

= Ascall mac Ragnaill =

Ascall mac Ragnaill meic Torcaill ( died 1171 ) , also known as Ascall Mac Torcaill , was the last Norse @-@ Gaelic King of Dublin . He was a member of the Meic Torcaill , a Dublin family of significance since the early twelfth century .

Control of the wealthy coastal kingdom was bitterly contested during Ascall 's floruit , with members of his immediate family , as well as Islesmen and Irishmen , all securing power for brief periods of time . Throughout much of this period , however , the overlord of Dublin was Diarmait Mac Murchada , King of Leinster . In 1166 , after the death of his close ally Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn , High King of Ireland , Mac Murchada was beset by his enemies . At this critical point of his reign , Mac Murchada lost the support of the Dubliners , which contributed to his expulsion from Ireland that year . Not long afterwards , however , he made his return with significant military assistance from mercenary English adventurers . In the latter half of 1170 , Dublin itself fell to the combined forces of Mac Murchada and the powerful English magnate Richard de Clare , Earl of Pembroke .

With the collapse of the Norse @-@ Gaelic kingdom , Ascall and the Dublin elite were forced to flee into what one source calls the " northern islands " , a reference to either the Kingdom of the Isles or the Earldom of Orkney . About a year later , not long after Mac Murchada 's death , Ascall attempted to regain his patrimony from the English . Unfortunately for himself , his invasion of Dublin ended in utter failure , and he was executed by the English governor of the town . Immediately following his fall , Dublin was besieged by a combined force of Irishmen and Islesmen . The town , however , remained firmly in the hands of the English ; and before the end of the year , Dublin passed into the direct control of Henry II , King of England , who converted it into an English royal town .

= = Background = =

Ascall 's father was Ragnaill mac Torcaill ( died 1146 ) , a man who may well have ruled as King of Dublin . The men were members of the Meic Torcaill , a substantial landholding kindred in the kingdom . Several members of this Norse @-@ Gaelic family held the kingship in the twelfth century . One such man was Ascall 's uncle , Brodar mac Torcaill , King of Dublin , who was slain in 1160 .

At the midpoint of the twelfth century , the kingdom was under the overlordship of Diarmait Mac Murchada , King of Leinster ( died 1171 ) . The latter 's ultimate overking , however , was Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn , King of Cenél nEógain ( died 1166 ) . The year after Brodar 's death , numerous sources indicate that Mac Murchada , with a force of Dubliners in tow , formally rendered submission to Mac Lochlainn . In 1162 , the Annals of Ulster reveals that Mac Murchada gained an almost @-@ unprecedented authority over Dublin . There is reason to suspect that his success stemmed from assistance received from Mac Lochlainn . The latter , for example , is recorded by the same source to have laid siege to the town within the year . In fact , this military campaign may have been undertaken to counter the Dubliners ' attempt to install Gofraid mac Amlaíb , King of the Isles ( died 1187 ) to the kingship of Dublin , as recounted by the Chronicle of Mann .

The record of events during the mid part of the twelfth century suggests that Leinster @-@ based overkings of Dublin enjoyed the cooperation of the indigenous leaders of Dublin , and the emergence of the Meic Torcaill during this period may well fit into such a context . When an indigenous ruler was not to be found , however , the Dubliners seem to have sought leadership from the Isles , rather than endure a non @-@ Leinster overking , as evidenced by the aforesaid episode concerning Gofraid . Mac Murchada 's considerable authority in Dublin at this point is apparent through several ecclesiastical grants , foundations , and appointments . Furthermore , two major military operations undertaken by Dublin 's forces in 1164 and 1165 were almost certainly conducted under Mac Murchada 's authority . The former campaign , recorded by Brut y Tywysogion and Brenhinedd y Saesson , concerned naval manoeuvres off Wales , in the service of Henry II , King of England ( died 1189 ) . The latter campaign , recorded by the Annals of Ulster , consisted of involvement in the ill @-@ fated invasion of mainland Scotland , launched by Somairle mac Gilla Brigte , King of the Isles ( died 1164 ) .

= = Fall of Mac Murchada and rise of Ua Conchobair = =

Mac Lochlainn was slain in 1166 , leaving Mac Murchada to fend off his own enemies alone . Other than Mac Murchada himself , another man making a bid for the high @-@ kingship was Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair , King of Connacht ( died 1198 ) . Within the same year as Mac Lochlainn 's demise , Ua Conchobair and his allies expelled Mac Murchada from not only Dublin , but Ireland altogether ; and Ua Conchobair himself was duly recognised as High King of Ireland .

According to the Annals of the Four Masters , he had secured the cooperation of Dublin , and perhaps gained the kingship of the town itself , through a stipend of 4 @,@ 000 cows . In consequence , Dubliners formed part of Ua Conchobair 's forces when he marched to Drogheda and Leinster , where he forced the submissions of the kings of Airgialla and Leinster respectively . In fact , Dublin appears to have formed a key part of Ua Conchobair 's arsenal , and it is apparent that Mac Murchada was doomed without the support of this coastal @-@ kingdom . Certainly , the Song of Dermot and the Earl relates that Ascall ( " MacTurkyl de Diveline " ) had abandoned his former overlord , and the Annals of Inisfallen specify that Mac Murchada was only expelled from Ireland after the Leinstermen and Dubliners had turned against him . Although Ua Conchobair appears to have allowed Mac Murchada to retain his patrimonial lordship of Uí Chennselaig , the Annals of the Four Masters reveals that the Leinstermen and Dubliners assisted Tigernán Ua Ruairc , King of Bréifne ( died 1172 ) in forcing Mac Murchada from this final vestige of authority and into exile .

