandfather Balor of the Evil Eye here in the misty long ago. Such intriguing tales of legend balance the factual descriptions of the place-names throughout the book. Tir Chonaill is very well represented and the written text is augmented by artist's illustrations and ancient maps. The areas and place-names are in alphabetic order, making it very accessible for quick research. Visitors to Ulster will find this book of great interest and there is an excellent index of place-name elements and an detailed bibliography also. Every bookshop and tourist office in Ulster should stock this invaluable work.

*Billy Finn*

*LOUGH NEAGH PLACES, THEIR NAMES AND ORIGINS*  
Patrick McKay and Kay Muir, Cló Ollscoil na Banríona  
Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN



The authors are experienced senior researchers with the Northern Ireland Place-Name project at Queen's University, Belfast. Dr. Patrick McKay, a native of the northern shore, learned to swim in the lake and is prominent in traditional music circles in the area. Dr. Kay Muhr, who grew up in the East Anglia fens, has researched the early Irish origin legends and the southern parishes of the lake. Lough Neagh covers an area of one hundred and forty nine square miles and is the largest lake in Britain and Ireland and the fifth largest in Europe. This book deals with the place-names of the area, and takes the form of a journey around the Lough. We encounter a wide range of place-names, ranging from names of rocks and islands, to names of town lands, towns, villages, rivers, parishes and native Irish territories. The suggested journey, beginning and ending at the historic town of Antrim,

follows the circuit around Lough Neagh in four chapters, dealing with the eastern, southern, western and northern shores. There is a fascinating section on the history and mythology of Lough Neagh and the book is full of informative photos, local customs, maps, historical drawings and anecdotes. We learn, for instance, that in AD 818, there were herds and hunting parties on the lake itself because of `abnormal ice and snow from Epiphany to Shrove`, the frost being so hard that lakes and rivers, including the Boyne, could be crossed dryshod. Different times indeed and a long way from global warming! The maps of the townlands adjacent to the lake, in particular, catch the eye and will be of huge interest to locals, historians and visitors. All in all, a wonderful piece of local history research.

**Billy Finn**

## DONEGAL STUDIES 2007

*Eileen Burgess*

**Religion / Ecclesiastical History ~**

**Reiligiún / Stair Eaglasta**

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Omagh: Derry and Raphoe Action, 2007.

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KELLY, Eamonn

No stopping the clock

Letterkenny: Eamonn Kelly, 2007. pp80

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& Dean T. Moore (revised, updated by)

Clergy of Clogher: Biographical succession lists.

Clogher: Ulster Historical Foundation,

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In Dearcadh 2007-2008.

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MEEHAN, Helen

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In Spark: Border counties local history review.

Tyrone: Vol. 20, Summer, 2007. pp17-19

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Donegal: Rathmullan and District Historical Society, 2006. pp26-51.

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BARRETT, Stephen & Caoimhín Mac Aoidh

Volunteering, community and people with disabilities: A study into barriers and perceptions in Donegal.

Donegal: Donegal Local Development Company Ltd., 2006. pp76 €5

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**Local Development ~ Forbairt Áitiúil**

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- COUNTY Donegal Vocational Education Committee  
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- NAIRN, Richard  
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- CONWAY, Richard  
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'Máire': An fear á léiriú féin  
Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 2006. pp102.  
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Kilmacrennan Concert DVD

MC GINTY, Terry & Marie Mc Teague [Produced & mixed by]

Colaiste Cholmcille, Ballyshannon: A touch of class

Ballybofey: Valley Music Studio, May 2007.

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[Actors: Eamon McLaughlin, Seamus McGranaghan, Noel McLaughlin]

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Father's Day

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Dungloe: GRH Records, 2007.

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Letterkenny: New Mill Sound Studios, 2007.

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Every effort is made to create as comprehensive a bibliography as possible. However, given the extent of publishing in and relevant to the county, there may be occasional omissions. The author would be grateful for the assistance of readers in providing details of any 2007 publications not listed. These will then be included in the next bibliography. Details of 2008 publications would also be appreciated.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Ciara Cunnane, Assistant Librarian, Helen McNutt, A/Assistant Librarian and Berni Campbell, Senior Library Assistant, in compiling this list.

**Eileen Burgess is the County Librarian for Donegal and holds the position of Divisional Manager of the Cultural Services Division of Donegal County Council.**

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## PAST PRESIDENTS

(Asterisk denotes deceased)

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Rt. Rev. Dean Molloy, D.Ph., V.G., P.P., Dungloe.

