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# CATHAIR NA MART

Journal of The Westport Historical Society



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CATHAIR NA MART, VOL. 5, NO. 1, 1985  
JOURNAL OF THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ISSN 0332-4117

*Front Cover:*  
Distributing Relief Tickets in the Turf Market, Westport, County Mayo,  
(based on *Illustrated London News*, 6 March 1880).

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**EDITORIAL**

*This is the fifth number in our series of publications on the history of our region. We are confident that we have kept up the high standard which has been set from the beginning, and that the contents will prove a mine of information to the research worker, as well as a source of pride and gratification for the people of the area. We wish to thank all those who helped with its compilation – our contributors, our sponsors and our printers.*

**SHEILA MULLOY,**  
Hon. Editor,  
Westport Historical Society,  
Carrowbaun,  
Westport.

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Photographs by Frank Dolan and Ronna Bloom.  
Maps by Desmond MacCabe and John Mulloy.

## KILMEENA PART I by Jarlath Duffy

This article deals with the area between Westport and Newport in general and the Parish of Kilmeena in particular. The parish of Kilmeena (otherwise Kilmeny, Killmanine, Kilminny, Killveeny etc.) is situated in the Barony of Burrishoole in the ancient district of Umhall.

The modern Parish of Kilmeena dates from the early 19th century when the parishes of Myna and Fahy were joined together, the latter properly referred to as Kilmaclasser. O'Donovan in his letters quotes the story told to him in the 1830s by Robert Ulick Walsh concerning the early history of the parish. 'Two saints Mac Glaise and Miodhna agreed to divide the middle district of Umallia between them by each going to the opposite extremities, Meena to the Western and Mac Glaise to the Eastern, and moving in a straight line towards each other on their knees and wherever they met was to be a point of separation. Saint Meena, however, who had all the roguery of a primitive and modern saint got up on his feet and took to racing, which when Saint Mac Glaise perceived he became so wroth that he stooped down to take up a stone to hit the other with it, on the head. But his hand was stuck to the stone! Recognising that this was the intention of Providence he agreed that Saint Meena was right in playing this piece of roguery upon him, and consented to fix the boundary between their parishes there.

Near this place, in the townland of Roe Kilmeena, there are three stones level with the surface of the ground in which are the prints of the two knees and hand of Saint Mac Glaise, impressed in them on this occasion as an eternal memorial of God's approval of the little holy trick of his favourite Saint Meena. This story accounts for the great breadth of the Parish of Kilmeena in comparison with Kilmaclasser'.<sup>1</sup>

In his field name books the same writer varies the story a little. 'The parishes of Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser were at one time united and the spiritual needs of the inhabitants were looked after by two saints, St. Miodhna and St. Classer. But the two holy men had a disagreement, and decided to part company, and partition the district between them . . .'

O'Donovan tells about the plan and the deception of St. Meena 'The Leight Meena on the north side of a cross road in the townland of Roekilmeena marks the spot where St. Classer was kneeling, when he was about to hurl a stone at St. Meena and the boundary line between the parishes of Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser passes very near it', the writer concludes.<sup>2</sup>

Another local version of the story states that Classer on seeing the deception of Meena fell to his knees on the spot now called Leight Meena, cursing his rival.<sup>3</sup> St. Patrick and St. Brendan are both associated with the Parish of Kilmeena. St. Patrick after his stay on the Reek, Knox tells us, 'established a church in Mag Humail' which he (Knox) says is Kilmeena.<sup>4</sup> D'Alton in *The Archdiocese of Tuam* seems to question whether St. Patrick visited Kilmeena and concludes 'the probable opinion is that he did. For in

the dispute between the Archbishop of Tuam and the Archbishop of Armagh in the 13th century, the latter laid claim to the Church and lands of Kilmeena, and he could have done this only because Kilmeena was a Patrician foundation.<sup>5</sup> D'Alton further states that there was 'never a convent or monastery' in Kilmeena.<sup>6</sup>

St. Brendan is the patron saint of the parish. There is a blessed well in the townland of Myna bearing his name. In the second half of the 6th century Brendan was establishing many monasteries throughout Ireland. Some of these were in the West of Ireland, notably Annaghdown on the shore of Lough Corrib, Inchiquin near Headford and later on, the Island of Inis-Gluair (Inishglora) on the extreme west of Erris.<sup>7</sup> If his association with Kilmeena is true, it is probable that on his journey from Headford to Erris he visited Kilmeena. It is interesting to note that the holy well in the Lankill cillín is also called after this saint. Local folklore tells the story of the wife of one of the O'Malley chiefs who, fleeing from the slaughter in Clare Island, landed in Kilmeena and gave birth to a female child. Bearing her child in her arms she met the holy man Brendan. She told him the story of her flight and asked him to baptise her child. Her husband and the other male members of the family had been killed and she mourned that it was not a son God had given her. Brendan took pity on her and pulling up a 'flagger' from beneath his feet, a well immediately formed and he dipped the child in the well, and the sex was changed and the joyous mother resumed her journey carrying her *son* in her arms.<sup>8</sup>

In Patrick Logan's *The Holy Wells of Ireland* is found the following:

... In Kilmeena parish in Co. Mayo St. Brendan's Well is surrounded by a stone wall about three feet high. Inside the wall the floor is paved with stones with the well in a circle about two feet in diameter, in the centre. The well contained about two and a half feet of water, at the end of a long period of dry weather. This well had a most unusual power; it could change the sex of babies if they were dipped in it. It is believed that once the English ordered the destruction of the O'Malley Clan and killed all the male children and babies. However, a baby girl was taken secretly to the well, which was guarded, and dipped, and so turned into a boy, and from him all the O'Malleys are descended.

O'Donovan in his letters raises the question as to the holy well called after St. Brendan while there is none to St. Miodhna the reputed Patron.<sup>9</sup>

Other places associated with the church include:

Clynish Church (ruins).

Innish Daff (Inis Damh - ox island) W.N.W. of Rosbeg - church (ruins) and graveyard.

Kilmeena Old Church described by O'Donovan in 1838 as follows:

... Only the West gable and a small part of the north side wall are standing. In the gable there is a doorway, nearly 7 feet high; a round arch, round inside and outside, forms the top of this door. The church is not one of the primitive Irish Churches.<sup>10</sup>

Creevagh Graveyard - an unfrequented burial ground in Westport Demesne.

Killeen Graveyard - a graveyard situated in Rusheen.

Further information on these and the holy sites in the Fahy Parish will come later, but let us see what are the earlier references to this area.

O'Donovan in *Survey Field Name Books* lists the following antiquities in the Parish of Kilmeena:

Ardkeen 3 ancient forts  
Ballinthleeva 1 fort  
Carrowbeg 1 ancient fort  
Claggan 1 small fort  
Clooncannawaun 1 ancient fort  
Cross 1 fort  
Derrynaraw 1 fort  
Doonbullaun 1 fort  
Dromgarriv 1 fort  
Drumgony 1 ancient fort  
Gurtawarla 1 fort  
Knockasprughaun 1 fort  
Knocknaboule 1 fort  
Mucklagh 2 forts  
Mweeour 1 ancient fort  
Owentheecheagh (Island) 1 fort on its northern point  
Rosbeg 2 standing stones (called Dermot and Grania's Bed)  
Roscahill 1 fort  
Roslea Island 1 fort  
Rostoohy 1 fort  
Rusheen 2 ancient forts  
Westport Demesne 1 ancient fort

M. O'Donnell in his list drawn up for *Béaloideas* in 1934 adds two more to this list - one each at Kiltyroe and Rosduane.

De Valéra's book *Survey of Megalithic Tombs of Ireland* gives an in-depth account of Dermot and Grania's Bed referred to in the above list by O'Donovan:

... The tomb lies on level ground about 100 yds. west of Ross House. The monument is greatly disturbed. It consists of the remains of a segmented gallery, orientated roughly E-W, surrounded by disturbed cairn debris. A large barn has been built along the southern side of the monument about 3.00m from the gallery. A path runs at a similar distance along the northern side and a fence crosses the western end some 2.00m beyond the most westerly orthostat of the gallery. Two anomalous enclosures abut the megalithic structure. That to the north of the gallery is roughly rectangular and measures 3.50m long (E-W) and 2.00 wide (N-S). The other runs eastwards from the gallery and is roughly oval measuring 4.00m long (E-W) and 2.00 wide (N-S).

The gallery structure extends for 5.30m. High jambs, with a septal stone between them, divide it into two chambers. In the western chamber two sidestones are present on either side. The more westerly stone of the northern side leans heavily inwards and would be .80m high if erect. The second stone on this side is erect and is 1.40m high. Both stones on the southern side are erect. The more westerly is 1.00m high while the other is .60m.

The jambs of the segmentation are set longitudinally. The more northerly is 2.00m high. The present height of the opposite jamb is .80m but standing on edge just outside it, supported on loose stones, is a piece of stone, 1.30m tall, which seems to be broken from it. The total combined height of both would be 2.00m and would match the opposite jamb. The septal stone, .70m high, runs transversely between the jambs. Its top edge slopes down towards the south. Lying prostrate to the south of the segmentation is a block .85m in maximum dimension. In the

eastern chamber the only sidestone of the northern side is pitched to the south into an almost prostrate position. It is 2.55m long, .30m thick and would be 1.65m high if erect. Four overlapping stones averaging .60m in height and all erect, but none firmly set, continue the line of the southern side eastwards from the segmenting jamb. It is very doubtful if any of these are in situ. A stone set transversely at the eastern end of the gallery is 80m high. It is very probably a jamb and may, perhaps, mark the entrance.