The following year , Ua Conchobair convened a great assembly at Athboy . The Annals of the Four Masters states that 13 @,@ 000 horsemen attended the meeting ? 1 @,@ 000 of which were supplied from Dublin . One of the many rulers recorded to have attended this gathering is a certain Ragnall mac Ragnaill , styled tigerna Gall ( " lord of the foreigners " ) . The latter 's name and title suggest that he was either an otherwise unattested brother of Ascall , or else an annalist 's mistake for Ascall himself . Meanwhile , after his expulsion from Ireland , Mac Murchada sought out Henry on the Continent , and gained permission to recruit military aid from the latter 's subjects . In the autumn of 1167 , Mac Murchada and his English allies arrived in Ireland , where they established themselves at Ferns . Ua Conchobair responded by penetrating Uí Chennselaig in a campaign , recounted by the Annals of Tigernach , that included military support from Dublin . With Mac Murchada temporally kept in check , a preoccupied Ua Conchobair allowed him to hold onto at least part of his patrimony .

= = Arrival of the English and Dublin 's fall = =

The situation in Ireland remained relatively unchanged until the arrival of a significant force of mercenaries in the summer of 1169 , after which some of Mac Murchada 's former vassals began to come over to his side . According to the Song of Dermot and the Earl , however , the kings of Uí Fáeláin and Osraige , and Ascall ? described by this source as the " lord " of Dublin ? stubbornly refused to support Mac Murchada 's cause . In an apparent show of force that may have been designed to keep the Dubliners onside , the Annals of the Four Masters states that Ua Conchobair led an army to Tara , where he was joined by the forces of the kings of Ulaid and Airgialla , after which the combined army marched upon Dublin . The following year , however , saw the arrival of even more English support for Mac Murchada ; and in August 1170 , Richard de Clare , Earl of Pembroke ( died 1176 ) landed in Ireland and took Waterford by storm . Soon after , Clare married Mac Murchada 's daughter , Aífe , and effectively became heir to kingship of Leinster and the overlordship of Dublin . Unsurprisingly , later in September , the combined forces of Mac Murchada and Clare marched on Dublin , where they confronted Ua Conchobair and his forces .

If the account of the Annals of the Four Masters is to be believed , the Dubliners switched sides at this point , deserted the cause of Ua Conchobair , and further suffered an act of divine justice as their town went up in flames . On the other hand , Expugnatio Hibernica specifies that , whilst negotiations were under way between the forces of Ua Conchobair and the coalition of Mac Murchada and Clare , an English force under the command of Miles de Cogan and Raymond le Gros ( died 1189 x 1192 ) successfully assaulted the town , and caused considerable carnage

amongst the inhabitants . Although the Annals of the Four Masters specifies that the Dubliners were slaughtered in their fortress , after which the English carried off their cattle and goods , Expugnatio Hibernica instead states that the majority of the Dubliners escaped the massacre and retained most of their possessions . The same source states that Ascall and the Dubliners managed to escape into the " northern islands " . This term could well refer to Orkney . On the other hand , it is also possible that the term refers to the Hebrides or Mann ; if so , this source would appear to be evidence that the Dubliners had retained close links with the Isles . According to the version of events preserved by the Song of Dermot and the Earl , the coalition 's conquest of Dublin took place on 21 September .

= = Final defeat and death = =

Within weeks of Mac Murchada 's death at the beginning of May , Expugnatio Hibernica reveals that Ascall made his return to Dublin . The account of events recorded by Expugnatio Hibernica and the Song of Dermot and the Earl indicate that Ascall 's forces consisted of heavily armoured Islesmen and Norwegians . The former source numbers Ascall 's forces at sixty ships , whilst the latter gives one hundred . According to both sources , Ascall 's followers included a notable warrior named " John the Mad " , a figure who may or may not be identical to the Orcadian saga @-@ character Sveinn Ásleifarson .

According to the Song of Dermot and the Earl , the invaders made landfall at the " Steine " , located on the southern bank of the River Liffey , and proceeded to encamp themselves outside the town 's walls . Expugnatio Hibernica relates that they assaulted the walls of the eastern gate , a location that corresponds to St Mary 's Gate , the focus of assault identified by the Song of Dermot and the Earl . Unfortunately for Ascall , the operation was an utter failure that resulted in his capture and death . Both sources relate that the town 's defenders , led by Cogan and his brother Richard , successfully repulsed the invaders , slew John , and captured Ascall as he fled to his fleet . Although Expugnatio Hibernica reveals that Ascall 's life had originally been reserved for ransom , both this source , and the Song of Dermot and the Earl , report that he was soon beheaded on account of his recalcitrance .

The successive deaths of Mac Murchada and Ascall appear to have left a power vacuum in Dublin that others strived to fill . Immediately after Ascall 's fall , Ua Conchobair had the English @-@ controlled town besieged . Expugnatio Hibernica records that he and Lorcán Ua Tuathail , Archbishop of Dublin ( died 1180 ) sent for Gofraid and others in the Isles , asking them to blockade Dublin by sea . According to the aforesaid source , " the threat of English domination , inspired by the successes of the English , made the men of the Isles act all the more quickly , and with the wind in the north @-@ west they immediately sailed about thirty ships full of warriors into the harbour of the Liffey " . Unfortunately for the Irish , Islesmen , and Dubliners , the blockade was ultimately a failure , and Dublin remained firmly in the hands of the English . Ascall was the last Norse @-@ Gaelic King of Dublin ; and before the end of the year , Clare relinquished possession to his own liege lord , Henry , who converted it into an English royal town .