Capt. J. Hamilton, Ballintra.

Sean D. MacLochlainne, Lifford.

Rev. Dr. J. H. Bewglas, Raphoe.

An tAth P. MacLoinsigh, P.P, Aghyaran.

Rev. R. Laird, The Manse, Ardstraw

Patrick J.McGill, N.T., F.R.S.A.I., Ardara.

Miss C. Atkinson, Cavangarden, Ballintra.

Fr. Terence O'Donnell, O.F.M., Rossnowlagh.

Mr. J.C.T. Mac Donagh,Ballybofey.

Denis Verschoyle, Cape Town, South Africa.

Eamonn MacLoinsigh, An clochan,Gleann Finne.

P. Urr, O'Gallachair, Cluain Eois & Drom Mor.

Harry P. Swan, Buncrana.

Rupert S. O' Cochlainn, Dublin.

E. W. R. Cookman, M.A., Raphoe.

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Sean MacLoinsigh, O.S., Convoy.

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J.D. Williams, Letterkenny.

Dorothy Borland, Fanad.

Edward McIntyre, Stabane.

Cecil King, Ballyshannon.

Liam O'Doherty, Derry.

Arthur Spears, B.E., Lifford.

Arthur Lemon, Waterford.

Seamus Gildea, Glenties.

Mairead Dunlevy, Dublin.

Patrick J. Dunleavy, Dungloe.

Edward O'Kane, Cavanacor House, Ballindrait, Lifford.

Anthony Begley, Ballyshannon.

Vincent O'Donnell, Inver.

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY 2007

*Anthony Begley*

**Archive Records:** Early minute books of Co. Donegal Historical Society were presented to Ms. Niamh Brennan, County Archivist, at a function in the Council Offices, on the 17th of April, attended by the President and members of the executive committee. This valuable archive material will now form part of the County Archive in Lifford which is building up a collection of material on the county.

**Annual General Meeting:** The Annual General Meeting of County Donegal Historical Society was held in Jackson's Hotel Ballybofey on Tuesday 24th April at 8 p.m. Ms. Una Mc Garrigle Hon. Secretary, reported on a busy year for the Society and paid tribute to all who had assisted including executive members, contributors to the *Donegal Annual* and lecturers. Those present complimented the Secretary on her detailed report and on her running of the affairs of the Society. Mr. Frank Shovlin, Hon. Treasurer, gave a comprehensive report on the finances of the Society and was complimented on a job well done. Tributes were paid to outgoing President of the Society, Mr. Vincent O'Donnell who represented the Society in an excellent manner and pioneered new initiatives such as the Coach Trip to Kinsale, which marked the commencement of the Society's activities culminating in the Flight of the Earls' Commemorations. He also re-designed our website. Ms. Helen Meehan was unanimously endorsed as the new President of County Donegal Historical Society. At subsequent meetings, a minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect to two deceased members, Arthur Lemon and Conall Byrne. Arthur served as President of CDHS and Conall delivered scholarly lectures at our Field Days and Seminars. May they rest in peace.

**Schools' Competition:** The valuable work of engaging young people with the history of their localities continued with the schools project competitions. Mr. Pat Shallow, Project Director, and his team involved students in Primary and Post-Primary schools in projects on The Flight of the Earls, The Plantation Town, Genealogy of the O'Donnells, Surnames and Donegal Society. Prizes were presented in Jackson's Hotel, Ballybofey on Thursday 31st May.



*Westport*

**Annual Coach Outing:** The popular 3 day coach trip to Westport was well attended with members and friends staying in the Westport Woods Hotel. Sites visited included Ballintubber Abbey, Granuaile country, Achill Island, Atlantic Drive, Deserted Village etc.

**Field Days:** The first field day of the year, on Sunday 10th June, was well attended and was conducted by our President, Helen Meehan, who brought us on an interesting journey on the waterbus and we also visited the O'Donnell Castle in Donegal Town. On Sunday 15th July we travelled to

Glenveagh where May Mc Clintock, a member of our executive, described the history of the Derryveagh evictions. Professor Orser who was conducting a dig at the ruins of an ancient rural dwelling showed us the site and gave an update on the progress so far. Appropriately the Society visited Rathmullen and the Flight of the Earls' Heritage Centre on Sunday 12 August. Ms. Áine Ní Dhuibhne outlined the history of the area and amongst the sites visited were the Carmelite Monastery ruins and Port na nIarlaí from where the Earls departed in September 1607. A very large number attended the field day including visitors to the area who were most welcome. On September 23 Ms. Mary Harte was our guide on a visit to Beltany Stone Circle. We also visited the Church of Ireland Cathedral where she spoke on the history of the building. A visit was also paid to Volt House to see exhibitions and works of local groups and the field day concluded with a welcome cup of tea.