The enclosure lying east of the gallery is formed by stones set obliquely and ranging from .10m to .40m in height. Many of these are loose. The other enclosure, north of the western portion of the gallery, is composed of similar stones almost all of which are loose. It is most improbable that either of these enclosures forms part of the original tomb.

The outline of the mound is largely affected by the fence, path and barn. Rough dry-stone work of no great antiquity, about .50m high, curves around the western edge. The whole of the cairn-remains can give no indication of the original extent or shape of the cairn.

While the number of chambers is uncertain the transverse jamb tends to suggest an entrance at the east and a two-chambered design would, in this case, be probable.<sup>11</sup>

In an article published in the *Sunday Press*, 13 April 1980, Major Blackwell gives an account of digging in the tomb and later suffering a horrible dream. In 1969 the article says it was decided to hold a seance in the tomb. Four people took part sitting around an ouija board on the rocks of the tomb. Major Blackwell tells what happened: 'It was broad daylight and the seance got under way with the four at the ouija board asking who was in the tomb - and the name of ODIN was spelled out. Almost immediately a crucifix which was being held by one of the observers on the tower fell face down onto the staircase. Simultaneously Joe Linton fell face forward to the ground with blood gushing from his head. The seance ended and medical help was summoned.'

Major Blackwell continued: 'A local doctor who treated Joe said that the wound was inflicted with a blunt instrument and but for his long hair he would have been killed. The following day the most horrible smell I have ever experienced hung over the house and penetrated every room. I had never smelt anything so pungent in my life but it disappeared after 24 hours.'

Other people have sensed the evil around the tomb including a friend of mine who is a white witch. Without knowing anything about its background, as we passed it one day, she told me the place was evil. I don't want to disturb the spirits because I want to keep things the way they are here,' adds the Major.

No doubt this area was populated from early times. The numerous forts would suggest this, but care must be taken here as some of these may be of comparative recent times. However, it is reasonable to assume that some of the early settlers in Mayo were in the Kilmeena area, even though as yet evidence like that to be found in the Louisburgh area or at the north end of Mayo at Ballycastle has not materialised. In 1938 Mrs. Maria Ryan (90 years of age) of Knocknabola told the story of the finding of hidden treasure belonging to the Firbolgs in Knocknabola by Pat Corcoran, who came across a gold ring in a tree and suffered no ill luck from his find.<sup>12</sup>

Place names offer some insight into the history of an area. Behind the name Carraig an Draoi (Druid's Rock) off Innisbee (Inis Buidhe) must surely lie another age long before Myna!

A look at the names of the townlands tells some history:

Aghagowla - Achadh Gabhla - the forked field  
Ardkeen - Árd Caoin - beautiful height  
Ballinacarriga - Baile na Carraige - town of the rock  
Ballinlough - Baile an Locha - the town of the lake  
Ballour - Baile Úr - Newtown  
Ballybrock - Baile Broc - badgers town  
Ballyknock - Baile an Chnoic - town of the hill  
Barley Hill - Cnoc na hEornan  
Bawn - (Boffin) - Áit na Bó Finne - place of the white cow  
Bochullin - Both Chuilinn - hut of the holly  
Booley - Buaile - byre  
Broca - Brocach - a badger's set  
Buachagee - Buac na Gaoithe - windy height  
Buckfield - Cill Dá Bhoic - Church of the belly shaped hills  
Buckagh - Boc Mhagh - deer plain  
Cahir - Cathair - fort  
Carrowbeg - Ceathramhadh Bheag - the little quarter  
Carrowholly - Ceathramha Chalaídh - ¼ beside harbour, ¼ of the callow;  
Carrtha Calaidh - pillar of the landing  
Cartoon - Cartún - a quarter  
Castleaffey - Caisleán Laimhbhe - Laffy's Castle  
Claggan - Claigeann - a round rocky hill  
Clogher - Clochar - a stony place  
Clooneen - Cluainín - little meadow  
Cloonkeen - Cluain Caoin - fair meadow  
Conrea - Con-reidh - mountain plain of the hounds  
Coolbareen - Cúl Barrfhionn - fair nook  
Corratowick - Cor a' tSeabhaic - round hill of the hawk  
Corrigaun - Corragán - a rocky height  
Cranareen - Crannairín - a place of small trees  
Creevagh - Craobhach - bushy land  
Cross - Crois - a cross  
Culthrein - Coill Tréin - wood of the strong (men)  
Cushalogart - Caiseal an Fhógairt - stone fort of warning  
Derrylea - Doire Liath - grey oak wood  
Derrynanaff - Doire na nDamh - oakwood of the oxen  
Derrynaraw - Doire na Ratha - wood of the fort  
Derryribbeen - Doire Róibín - Robin's oakwood  
Drimard - Druim Árd - high hill  
Drimaboe - Druim na Bó - ridge of the cow  
Drimulra - Druim Iolra - eagle ridge  
Drumgarve - Drumgarbh - rough back of the hill

Drumhuskert – Druim Tuaisceart – northern ridge  
 Drunagh – Dronnach – humpy townland  
 Dunbullan – Dún Bullán – fort of the bullocks  
 Fahy – Faiche – Green  
 Fox Hill – Cnoc an tSionnaigh  
 Gortawarla – Gort a' Mharla – field of daub (brick)  
 Gortnaclashagh – Gort na gClasach – field of the trenches  
 Gubbathick – Gob an tSoic – ploughshare  
 Gurtheen – Goirtín – little garden  
 Kilmeena – Cill Mhíodhna – Meena's Church  
 Kiltyroe – Coillte Ruadha – red woods or hazel  
 Knockasproca – Cnoc a' Sprotha – hill of mutilation  
 Knockballagh – Cnoc Ballach – speckled hill  
 Knockboy – Cnoc Buidhe – yellow hill  
 Knockieveen – Cnoc Aoibhinn – pleasant hill  
 Knockinisky – Cnoc an Uisce – hill of the water  
 Knockmoyle – Cnoc Maol – bare hill  
 Knocknabola – Cnoc na Buailéadh – hill of shieling (dairy place)  
 Knockovanloman – Cnoc a' Bheann Lomáin – summit of the exposed peaks  
 Mayour – Magh Úr – new plain or magh odhar – dun plain  
 Money – Muine – place overgrown with bushes  
 Moynagh – Maighne – small plains  
 Mucklagh – Muclach – common for pigs  
 Pigeon Point – Ros na hEilte – Deer point  
 Rawe – Rath – fort (above Hawkshaw's hill in Carrowholly)  
 Roe – Rua – red  
 Rosbeg – Ros Beag – small headland  
 Roscahill – Ros Chathail – Cathal's headland  
 Rosehill – (old name Gob-Rua) – red headland  
 Roslaher – Ros Láthair – middle headland (*or* of the site)  
 Roslea – Ros Liath – grey headland  
 Rosmoney – Rosmuine – headland of shrubbery  
 Rosmindle – Rosmiondáil – headland of fertile patches  
 Rosmore – Ros Mór – big headland  
 Rosnakilley – Ros na Cille – headland of the church  
 Rostuohy – Ros Tuaithe – headland of the district  
 Rosduane – Ros Dubháin – headland of the (fishing) hook  
 Roskeeran – Ros Caorthainn – headland of the rowanberry  
 Rossow – Ros Samhadh – headland of the sea mist  
 Rusheen – Roisín – little headland  
 Sgardan – Scárdán – a small cascade  
 Shandrum – Sean Druim – old hill  
 Shanvalley (Old Walls) – Sean Bhaile – old town  
 Slinaan – Slinneán – a shoulder blade  
 Sloger – Slogach – full of pits(?)  
 Tonaraha – Tón na Ratha – bottom of fort

Tubbercoyne – Tobar Chadhain – Coyne's well  
 Windmills – Muileann Gaoithe

#### Islands

Calf Island – Oileán na nGamhna – island of the calves  
 Clynish – Clai-Inis – island of the ditch  
 Corrigeenrevagh – Carraigín Riabhach – grey little rock  
 Crevinish – Creamh Inis – garlic island  
 Cullin – Cuileann – holly  
 Derrinish – Doire-Inis – oakwood island  
 Freaghillaun – Fraoch-Oileán – Heather island  
 Illanatevidilla – Oileán a' tSeimhdille – island of the beetle  
 Inishbee – Inis Buidhe – yellow island  
 Inishcottle – Inis Coitil – Cottle's island  
 Inishcuil – Inis Coill – wood island  
 Inishdamh – Inis Damh – ox island  
 Inishfesh – Inis Feis – festival island  
 Inishgort – Inis Goirt – field island  
 Inishgowla – Inis Gabhla – fork island  
 Inisheeney – Inis Aonaigh – market island  
 Inishoo – Inis Umha – island of the cave  
 Inishlaghel – Inisleamh Coille – elm wood island  
 Inishloy – Inis Láidhe – island of the spade  
 Inishlyre – Inis Ladhair – fork island  
 Inishmuilt – Inis Molt – island of the wethers  
 Inishnakillew – Inis na Coille – island of the wood  
 Inishraher – Inis Raithneach – island of the ferns  
 Inishturk – Inis Torc – boar island  
 Islandtaggart – Oileán a' tSagairt – priest's island  
 Taash – Tais – (?) soft land

The above list has been compiled from the following:  
 Eoghan Ó hAodha, M. O'Donnell, John O'Donovan, and some local people.  
 In the follow-up article to this, amendments will be made.

