

= Mac Scelling =

Mac Scelling (fl . 1154 ? 1173 / 1174) , also known as Mac Scilling , was a prominent twelfth @-@ century military commander engaged in conflicts throughout Ireland . He is first recorded in 1154 commanding the maritime forces of Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn , King of Cenél nEógain in a bloody encounter against Toirrdelbach Ua Conchobair , King of Connacht . Muirchertach 's naval forces were drawn from the western peripheries of Scotland and the Isles . He next appears on record in 1173 / 1174 , supporting the cause of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair , King of Connacht against the English colonisation of Mide . An early modern Scottish source claims that a man of the same name was a bastard son of Somairle mac Gilla Brigte , King of the Isles . If Mac Scelling was indeed related to Somairle , this relationship could cast light on the latter 's conflict with Guðrøðr Óláfsson , King of the Isles , a man who appears to have opposed Muirchertach at some point in his career . Although not termed so in contemporary sources , Mac Scelling may be regarded as an early archetype of later gallowglasses , heavily @-@ armed Scottish mercenaries recruited by Irish rulers in centuries that followed .

= = In the service of the Meic Lochlainn = =

Midway through the twelfth @-@ century , Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn , King of Cenél nEógain (died 1166) pressed forth to claim to the high @-@ kingship of Ireland , an office then held by elderly Toirrdelbach Ua Conchobair , King of Connacht (died 1156) . In 1150 , Muirchertach invaded Connacht , and succeeded in gaining hostages from the kingdom . Although Muirchertach and Toirrdelbach made peace the following year , their forces clashed the year after that , with Muirchertach 's defeat of Toirrdelbach 's son , Ruaidrí (died 1198) . In 1154 , the forces of Toirrdelbach and Muirchertach again met in a major conflict fought off the Inishowen coast , in what was perhaps one of the greatest naval battles of the twelfth century . The engagement is briefly recorded by the Annals of Tigernach , and expanded upon by the Annals of the Four Masters . According to the latter source , Muirchertach 's maritime forces were mercenaries drawn from Galloway , Arran , Kintyre , Mann , and " the territories of Scotland " . The annal @-@ entry further reveals that Mac Scelling himself commanded Muirchertach 's forces , and that his teeth were knocked out in the affair . Although Toirrdelbach 's forces obtained a narrow victory , his northern maritime power seems to have been virtually nullified by the severity of the contest , and Muirchertach soon after marched on Connacht , Bréifne , and Dublin . As a result of the Dubliners ' resulting submission , Muirchertach effectively secured himself the high @-@ kingship . There is reason to suspect that Muirchertach 's use of foreign warriors ? including Mac Scelling himself ? strongly influenced the composition of Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn , a contemporary Gaelic text that forms a sequel to the epic Táin Bó Cúailgne .

= = An apparent Meic Somairle namesake = =

Mac Scelling 's identity and origins are unknown . His name is similar to that of " Gall mac Sgillin " , a supposed bastard son of Somairle mac Gilla Brigte , Lord of Argyll (died 1164) , noted by the early modern Book of Clanranald . Somairle was a brother @-@ in @-@ law of Guðrøðr Óláfsson , King of the Isles (died 1187) , a man who succeeded to the kingship of the Isles after the death of his father in 1153 . Within a few years , Somairle and Guðrøðr fought for control of the Kingdom of the Isles . Although Somairle succeeded in ousting Guðrøðr , he himself was dead within a decade , and Guðrøðr regained the throne . If Mac Scelling was indeed a member of the Meic Somairle ? the descendants of Somairle ? this relationship may cast light upon Somairle 's struggles in the Isles . For instance , Mac Scelling 's cooperation with Muirchertach could be evidence that Guðrøðr faced united opposition from Somairle and Muirchertach . In fact , there is evidence indicating that Guðrøðr and Muirchertach were indeed at odds at some point in the 1150s or 1160s , as the former appears to have briefly gained the kingship of Dublin at the expense of Muirchertach 's authority as overlord . Nevertheless , it is also possible that the battle took place before Somairle and Guðrøðr

struggled for the kingship . Guðrøðr is otherwise known to have married a granddaughter of Muirchertach , and seems to have had an earlier marriage to another member of the Uí Néill . These matrimonial unions could be evidence of an alliance between Guðrøðr and Muirchertach in the 1150s . Mac Scelling 's participation in Muirchertach 's service , therefore , could have been undertaken during a period of cooperation between the Isles and the Uí Néill .

= = In the service of the Uí Conchobair = =

In the last third of the twelfth century , Diarmait Mac Murchada , King of Leinster (died 1171) was deposed and driven from Ireland by his rivals . He subsequently enlisted the aid of English mercenaries and launched an invasion of Ireland . In 1170 , the combined forces of Diarmait and Richard fitz Gilbert de Clare , Earl of Pembroke (died 1176) conquered Dublin . The following year , the aforesaid Ruaidrí , who was then the reigning High King of Ireland and King of Connacht , along with Lorcán Ua Tuathail , Archbishop of Dublin (died 1180) , appealed to Guðrøðr for military assistance from the Isles . Although Ruaidrí besieged the town by land , whilst Guðrøðr blockaded it by sea , Dublin remained firmly in English hands . Within the year , Henry II , King of England (died 1189) arrived in Ireland and consolidated English control . One of the few provincial kings who refused to submit to Henry was Ruaidrí himself ; and in 1173 or 1174 , he assembled a massive host from northern Ireland in campaign to bring a halt to the English colonisation of Mide . According to the Song of Dermot and the Earl , one of the numerous rulers who rallied to Ruaidrí 's cause was Mac Scelling himself . This source further states that Ruaidrí enlisted support not only support from Leath Cuinn ? a reference to northern Ireland ? but also from " les Norreys " and " les Norreis " ? two terms that may refer to Norsemen . The Song of Dermot and the Earl , therefore , appears to indicate that Ruaidrí indeed received support from the Hebrides .

= = Archetypical gallowglass = =

The little that is known of Mac Scelling suggests that he was an early archetype of what latter became known as gallowglasses , heavily @-@ armed mercenaries , recruited from the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland by Irish rulers in later centuries . Although first specifically recorded in the last decade of the thirteenth century , gallowglasses were almost certainly utilised at least a generation before . The aforesaid apparent reference to Mac Scelling by the Song of Dermot and the Earl could be evidence that he had taken up residence in Ireland like later gallowglasses .