**International Flight of the Earls' Conference:** A very prestigious conference was held in Letterkenny Institute of Technology in August at which there were 29 speakers. County Donegal Historical Society provided two lecturers, Ms. Helen Meehan, our President, speaking on the history of the Church at the time of the Flight and Mr. Vincent O'Donnell, an Executive member, who delivered a lecture on the O'Donnells. These sessions were chaired by Mr. Seán Beattie, Editor, *Donegal Annual*.

**The Paddy McGill Memorial Lecture:** The ever-popular McGill Lecture in memory of one of Donegal's finest historians was held in Hill's Bar in Ardara on 22 September. Our distinguished guest lecturer was Mr. Jonathan Bell from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra whose topic was Farms and Farmsteads in Donegal in the 19th Century.

**Museum Curator's Report:** Mr. Anthony Begley, Curator of County Donegal Historical Society Museum in Rossnowlagh, reported to the Annual General Meeting that visitors from over 20 countries had signed the visitors' book in the Museum in the past year. The

most popular locations were Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and U.S.A. There was a notable increase in visitors to the Museum from Poland which indicates an interest in the culture of their new homeland by recent arrivals in the workforce. Other international countries whose citizens visited the museum were India, Lithuania, New Zealand, France, Germany, Ghana, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Philippines, Brazil, South Africa, Switzerland, Spain and Argentina. Over 5,000 people signed the visitors' book and from frequent observation, this is but a fraction of the people who visit the museum, as many people just enjoy the experience and don't sign the book.

The popularity of this small museum must place it very high on the ranking of museums in rural settings in Ireland. The success is due to the quality of the artefacts and its location in the Franciscan Friary Grounds, in the holiday resort of Rossnowlagh. Our gratitude is due to Fr. Bernard O.F.M., Guardian, and the Franciscan Community who have given the Society free accommodation in Rossnowlagh since 1954. They have in large measure sustained this popular museum which houses many artefacts of local and national significance.

The museum loaned artefacts to Bundoran Library for a display on the Flight of the Earls and the artefacts were looked after in a professional manner which befits their significance. The pipes of Tarlach Mac Suibhne, The Piobaire Mór, have been receiving great interest and Mr. Jim Mc Guire, an American expert and Mr. Caoimhin Mac Aoidh, an expert on traditional Irish music, visited the museum to examine the uileann pipes and indicated that the pipes are an extremely rare 19th century set. It is hoped that their deliberations will be recorded in a future *Donegal Annual* to add to the previous research by Seán Ó Gallchoir in the 1978 *Donegal Annual*.

Visitors give many wonderful insights in their written comments in the visitors' book in the museum. Most frequently they describe it as interesting, educational and peaceful. Younger people like signing the visitors' book with comments, such as the following variety: *This place rocks, especially that head that looks like a rock over there. Great stuff. Super Dupper. Savage. It's deadly.* Some adult comments indicate that some people have been frequent visitors to the museum, over the years since it opened in 1954. *Came here as a child and was always fascinated at the museum-still am. Iontach Maith. Always like to come back-happy days. Great collection-who was Napper Tandy? Some fantastic historical artefacts. An-mhaith ar fad. A great source of local history. This museum started my interest in history when I was a boy 35 years ago. O'Donnell rules. The Dohertys were kings.*

#### ***The Emerson Memorial Lecture***

On Wednesday 7 November Anthony Begley gave a talk on the Flight of the Earls in Coláiste Cholmcille, in memory of Kathleen and Louis Emerson who devoted a lot of time and energy to the preservation of the artefacts in the museum. A capacity crowd

attended the initial lecture, on Wednesday 7 November, in Coláiste Cholmcille in Ballyshannon, in memory of Kathleen and Louis Emerson who gave a lifetime service to the Historical Society, to Ballyshannon and to the County of Donegal. The attendance was one of the largest seen at an historical talk in the town and was a fitting recognition of how the community and the Society recognised and appreciated the legacy of the Emersons. Mr. Anthony Begley, Curator of the Society Museum in Rossnowlagh, delivered the illustrated talk entitled: *The impact of the Flight of the Earls on Ballyshannon* and appropriate readings of the period were delivered by Mr. Conor Carney. This was the final event organised by the Society in this commemorative year of the Flight of the Earls. Tributes continue to be paid to Louis Emerson. The Editor recently received the following from a former student: "I would have been lost but for two valuable years 1955-57 I spent under Mr. Emerson's guidance. I have still to meet an individual who can come close to the Master, who at 94 had the sharp intellect that impressed me for so long"