If material to tell about the early historic period is somewhat scanty, the same cannot be said for the end of that period and the following medieval period.

In the townland of Money mearing Rosmoney is a cave known as The Dane Hole. Where Colm Staunton's house is, was the site of Bawn Castle (Bauvoon) which once belonged to a branch of the Burkes – the McPhilibins. Across the road is the ruin of a windmill in the townland of Rusheen. Folklore tells of the fairy white cow which came to feed on the land which was richest and hence the name of the castle. When O'Ruairc Prince of Breifne came on a pilgrimage to Cruach Phádraig it is said he waited the night in Bawn Castle. A row developed between O'Rourke and McPhilibin, the latter being killed in a duel. Some say McPhilibin's ghost is still to be seen . . . . . O'Rourke is



*St. Brendan's Well.*

*Cillín at Rusheen.*



remembered more for his wife than himself because it was she who eloped with Dermot McMurrough King of Leinster, the man who fled across the Irish sea to get help and brought the Normans to this fair land. Local folklore claims that there was a church at the Cillín for the McPhilibins with a private walk from the castle to the church.<sup>13</sup> Before this monks arrived from Norway. Tradition had it that it was they who tilled the land with tall wheat and built the windmill for grinding the corn. Measurements of the remains of the windmill in 1938 were as follows: inside diameter 12 feet; walls 3 feet wide; 2 doorways each 3 feet x 6 feet. Building 2 storeys high with the first storey 10 feet high.<sup>14</sup> South of the fort lies Ros na hEilte (called today Pigeon Point) which was reserved by the McPhilibins for deer. On the Carrowholly side of the Demesne lies Winter's Hill, then Bawn. The inlet between Farrell's Hill on Pigeon Point and the windmill is called Bán Strand. From Farrell's Hill to Roslea is called Gortmore – the big field. All the above is evidence of a busy life in the area with the open sea to the west from where, no doubt, traders or invaders came. Some settled. In 1939, 25 silver bracelets and fragments were discovered on the peninsula which terminates in Urrisaun Point, in the townland of Cushalogart, Kilmeena parish. The discovery, which occurred during the course of potato moulding, was made at a spot only six yards from the shore in an area which, in the memory of the oldest local resident, had never previously been cultivated. According to the finder, the bracelets were linked together when unearthed at a depth of approximately 12 inches (30cm) below the surface. They were covered only with soil, and there were no remains of any container, although the soil around them seemed to be darker than the surrounding earth, suggesting that they may originally have been contained in a pouch or box of purely organic material. The find was reported to the National Museum of Ireland and acquired for the Museum with the help of the Royal Irish Academy.

As regards both shape and decoration, the bracelets are unparalleled amongst earlier Irish material. Numismatic evidence from England and Scotland demonstrates that they were in vogue there during the 10th century and early 11th century. One possible explanation of the Cushalogart hoard is that it represents loot won from a marauding company of Vikings venturing up the coast from a base such as Limerick. It was the presence of individual Vikings that was responsible for the occurrence of these bracelets, as opposed to their being adopted as fashionable by the native Irish.<sup>15</sup>

O'Donovan refers to a fort near the townland of Cushalogart on the island of Áit Tighe Cliath, which he says is said to have been a Danish fortification, but which was more probably a Damonian one.<sup>16</sup>

Another story in folklore tells about the treasure of Innishoo which a Dane in flight hid with the help of a local man. The latter promised to mind the treasure. But the Dane slew him on the spot. His spirit is now there to fulfil the promise he made. Inishdaff too has its folktale with a Dane who uses the son of a local man in his distillery to help him. The Dane prospers but the father of the helper is jealous. The Dane assured him that he would give him the recipe but that he was afraid of his son – his helper. He impressed the

father so much that he got him to kill his son. Having done that, the Dane now told him 'I have the secret now to myself and you may kill me but you will not get it.'<sup>17</sup>

Castleaffey stands out as a landmark for the medieval period. It is said to have been built by Gráinne na gCearrbhach Ó Máille who flourished in the reign of Queen Elizabeth of England.<sup>18</sup> Local tradition explains the name Affey as belonging to one of the Burkes.<sup>19</sup> Anne Chambers associates Gráinne with Bawn Castle and Castleaffey near Westport.<sup>20</sup> In giving an account of Gráinne's son Tiobóid na Long she tells us he was fostered firstly with Edmund MacTibbott, a minor chieftain who resided at Castleaffey in Burrishoole, and later with Myles McEvelly at Kinturk Castle in the barony of Carra. Fosterage, she tells us, was especially important for the young Tiobóid as the involvement by both his parents in the political scene left little time for rearing a child.<sup>21</sup> 'Within the family of his foster parents, Tibbott received all the affection, discipline and instruction bestowed by Edmund and his wife on their own children. His education would have placed much emphasis on mastering the skills and techniques of warfare, leadership and diplomacy. The use of the javelin, bow and arrow, sword, dagger and dart had to be mastered, both on foot and on horseback.'<sup>22</sup>

Later she describes how when Robert Luccopp, the captain of a Scottish merchant ship en route to Scotland with a cargo of wines and provisions, was anchored in Burrishoole, Tiobóid's cousin David Bourke, together with others, boarded Luccopp's ship and murdered him and his crew, seized the ship and its cargo, and set sail out of the bay only to be eventually wrecked further down the coast.<sup>23</sup> Tiobóid, his son Miles, with others, were summoned to Dublin Castle on suspicion of involvement in the murder but they all were subsequently released. Local legend has it that Tiobóid was murdered near Ballintubber Abbey in 1629.<sup>24</sup>

Fulmar Petrel gives a graphic description in *Grania Uaile* of Kilmeena Castle (Castleaffey). Gráinne is coming into the castle.

... The outworks passed they entered the keep. The central hall, dimly lighted by one heavily mullioned window high up in the eastern wall, was surrounded by a gallery, from which hung arms, swords, pikes, shields, while on the walls were matchlocks and powder-horns mounted in polished brass. The centre of the room was occupied by a table of dark red wood brought from the Spanish Main. Dressers with shelves loaded with Dutch ware and silver plate stood against the walls, and benches and chairs were there for a goodly company. From the heavy rafters of the oak ceiling an iron lamp hung by chains of grotesque design, while at each side of the high fireplace iron brackets for torches of bog-wood were fixed to the walls. The dry rushes with which the floor was strewn gave out an agreeable odour and mingled with the smell of smoke from the turf smouldering on the great hearth which was a necessary adjunct of an Irish home.

Ascending by one of the stone staircases in the thickness of the wall, we enter a spacious chamber with a limestone mullioned window opening towards the bay, through which a flood of light poured from the sun, now sinking towards the western sea.

In the opposite wall of the castle a window of similar structure looked out upon the sedgy swamp to the eastward. This apartment was divided by an oak screen into a sleeping and a living room. Oak wainscoting lined the walls, which were here and



*Leacht Míodhna (The Leacht is behind the hedge on the left).*

*Fort opposite Golf Course.*



there adorned with old flags taken from wrecks or captured in war – faded flags of several nationalities, all suggesting strange histories, could they but speak of the scenes over which they had last waved.

From the groined stone roof hung two silver lamps, and on the embroidered seats lay some rich silks. This was the women's apartment, where no man ever entered except he was a near relative.

The only openings in the southern and northern walls of the castle, which were those most exposed to attack, were loopholes or arrow slits, which gave some dim light to the passages in the thickness of the walls.

Leaving the women's apartment by a door in either window niche, we can ascend to the floor above by one of these hidden stairways.

Here several small chambers, occupying the whole width of the castle, provided sleeping accommodation to the men of the household, and from these there was easy access to the battlemented roof.

From this lofty viewpoint we can look down on the glassy bay inside the islands, where men in boats were busy loading the ship, the still evening air broken by their shouting and the creaking of pullies and clatter of oars. On the land side the castle bawn or court was protected by a swamp and afforded room for outoffices of various kinds – stores, stables, and the dwellings of the Scotch warders of the castle. Standing as the castle did between a swamp and the shore of the creek, the most vulnerable points in its position were the approaches from the north and from the south. Here walls and loop-holed towers stood as outworks, but the real strength of the fortress lay in the immensely strong masonry of the keep and in the fact that the owners held command of the sea. Outside the fortifications were numerous skin-covered cabins of the kerne, herdmen, and such like, whose business it was to tend the cattle on the island and on the vast pasturages which extended inland, or, when occasion required, to take matchlock, pike, or battle-axe, and man the galleys for any desperate undertaking. On the outer fortifications several pieces of cannon known as falcons were mounted, and on the battlemented keep two long Spanish four-pounders of brass shone bright in the sunshine.

Kilmeena Castle, though not so large as many of those the ruins of which one sees in the more central portions of the country, was a fortress of no mean strength, and stood there defying the invader and both protecting and dominating the people who looked up to it as the centre of their world.<sup>25</sup>

Today Castleaffey is but a ruin. Tradition says that it was attacked by the enemy using cannon balls, some of which have been found by the local people in the past.<sup>26</sup> No doubt it saw much of local history from the 13th century on under the Burkes, and before that as a caiseal – a stone fort.

The Strafford Inquisition of Co. Mayo which opened at Ballinrobe on 31 July 1635, describes in detail the ownership of land in Co. Mayo over the previous 10 years. The special advantage of this inquisition is that it contains the most detailed surviving account of the ownership of land in the county – before any plantation was decided upon. The general picture is of a great many small freeholders and a few greater landowners.

Below is set out extracts from the chapter dealing with the Barony of Burrishoole from the Inquisition.

... Oliverus Bourck, of Moyny – 1 cartron of Moyny in the town of Ballinlogha and ½ cartron in the qr. of Carrowbegg and Derrinrath in the town of Ballitrasna; and 1 cartron called Rossecabell in the town of Cosselachie, alias Castleaffie, until that about 3 years since he did mortgage the same unto the right honourable the lord viscount Mayo and his heirs for £20 st. –

Callagh mc Gibbon – the other moiety of the said cartron of Gortnecree from the last day of June 1625 until 14 August 1634, at which time he did mortgage the

same unto Edmund mc Gibbon for £10 st. –

Edward Bourck mc Walter – 1 cartron in the qr. of Ilanemore from the last day of June 1625 until the last of November 1634, at which time he did mortgage the same unto John Crone mc Keone and his heirs for £4 st. –

William mc David Bourck – 1 cartron in the half qr. of Ardkeen.

Tibbott Bourke, of Moynie – 1 cartron in the qr. of Kanemore, in the town of Cosselachie; ½ cartron in the half qr. of Ardkeene in the said town of Cosselachie, and 1½ cartons in the qr. of Moynie in the towne of Ballenlogha.

Said Tibbott – ½ cartron in the qr. of Carrowbegg and Derryenrah in the town of Balletrasnae for the last day of June A.D. 1625, until that about a year since he did mortgage the same to Randolph mc Mullmorey mc Donnell of Clogher and his heirs for the sum of £11 st. –

Hubert Bourk, of Moyney – 3 half cartrons in the qr. of Moynie, and 1 cartron called Inishlanghell in the town of Cossahy.

Said Hubert Bourk – ½ cartron in the half qr. of Ardkeene aforesaid from the last day of June 1625, until that about 2 years since he did mortgage the same to Edmond mc Gibbon, of Mahanagh, and his heirs for the sum of 6 pounds st.

Said Huberte – 3 half cartrons in the qr. of Leighcarrowbegg and Derrinrath from the last day of June 1625, until about a year since he did mortgage the same to Randolph mc Mullmorie mc Donnell, of Clogher, and his heirs for £9 st. the condition of redemption of both which parcels is still in the said Hubert.

Walter mc Philbin – ½ qr. of Knockglasse, called the cartron of Knocknemears; and the cartron of Knocknoghrie; and ½ cartron of Aghagowla from the last day of June A.D. 1625 until 23 May 1633, at which time he did mortgage the same unto David Kelly, of Downamona, for £27 st.

Said Walter – 3 half cartrons of the qr. of Cogalla; and ½ cartron in ShaneballyComyn and Knocklogha from the last day of June 1625 until August 1633, at which time he did mortgage the same unto Richard mc Gibbon and William mc Gibbon for £26 st. –

Said Walter mc Philbin – ½ cartron in Shanballyconnyne and Knocklogha; and ½ cartron in Knockglass from the last day of June A.D. 1625 until May 1635, at which time he did mortgage unto Edmund Duffe mc Philbin and his heirs for £10 st.

Walter mc Edmond Gibbon, of Ballyknock, late deceased, whose daughter and heir is Shedy Gibbon, 3 years old, born after her father's death, was from the day of June 1625 until the time of his death the reputed owner or possessor of ½ qr. of Killmneile; 1 cartron called Knockerahie in Ballyknock; 1 cartron in the ½ qr. of Knocklegane, parcel of the half town of Monny; ½ qr. called Inishburcke; and the one moiety of ½ qr. Muccallagh.

Of these lands the lord viscount of Mayo hath had possession since the death of the said Walter Grana, pretending a deed thereof from the said Walter, but no deed or consideration appearing.

Moyler oge mc Gibbon, of Ballyknock, late deceased, was since the last day of June 1625 the reputed possessor or owner of 1 cartron called Cortnecrosse, of this my lord of Mayo is in possession since the death of Moyler oge, being about 4 years, alleging a deed.

½ qr. of Rostowh was mortgaged by Walter mc Tibbott, the said Rickard's father, about 20 years since unto Teige mc Keon, of Killemyna, and his heirs for £3 10s. st. –

Walter Grana mc Tibbott – the moiety of the cartron of Druminaboe.

Said Walter – the other moiety of the said cartron of Druminaboe; and a cartron of the half qr. of Irrishane from the last day of June 1625 until the 24 May 1628 at which time he did mortgage the same to David Kelly, of Downamona, for £20 st.

Said Walter Grana – 1 cartron in the half qr. of Rosstwoy, until he did mortgage the same about 12 years since to Richard Black ffitz Andrew, of Gallway,

merchant, and his heirs for £20 st., the condition of redemption of both which parcels is still in the said Walter.

John mc Gibbon – a cartron in the qr. called Murrney; the 2 parts of a cartron, parcell of the half qr. of Muckollogh.

Walter Kelly of Roskine – 1 cartron of half qr. of Roskine; a cartron of the half qr. of Lettermagherly Ighteragh.

Said Walter Kelly – 1 cartron of half qr. of Roskine aforesaid from the last day of June 1625 until the year 1626, at which time he did mortgage the same unto Dominick ffrench, esq., and his heirs for £9. 13s. 4d. st. –

Ulick mc David oge o Kelly – ½ qr. of Roskine aforesaid.

William Keogh mc Tibbott Bourke – the ½ qr. of Knock Icattane; and the cartron called Killavogie.

Said William – the qr. of Carrowenknockboy until the 5th of May 1618, at which time he did mortgage the same unto Martin Darcy for £20 st.

Said William – ½ qr. of Knockspreckane from the last day of June 1625 until the year 1630, at which time he did mortgage the same unto Walter Reogh mc Stephen and his heirs for £8 st. –

Moyler mc Tibbott, of Ballyknock – ½ qr. of Coolebarry in the townland of Ballyknock; 3 half cartrons of the half qr. of Dromhanagh and Magherybrack in the said qr. of Moyhasten; ¼ qr. of Clonekine in the said qr. of Clonekine, Inishtuirck, and Inishpee, in the townland of Ballykinard.

Richard mc Tibbott mc Gibbon, of Ballyknock – the cartron of Loughknockane from the last day of June A.D. 1625, until that about 6 years since he did mortgage the same to David mc Moyler and his heirs for £6 st. –

Said Richard – ¼ cartron of Inishragher in the qr. of Brae from the last day of June 1625 until March 1634 [?5], at which time he did mortgage the same unto the said Connogher mc Neale and his heirs for £3. 7s.

Said Richard – ½ qr. in the qr. of Carrowrevagh from the last day of June 1625 until 14 August 1634, at which time he mortgaged the same unto Constantine mc Kiggon and his heirs for £20 st. –

Riccard oge mc Gibbon and Shane mc Gibbon – 5 half cartrons in the qr. of Kinereisk; and 2 one third parts of half a cartron of Keillellragh of the townland of Ballyknock.

Mary ny Gibbon – ½ part of half a cartron of Killellragh in the town of Ballyknock aforesaid.

William Crone mc Gibbon – 1 cartron in the qr. of Keillellragh in the town of Ballyknock called Knocecomyne.

Jonack mc Philbin and Tibbott mc Gibbon – ½ cartron of Cregganahorna in the townland of Ballyknock.

Borrishoule – Sir Richard Blake, knt. – 1½ qr. of Killevally; ½ qr. of Limrie; 1 qr. of Moate; a qr. of Fieraghmore; 1 qr. of Capmernaire; 2 qrs. of Killyvirre, alias Killvry; and 1 qr. of the island of Clinish.

These lands following are belonging to the see of Tuam, the townland of Ballybarranan containing 4 qrs: – 1½ qrs. in Mayore; 1 qr. in the townland of Cossiny; 2 qrs. in the townland of Aghagowre; ½ qr. of the town of Mayore; 2 qrs. of Kilmaclasser; 1 qr. of Inisduffe; 1 qr. of Killmine; 1 qr. of Ellaneden.

Jonack mc Gibbon – ¼ part of the island of Cullin containing in all a qr; the ½ qr. of Munney called Rosse and Knockanish in the qr. of Knockanegane; the ½ cartron of Illanetaggard; and ¼ part of the cartron of Inishragher.