***The Donegal Annual:*** A special Flight of the Earls edition of the *Donegal Annual* marked, in a very significant way, the importance of this event in the history of Donegal. The articles featured much modern research and also included research works from the past. The photographs, maps and documents included in the *Annual* were of



*Emerson Lecture : left to right - Anthony Begley, Matt McNulty, Helen Meehan, Col. Declan O'Carroll, Vincent O'Donnell and Conor Carney..*

the highest quality and great credit is due to Mr. Seán Beattie, Editor, his Editorial Board and the numerous contributors for the quality of this commemorative edition. A first for the Society was the production of a DVD on the Flight of the Earls by Mr. Seán Beattie

to accompany the *Annual*. Needless to say this edition was a sell-out and reflected very well on the quality of the work produced by County Donegal Historical Society



*Field Day at Portnamurray, Rathmullan, 12 August 2007. (Photo A. Quinn)*

## OFFICERS 2007

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**Hon. Editor** Seán Beattie  
**PRO** Eamon McIntyre  
**Ast. PRO** Connie Duffy  
**Curator** Anthony Begley  
**Director of Archaeological Survey** Judith McCarthy

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 Arthur Spears  
 Seamus Gildea  
 Eddie O'Kane

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 Arthur Spears  
 Kathleen Carr

### Executive Committee (in addition to above)

Rev. Dr. P. O'Baoighill  
 Joseph O'Hegarty  
 Don Harte  
 Paddy McMenamin  
 Declan O'Carroll

### Website

Vincent O'Donnell

# SCHOOLS' ESSAY COMPETITION 2007

## *Patrick Shallow.*

The thirty-third annual schools' essay competition produced some excellent contributions from schools all over the county, although the number of entries was slightly down on last year. The theme for this year was The Flight of the Earls and students were encouraged to explore any of the following aspects of the event – the Nine Years War, the Plantation, and the state of society both before and after the 1607.

Carndonagh Community School examined the Flight as well as the journey to Rome while Pobal Scoil Ghaoth Dobhair produced a study of surnames. In the primary section, Glenswilly NS managed to cover a wide spectrum of topics using excellent graphics while Murroe NS dealt with the Plantation. The folders and exhibition stands were a credit to pupils, teachers and parents of the children, who displayed great enthusiasm for our heritage.

## RESULTS

*Harley-MacDonagh Trophy* : Winner – Glenswilly NS, Runner-up – Murroe NS

*Fr Fitzgerald Trophy*

Winner – Pobal Scoil Ghaoth Dobhair; Runner-up – Carndonagh C.S.

*Emerson Award*

Murroe N.S

*Cecil King Cup*

Winner – Patrick McNelis – Shane Curran (joint winners) Carrick V.S  
Runners – up – Barry O'Donnell, Sharon Jones (Carrick VS)

*Small Groups*

Primary

Winners- D. Gallagher, J. Friel, and S. Dunleavy from Glenswilly

Runners-up – E. McLean and K.O'Grady from Murroe

*Secondary*

Peter and Kieran Fox, Royal and Prior Comprehensive School

*Individual –*

Winner – Ellen Nugent, Creevy NS, Ballyshannon

Runner-up – Aoife Kennedy, Murroe NS.