The right honourable the earl of Ormond and Ossory – the castle and manor of Borrishoule and the qr. called Rossgiblin; the qr. called Carrankoy; the qr. called Killterrought, alias Killternaught; the qr. of Rossmore; the castle, town and 4 qrs. of Carrickowla, alias Rath, viz. the qr. of Rossbeary, alias Rossbuire; the qr. of Carrowsallogh; the qr. of Rathreogh; the qr. of Carrowbegg, alias Lecarrowbegg; the cartron called Knockkillin; and the cartron called Inishquirck; the castle, town and 8 qrs. of Ballyveaghane, with the fishings thereunto belonging, viz. the cartron

of Knockthomas; the cartron of Knockgowry; the cartron of Carrowbane; the cartron of Royvorane; the qr. of Twoghmore, alias Teachmore; the ½ qr. of Graffy; the ½ qr. of Carrowbeg; the ½ qr. of Knockyrath; the ½ qr. of Roscleane; the qr. of Knocknamonaigh; the ½ qr. of Knocktowny and Carownetowine; the ½ qr. of Kilbride; the qr. of Roscleane; the qr. of Knocknetenyll; the ½ qr. of Knocknegreely; the ½ qr. of Knocknetornory; the castle, town and 4 qrs. of Ballyvough, alias Craigneedy, viz. the qr. of Carrowcorglassie; the qr. of Killine, the qr. of Knockbanelleman; the ½ qr. called Lecarrow; the ½ qr. of Killmore; the town, and 4 qrs. of Ballyogowe, viz. the qr. of Knockunlyne; the qr. of Knocknibily; the qr. of Rosduane; the ½ qr. of Rosslare; the ½ qr. of Sheandrome; the town and 4 qrs. of Balledowlagh, alias Clogher, viz. the qr. of Carrownellano; the qr. of Carrowtowtagh; the qr. of Dromfinevonagh, the qr. of Carrowneclohy; the castle, town, island and 4 qrs. of Ackill, commonly called and known by the name of the 4 qrs. of Ackill; the town and 4 qrs. of Ballykinard, viz. the qr. of Carrowmore; the cartron of Lorgin; the cartron of Iffernane and Knocktalyne; the ½ qr. of Killermenie in Knocknibily; the ½ qr. of Rossson; the ½ qr. of Rossinerbuill; the cartron of Rossbarnagh; the cartron of Carrowgane; the 2 qrs. of Shraghfarnagh and Morryvagh, parcel of the town of Ballycroigh.

Said lord viscount Bourk of Mayo – the manor of Ballyknock; 1 cartron in the town of Ballyknock, called Slagger; ½ part of half a qr. in Ballyknock, called Soccragh; the castle, town and bawne of Brinh, and 3 qrs. thereunto belonging, viz. the qr. of Knocktallyne; the qr. of Rossyne and Rossehely; ½ a qr. in the qr. of Carrowencally; and ½ qr. of Inishgowly from the last day of June 1625 until June 1628, at which time he did mortgage the same to John Lynch, together with the other lands in Carra and Morish, and his heirs for the sum of £250 st. –

Said lord viscount – ½ cartron of Inishrahir; ½ cartron of Illanetaggarte; ½ cartron Shilorowdie and Knockanemoline; the castle, bawne and barbican of Castelaffie, alias Cashellovie; 3 cartrons of the qr. of Castelaffie; the qr. of Clagen, ½ qr. of the qr. of Ilandmore; 3 cartrons of the qr. of Ilandcollen; the carton called Inishgowlyclymane; the ½ qr. of Dromogharve; the qr. of Keelogg; ½ part of a qr. called Inishowe; the town and 4 qrs. of Ballyellmane, viz. the qr. of Knocknemyprickane; the qr. of Garryhore and Gortnaclassagh; the qr. of Knockmonyard; and the qr. of Knocktotane and Killtreane.

Said lord viscount did, in the year 1632, purchase from Stephen Crone, esq., the ½ qr. of Rossemraher for the consideration of £30 st.

Said lord viscount did also, on 6 August 1632, purchase of James Nowlan, of Ballinrobe, gent, ½ cartron in the half qr. of Rosstowgh; and ½ cartron in the half qr. of Irrishane, in the town of Ballytarsny for the consideration of £5 st.

Said lord viscount – the ruinous castle of Ballygurrissy and 4 qrs. thereunto belonging, viz. the qr. of Brockagh; the qr. of Aghagowla; the qr. of Tworgarrow; and the qr. of Knockglasse and Dronniry from the last day of June 1625 until 1 June 1627 at which time he did mortgage the same by lease for 99 years to George ffrench and his heirs for £115 st. –<sup>27</sup>

As a help to the reader it should be noted that 'a quarter contains 4 cartrons, every cartron 30 acres . . . an uncertain quantity, a measure of value not of actual acreage' – 'adjusted' acres?<sup>28</sup>

In the *Book of Survey and Distribution* covering Co. Mayo for the years 1636-1703 are preserved placenames and lands and their proprietors. Below is set out some of the entries for the Kilmeena parish.

Proprietor	Description of Land
Earl Ormond	Knocknebolly 1 qr.
	Rosssduane 1 qr.
	Rossw ½ qr.
Walter Grana McTibot	Drumeneboe 1 cartron



*Kilmeena Church before Penal Times – now in ruins.*

*Windmill, Rusheen.*



Hubert Bourke  
Alex McDonel  
Wm. Keogh McMoyler Bourke

Tibbot McRickd. Bourke

Lord of Mayo  
Moyler McTibbott McGibbon  
Sir Rickd Blake

See of Tuam

See of Tuam

Lord of Mayo

John McThomas McGibbon  
Shedy ny Gibbon  
Jonacke McGilleduffe McGibbon  
John McThomas McGibbon  
Shedy ny Gibbon  
Cormack Richard &  
Laughlin McGneal  
Cormack Ricard &  
Laughlin McGneal

Sheely ny Gibbon  
Richard McGibbon  
Lord of Mayo etc.

Jonacke McGibbon  
Lord of Mayo

Tibbot McRiccard Bourke  
Edmond McWalter Bourcke  
David McEdmond

Money 1 qr.

Knockfittane (Knockicattane)

½ qr. ½ cartron

Knockspracan 1 qr.

Derrynarath 1 qr.

& Carrowbeg

Ballyknocke 4 qrs.

Slagar in Kilelragh 1 cartron

Coolebarry ½ qr.

Cloinish & Freghilane 3 cartrons

Inishoo 1 cartron

Inishdaffe, Inishlia, Inishtlaie,

Rosbeg, Inishmilt,

Inishfesse 1 qr.

Kilmeeny 1 qr.

Gleab Ilandnagowne

Moygower and Lagnamilta

Maynerbeg & Drumard

Crosse in Moyoner and Clooneene

½ qr.

Drumnagariffe

& Drumnara part of Moyower 1½ qr.

Muny 2 qrs.

Muny 1 qr.

Muckallagh 1 qr.

Knocksproe ⅔ cartron

Inishearry 1 cartron

Dorintra 1 cartron

Inisturck ⅔ cartron

Inishpie ⅓ qr.

Cloonkeen (Knockevanlumane) ⅓ qr.

Casselafie ½ qr. ½ cartron

Rushmundill in Casellafie ½ cartron

Clagan ½ qr.

Inishnikallagh ½ qr.

Ilanecullin 1 qr.

Inishgorte 1 cartron

Ilandmore 1 cartron

Quinchiny part of Ilandmore 1 cartron

Moynish – 1 cartron

Ilanederrinish – 1 cartron



*Castleaffey.*

Hubert Bourcke decd.  
 Oliver McShane B  
 Tibbott McRiccald  
 Rickard McTibbit McGibbon  
 Lord of Mayo

Jonack McGalleduffe McG  
 Lord of Mayo

The next lists of landowners and tenants available are not until the 19th century, where Rent Rolls of Lord Sligo and Sir Samuel O'Malley, along with the Griffith Valuations lists for the 1850s, and the Tithe lists, give further insights into the names of the people who occupied these lands in the two preceding centuries.

*RENT ROLL 1818 - MARQUIS OF SLIGO*

Ardkeen & Innishlaffel  
 Attyreece

Villagers  
 Michael Malley  
 Darby Hanreene  
 Owen O'Malley  
 McCale & Co.  
 Edmond Malley  
 Thomas Gibbons  
 Walter Gibbons  
 Cummin Shiells

Inishlanchell - 1 cartron  
 Roscalla - 1 cartron  
 Ardkeene 1/2 qr.  
 Carrowcally 1 qr.  
 Inishgowle 1 carton  
 Inishbeagh 1 cartron  
 Ilandtagart 1 cartron  
 Inishraher 1 cartron

Buckfield  
 Carracally

Claddy  
 Clooneen

Clynish  
 Coolbarreen  
 Coolbareen Farm  
 Standford Park

Cloonkeen  
 Crevenish  
 Derrenish & Innishbue

Derrintaggart

Dorinch

Innishgowla  
 Innishleague  
 Innishlyer  
 Innishraher  
 Innishturk, Innishbullock & Boher  
 Islandmore  
 Islandtagart  
 Knockefittane  
 Knockevanlamane

Myna & Ardkeen  
 Raigh

Do. Bog  
 Raigh

Pat Dougherty  
 Michael Hill  
 Peter Navin  
 Pat Hill  
 Michael Hanrane  
 Hon. Mrs. Browne  
 The Browns & Dean  
 The Booths and M. Arthurs  
 The Carrabines  
 Pat O'Malley & Co.  
 The Scahills  
 Nicholas Fergus  
 Villagers  
 John Browne  
 Michael Kittrick & Co.  
 Villagers  
 John Scully  
 Villagers  
 Roger Toole  
 Michael Gavan & Co.  
 Gavan & Moore  
 Villagers  
 Mrs. Creavy  
 William Gill & Co.  
 Pat Joyce  
 Villagers  
 Robert Buchannan  
 Villagers  
 Austin Joyce  
 Hugh Berry & Co.  
 Villagers  
 James Devanny & Co.  
 John Higgins  
 Anthony McNally & Co.  
 Henry Garravan  
 D. G. Browne  
 James Fox  
 William Fox (Sen)  
 James Keenan  
 The Booths  
 William Fox (Jun.)  
 Peter Gibbons  
 Villagers  
 James Cosgreeve  
 Pat McGuire  
 Pat Devlin

Rosshelthia & Gortmore

Rusheen

Rusheen Bog  
Slogger East

Slogger West

Windmill

Frank Nugent  
John Gibbons  
Catherine Gibbons  
James McGuire  
Rt. Hon. D. Brown  
Peter Joyce & Co.  
Thady Hoban & Co.  
John Cuingan & Co.  
Thomas Seymour  
John Palace & Co.  
Patrick Kirwan  
Pat Garavan  
Connoly & Fox  
James Reilly & Co.  
Villagers  
Owen Hallinan  
Thady Malley  
Peter Toole  
Michael Malley  
Owen O'Malley  
Art Malley  
Villagers  
William Regan  
Pat Garavan  
Pat McNulty & Co.<sup>30</sup>

Griffith's *Valuation of Tenements for the Parish of Kilmeena* in the mid-1850s, offers the following lists of occupiers of land with the townland in question also stated:

Townlands and Occupiers	Immediate Lessors
<i>Inishloy</i>	
John Flynn	Judith O'Donell
<i>Inishdaff</i>	
Martin Forrestal	Judith O'Donnell
Hugh O'Donnell	Do.
Owen O'Donnell	Do.
<i>Inishcuill</i>	
Michael Keane	Judith O'Donnell
<i>Inishcuill West</i>	
Michael Keane	Judith O'Donnell
<i>Taash Island</i>	
Michael Keane	Judith O'Donnell
<i>Inishmolt</i>	
Patrick Sheridan	Judith O'Donnell
James Sheridan	Do.

William Burke Do.  
Thomas Nolan Do.  
Martin Berry Do.  
John Carty Do.  
Patrick Salmon Do.  
Bridget Mulloy Do.  
*Inishfesh*  
Michael Keane Judith O'Donnell  
*Inishbollog*  
Joseph Moore Marquis of Sligo

*Rosbeg*  
Capt. William Houston Judith O'Donnell  
*Roslaher*  
Patrick Sheilds Sir Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.  
Michael Keane Do.  
Michael Gannon Do.  
Richard Mullee Do.  
Patrick Gannon, Sen Do.  
Julia Malley Do.  
Patrick Gannon, Jun. Richard Mullee  
*Rosdooaun*  
John Gibbons Sir Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.  
Martin Gibbons Do.  
Owen O'Neill Do.  
Michael Gibbons Do.  
Patrick McManamon Do.  
James McManamon Do.  
Owen McManamon Do.  
Patrick McNamara James McManamon  
Mary Grady Do.  
William Walsh Sir Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.  
Martin Moran Do.  
Peter Walsh Do.  
Laurence Moran do.  
Patrick McManamon Do.  
Marry Kennon Do.  
James Moran Do.  
Nicholas Ruddy Do.  
Patrick McKeay Do.  
Owen McKeay Do.  
Judith McDonnell Do.  
*Roscow*  
J. Bartridge Sir Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.  
James McManamon Do.  
Patrick Murray Do.

<i>Knocknaboley</i>	
Owen McManamon	William Levingston
Thomas Garravan	Do.
Bridget Barrett	William Levingston
Patrick McKeay	Do.
William Levingston	Marquis of Sligo
Hugh O'Donnell	William Levingston
James Lavelle	Do.
Anthony Gallagher	Do.
Unoccupied	Do.
John Joyce	Do.
Bridget Moran	Do.
Michael Burke	William Levingston
John O'Donnell	Do.
Austin Moran	Do.
<i>Gortawarla</i>	
Edward McCormack	In fee
<i>Kiltyroe</i>	
Sir. Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.	In fee
John Gibbons	Sir Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.
Patrick Moran	Do.
<i>Knockmoyle</i>	
Michael Cawley	John Burke
Ellen Moran	Michael Cawley
Unoccupied	Do.
<i>Roemore</i>	
Darby Lavelle	John Burke
John Toole	Do.
Michael Toole, Jun.	Do.
Patrick Lavelle	Do.
Patrick Toole	Do.
Michael Toole, Sen.	Do.
Dominick Toole	Do.
Margaret Sheridan	Do.
Michael Toole, Jun.	Do.
<i>Shandrum</i>	
Bridget Gavan	Sir Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.
Patrick Gibbons	Bridget Gavan
Owen Walsh	Sir. Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.
Sarah Walsh	Owen Walsh
Michael Keane	Patrick Keane
Patrick Keane	Sir. Rd. O'Donnell, Bt.
Dominick Nolan	Do.
Patrick McNay	Dominick Nolan
Thomas Rose	Sir Rd. O'Donnell
Michael O'Donnell	Do.

Michael O'Donnell	Do.
Michael Keane	Do.
John Mally	Do.
Austin Lavelle	Do.
John Mally	Do.
Austin Lavelle	Do.
Ellen Lavelle	Do.
John Sheridan	Do.
Hugh Gavan	Do.

Unfortunately for this area the lists of tithes paid in the 1830s do not show an individual breakdown of the people paying in a particular village and accordingly will be referred to later only in the context of inter-church relations in the Kilmeena area in the early part of the 19th century.  
*To be continued.*

NOTES

1. *Letters relating to the Antiquities of the Co. of Mayo* (1838) vol. i, pages 230-40.
2. *Ordnance Survey Field Name Books* (1838), Part II, page 1659.
3. *Cill Mhíodhna* (1934), M. A. O'Donnell, page 6.
4. *Notes on the Diocese of Tuam, etc.*, page 24.
5. *History of the Archdiocese of Tuam*, vol. ii, page 38.
6. *Ibid.* p.239.
7. *Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*, pages 210-20.
8. *Cill Mhíodhna*, op.cit., p.37.
9. *Letters relating to the Antiquities of the Co. of Mayo*, vol. i, p.239.
10. *Ordnance Survey Field Name Books*, Part II, p.1657.
11. *Survey of Megalithic Tombs of Ireland*, p.76.
12. Irish Folklore Department, U.C.D. MS No. 88, p.241.
13. *Ibid.* p.383.
14. *Ibid.* p.399.
15. *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 103 (1973), p.78.
16. *Letters relating to the Antiquities of the Co. of Mayo*, vol. i, p.238, par. 488.
17. *Cill Mhíodhna*, op.cit. p.13.
18. *Letters relating to the Antiquities of the Co. Mayo*, vol. i, p.238, par. 488.
19. Irish Folklore Dept. U.C.D. MS No. 88, p.295.
20. *Granaile*, p.171.
21. *Chieftain to Knight*, p.36.
22. *Ibid.* p.37.
23. *Ibid.* pp133-4.
24. *Burke People & Places*, p.28.
25. *Grania Waile*, pp39-43.
26. Irish Folklore Dept. U.C.D. MS No. 88, p.295.
27. *The Strafford Inquisition of Co. Mayo*, pp8-25.
28. *Book of Survey & Distribution*, vol. ii, Co. Mayo p.xli.
29. *Ibid.*, pp98-101.
30. Rent Roll, Marquess of Sligo, May 1818.
31. *Griffiths Valuation of Tenements* pp76-9.