# LIST OF MEMBERS

John Adams, 9 Hoppet Close, Great Oakley, Corby, Northants, NN18 8JQ UK  
 Seamus Airton, "Gaoth Dobhair", Bothar Mullach Ide Ard EidheanBaile Atha Cliath 5  
 Allen County Public Library, Genealogy Periodicals P.O.Box 2270, Fort Wayne IN 46801-2270, USA  
 Sara Jane Anderson, The Pear Trees, 12 Partridge Close Greinton, Somerset TA7 9BA  
 Una Anderson, Lismintown, Ballintrala, Co.Donegal Armstrong & Sarsteiner, Jacqueline & James, Ballykinard Rossnaskill, Letterkenny, Co.Donegal  
 Elsie L. Augustin, Unit 18 , 5471 Asbury Lake Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45247-6989, USA  
 Diane I. Bader, 9425 Montevideo Drive, Wilton CA 95693 USA  
 Liam & Eileen Bannon, "Ros Cuilinn", Cornagill Letterkenny, Donegal  
 A.V. Barton, Eden House, Rosbeg , Portnoo Donegal Sean Beattie, Hill Grove Termacorragh, Cudlaff, Donegal Hugh Beattie BCL , Hill Grove, Termacorragh, Cudlaff , Donegal  
 P.J. Begley, 14 Seventree Road, Derry,NI BT47QH Geraldine Begley, Ballydevitt Beg, Donegal Town Co.Donegal Anthony Begley B.A., Carrickboy, Ballyshannon, Co.Donegal Maureen Bergin, 34 Kemp Park, Ballycastle, BT54 6LE Antrim  
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# County Donegal Historical Society

**Cuman Seanchais  
Dhún na nGall**

## — 2008 — *Programme of Events*

**Early Booking to Secretary for Coach Outing is essential,**

For other events just come along on the day.

Further information on field days will be in local papers.

**Further details** may be had from the

Hon. Secretary, Una Mc Garrigle, Parkhill, Ballyshannon.

Tel. 087 2261378

or e-mail [unamcgarrigle@hotmail.com](mailto:unamcgarrigle@hotmail.com)

All subscriptions, due at the beginning of the year, should be sent to

Frank Shovlin, Hon. Treasurer, at

Waterloo Place, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal

or e-mail [fshovlin@eircom.net](mailto:fshovlin@eircom.net)

Visit our website at [donegalhistory.com](http://donegalhistory.com)

## PROGRAMME 2008

**Tues. April 8th**                   **Annual General Meeting**  
Jackson's Hotel, Ballybofey.                   8.00pm

**Wed. May 14th**                   **Schools' Competition**  
Jackson's Hotel, Ballybofey  
Presentation of Awards: 7.00pm  
Topic: "Donegal Folklore 70 years on"  
This will be a smaller scale of the original schools project undertaken by Department of Education and Irish Folklore Commission in years 1937-38.

**COACH TRIP: DUNGANNON**  
**Saturday May 24th      Guide: Art O'Dálaigh**

Visiting the villages of Moy and Charlemont,  
site of Battle of Yellow Ford, site of O'Neill's castle  
and Inauguration site at Tullyhogue.  
Early booking advised: 087 2261378

**Sun. June 1st**                   **Field Day, Ballintra**  
Meeting Place: St. Brigid's Community Centre, Ballintra  
Time: 3.00pm                   **N.B. PLEASE WEAR WALKING SHOES.**  
Guide: John Hamilton, Proprietor.

**Sun. July 20th**                   **Field Day, Killybegs**  
Meeting Place: The Diamond                   Time: 3.00pm  
Guides: Tommy and Bernard O'Callaghan  
Area visited: St Catherine's Well, Maritime Centre.

**Sun. August 31st                    Field Day, Fahan**

Meeting Place: St Mura's Graveyard, Fahan

Time: 3.00pm

Guide: Peter Gurrie of Fahan Community Council

Area Visited: Tour includes the historic graveyard containing the 8th Century St. Mura's Cross, the grave of Agnes Jones (nursing pioneer who worked with Florence Nightingale) and the old Abbey ruins, graveyard where 68 victims of the White Star Liner, *Laurentic*, are buried, etc.

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**Sat. Sept. 20th      Paddy McGill Memorial Lecture**

Venue: The Heritage Centre, Ardara

Time: 8.30pm

Speaker: Dr. Pat Wallace, *Director of National Museum*

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**Sun. Sept. 21st                    Field Day, Dunfanaghy**

Meeting Place: Dunfanaghy Workhouse

Time: 3.00pm

Guide: Cary Meehan

Area Visited: Dunfanaghy Workhouse  
and the Horn Head Megaliths

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**Sat. November 8th      Emerson Memorial Talk**

Venue: Coláiste Cholmcille, Ballyshannon

Time: 8.00pm

Title: "Ballyshannon through the ages"

Speaker: Dermot Shannon, *Archaeologist, Ballyshannon.*

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**ANY OF THE ABOVE ARRANGEMENTS MAY VARY SLIGHTLY.**