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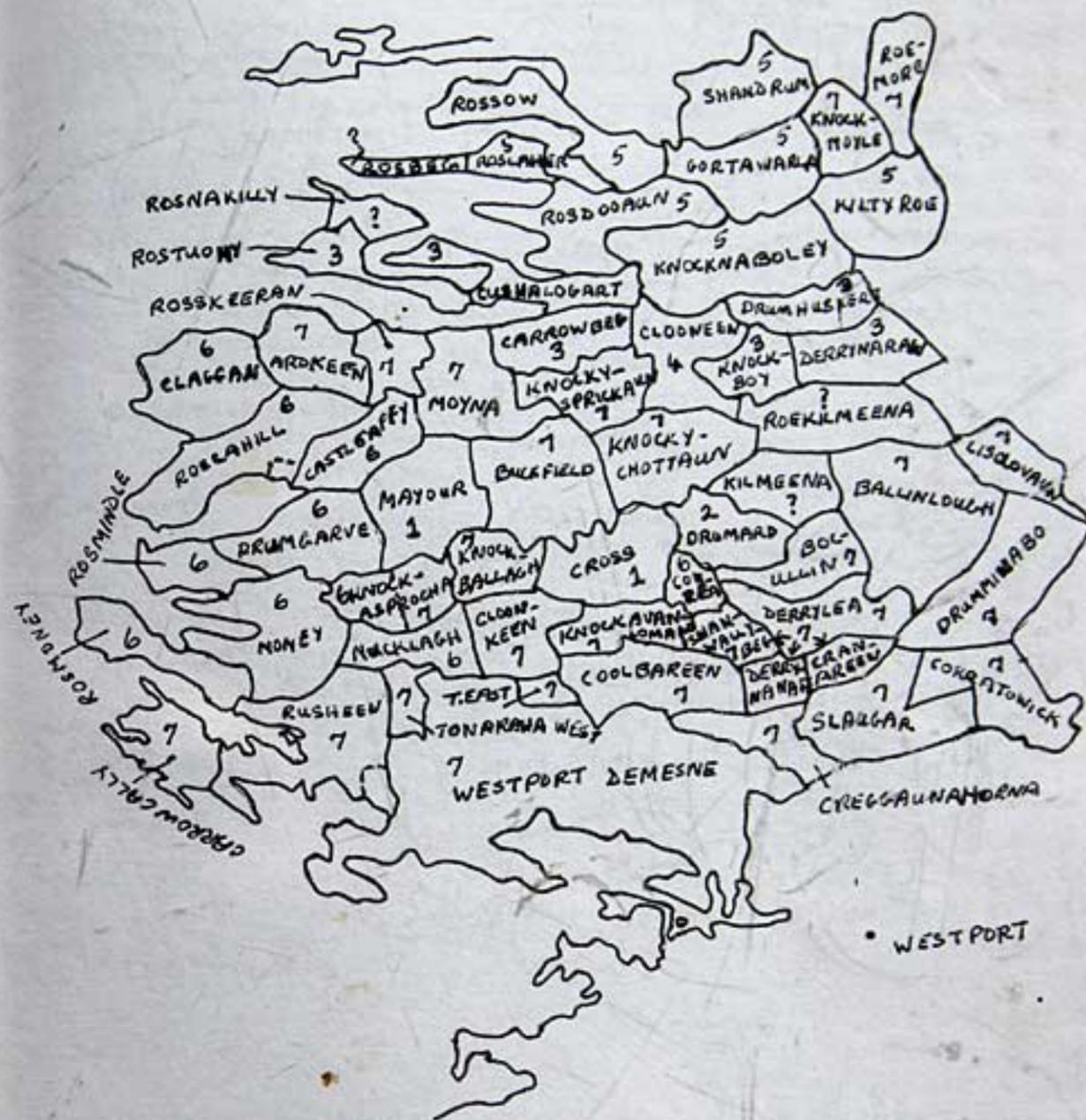
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JARLATH DUFFY: Native of Aughagower, living in Carrowholly, graduate U.C.D. Principal Vocational School, Westport for past 10 years. Founder member and Chairperson, Westport Historical Society. Editor *Cathair na Mart* 1981-84. Co-Editor *Fair Fingal*, 1975

## KILMEENA PARISH

Ordnance Survey 1838

Source: *Ordnance Survey Namebooks, Co. Mayo.*  
 (Nat. Lib.).



- ? Land ownership unidentified  
 1. Anglican Church Land (see of Tuam), [leased probably in perpetuity, to the MacDonald/MacDonnell, (the spelling varies) family]  
 2. Miss McDonnell  
 3. John Knox  
 4. Mr. Burke (probably Walter Burke)  
 5. Sir Richard O'Donel  
 6. Sir Samuel O'Malley  
 7. Lord Sligo



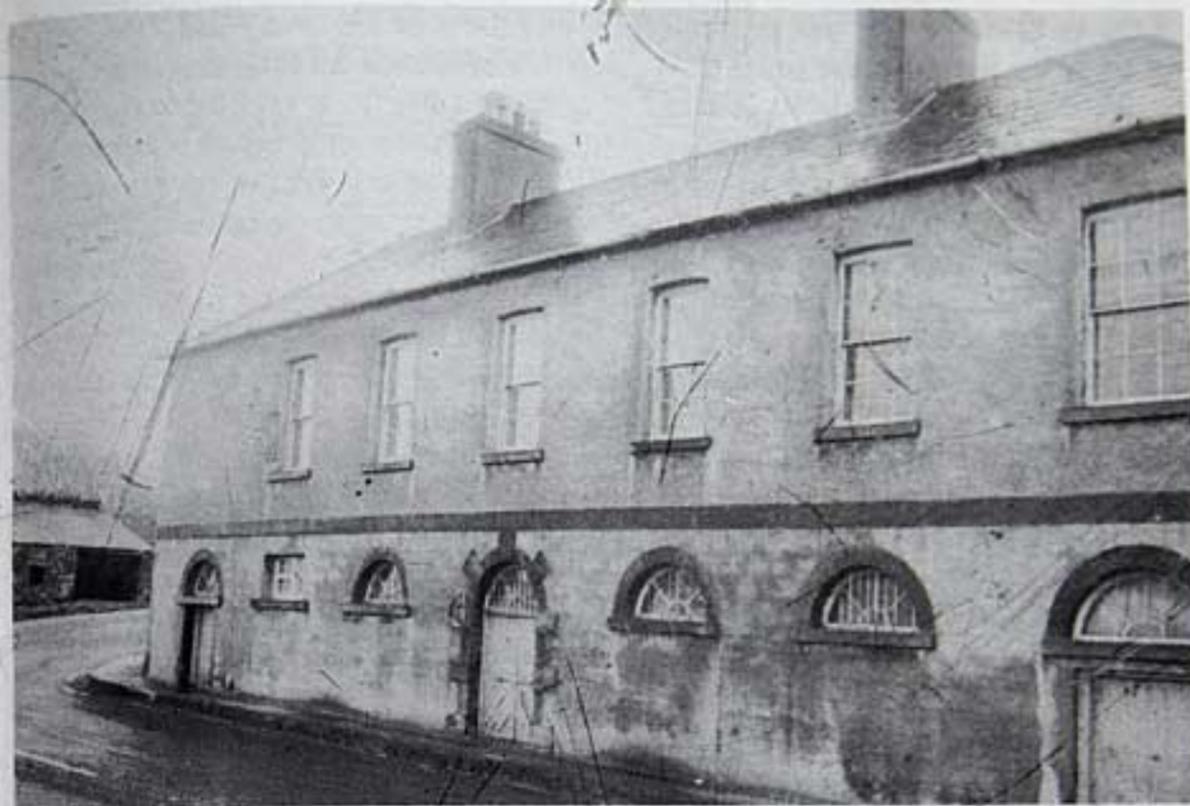
in Westport. During the rebellion the Clendinings were regarded as loyalists, and the house and property were damaged, and wines, spirits, crops and clothing, were appropriated to the amount of £500.

George Clendining took up residence, following his appointment as agent, in the Gibbons property on Mill Street, and became a close associate of Lord Altamont, whose property he administered. He also had close connections with the Moores of Moore Hall and the O'Donels of Newport House. He was a witness at the wedding of George Moore to Louisa Browne, which took place by special licence in Westport House in 1807, and one of his daughters was later to marry Sir Richard O'Donel of Newport House. Their son, Sir George Clendining O'Donel, was the last baronet of that name as he died without issue. The story is told that as a dowry, Clendining offered his daughter's weight in gold, and that for added value the daughter concealed two smoothing irons under her dress.

George married Margaret Nicolson, and their son John was born in 1798. He later entered Trinity College and graduated an M.D., establishing a practice in London. His other sons, George, Junior, and Alexander, were also educated in Trinity College. Alexander acted as agent to the Moores of Moore Hall, and they both assisted in the merchant banking business established by their father. There were five daughters, one of whom met with a tragic accident on Monument Hill. Another married into the O'Donels of Newport House. After the death of the Rev. Alexander Clendining in 1799, George had the maintenance of his two sisters. His widowed mother Eleanor lived with her son Thomas Valentine at Thomastown, where she died in 1830, aged 84.

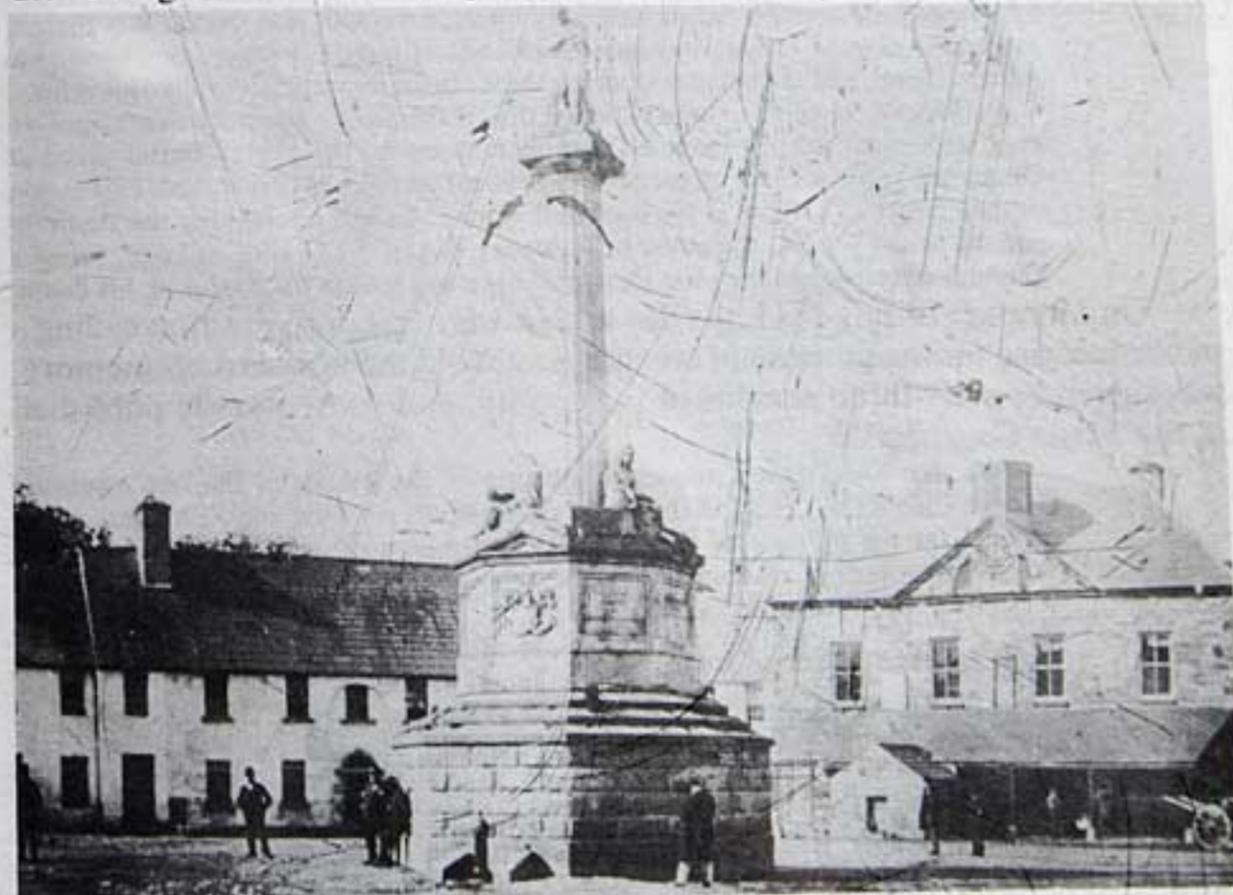
George Clendining was a self-made man. From the humble position of the family on their arrival in Westport, the vicar's son amassed a large personal fortune and became a person of great influence and social standing in the town of Westport. After his appointment as agent to Lord Altamont following 1798, he set up a merchant banking business, at a time when joint-stock banking was in its infancy, and at a time when the town of Westport was growing and developing as a centre of trade and industry with a thriving port. The Clendinings and other merchant families of the period, contributed to this rapid growth by their entrepreneurship and enterprise, and their names were household words in nineteenth century Westport. In 1826 Clendining was appointed Agent to the Bank of Ireland, and established one of the earliest branches of the bank outside of Dublin. The requirements demanded by the governors were £10,000 on deposit with a further £10,000 in securities. The bank flourished, with offices on Mill Street, where George had built an imposing mansion to replace the Gibbons property. The building, in the Gothic style, is peculiar in that the front entrance faces Monument Hill and the rear fronts onto Mill Street.

Like all great men George Clendining was a controversial figure even in his own time, and he should only be judged by the standards of that age, and by a careful study of the records and documents of the time. His politics, religion and position, would have alienated him from the popular movements



*Custom House, Westport Quay.*

*Clendining Monument, Octagon, Westport, ca. 1910 (Laurence Collection).*



of the period. Yet he was respected by members of his own class, and was a well-known figure in the town of Westport. Unwanted infants were deposited on his doorstep, and those in need approached his door seeking 'charitable loans'. A writer to the *Connaught Ranger*, who witnessed the mailcoach travelling the length of the town to collect him and one of the proprietors of the other Castlebar newspaper *Mayo Constitution*, went on to ask 'Who are these Clendinings that they should be entitled to such an unusual compliment?' The local press of the time were deeply involved in politics, the *Constitution* and *Ranger* supporting rival political opinions.

At the age of 73, and following a long illness, George Clendining died at his residence on Mill Street, Westport, on Thursday, 6 July 1843. His remains were removed to the Church of Ireland (now in ruins in Westport Demesne) where for many years his father had ministered and where he himself had acted as a Church Warden. His funeral took place to Aughavale (Oughavale) Cemetery on Sunday 9 July, where his remains were interred in the family plot, to the east of the old church. The following is a contemporary account of these events, taken from the *Connaught Ranger* of 10 July 1843:

... At an early hour on Thursday morning in Westport after a protracted and exceedingly painful illness, borne with Christian resignation and becoming submission to the all-wise providence, George Clendining, Esq., aged 75 years, deeply and sincerely regretted by a numerous sorrow-circle of most attracted relations and friends. During the long period of Mr. Clendining's residence in Westport, he held a variety of important public situations, the confidential duties of which he discharged with unexcelled zeal, undoubted integrity and unflinching fidelity, commanding the respect and at the same time winning the devoted esteem of all who held commercial or monetary intercourse with him. Never was there a more affectionate father, indulgent husband, attracted brother, or thoroughly sincere friend, and the manner in which these attributes were generally appreciated was univocally testified yesterday, when one of the most respectful assemblages we ever witnessed, accompanied his mortal remains to the family burial place at Oughavale, gentlemen of all creeds and political opinions giving audible expression to their heartfelt sorrow at his regretted demise. In Mr. Clendining the destitute and distressed people, not alone of Westport, but of the County at large, found a liberal benefactor and they too, alas, will have sad reason for deploring his death.

On Monday, 10 July 1843, the day after his funeral, a requisition calling a public meeting for the purpose of erecting a suitable memorial to his memory, was signed by sixty-three persons of the county, and subsequently published in the *Mayo Constitution*:

... We, the undersigned, request a meeting of the friends of the late esteemed George Clendining, Esq., at the Hotel of Westport on Thursday, 20th July, at 12 o'clock, for the purpose of adopting the best means of erecting, in the town of Westport, a lasting testimonial to the memory of that venerated gentleman. Westport, 10th July, 1843 (Signed):

Sligo	H. Blake, Lieut. Co., J.P.
Altamont	James Smyth
James de Burgh Browne (9th Lancers)	P. Pouden, Rector, Westport.
Peter Browne	Fitzgerald Higgins, J.P.
J.D. Browne	B. Burke, R.C. Dean, P.P.
Richard Levingston	James Pinkerton
Samuel O'Malley, Bart.	Geo. Gildea, Rector, Newport
Andrew C. Lynch, J.P., D.L.	Courtney Kenny, J.P.



Very Rev. Dean Bernard Burke, P.P., Westport.

George H. Moore, D.L.	A. Thompson, Maj. Gen., J.P.
Owen O'Malley, J.P., D.L.	Graham Acton, M.D.
J.C. Garvey, J.P.	James Cuffe, J.P.
Wm. Levingston.	George Ormsby, J.P.
Patrick C. Lynch, J.P.	Thomas Ormsby, J.P.
George Acton	Thomas Elwood, J.P.
R.W. McIlree, J.P.	W.H. Parker, J.P.
Joseph Burke, J.P.	H. Waldron, J.P.
Benjamin Jennings, J.P.	Robert Eprins
J.J. Stewart, J.P.	Matthew Gibbons
Robert Fair, J.P.	Thomas H. Bourke
Theobald Burke, J.P.	John F. Bourke
Edward Deane, J.P.	M MacDonnell, J.P.
Dominick J. Burke, J.P.	Joseph Myles MacDonnell
R. Buchanan, J.P.	Peter Tuohy
D.J. Cruise, R.M.	Ignatius Kelly, Jn.
John Burke, Ballinew	Patrick Boyd
J. Dillon, M.D.	St. Clair O'Malley
C.J. MacDonnell	Charles O'Malley, Q.C.
W.W. Graham	Patrick Hamilton, M.D.
James Hamilton, Clk.	Pierce George Barron, R.M.
Peter Burke, M.D.	John C. Larminie
Richard Dawsley, Col.	William Larminie
Francis Burke, M.D.	Thomas Gallogly
George Hildebrand	A. Bole

On 28 July, 1843, the *Mayo Constitution* reported as follows:

*Testimonial to the late George Clendining, Esq.:*

Pursuant to the aforementioned requisition a numerous meeting of the friends of this justly esteemed and venerated gentlemen was held in Robinson's [now the Railway Hotel] Hotel, Westport on Thursday, 20th July, at 12 o'clock, where the following resolutions were adopted and subscriptions to a considerable amount entered into.

John Browne, Esq., of Mount Browne in the chair.

Proposed by Capt. F.G. Higgins and seconded by William Levingston, Esq., that Dr. Dillon be asked to act as secretary.

Proposed by R.W. McIlree, Esq. and seconded by J.T.S. Stewart, Esq., that W.M. Patton, Esq. be asked to act as treasurer.

Proposed by Richard Levingston and seconded by M. MacDonnell, Esq., that W.M. Patton, Esq. be asked to act as treasurer.

Proposed by Richard Levingston and seconded by M. MacDonnell, Esq., Resolved - That our admiration of the character of George Clendining and our sincere sorrow for his death, are only equalled by our anxiety to perpetuate his memory amongst us by the erection of a Public Testimonial, that will hand down to posterity the strongest and most enduring expression of our feeling.

Proposed by Major O'Malley and seconded by J.C. Garvey, Esq., Resolved - That a Public Testimonial worthy of his memory be erected in such a place in the town of Westport, as shall be approved by the lord of the soil and by the committee appointed to carry our wishes into effect.

Proposed by Capt. F.G. Higgins and seconded by W. Levingston, Esq., Resolved - That a committee not exceeding 15 be appointed to carry out the object of this meeting, consisting of the Earl of Altamont, the chairman, the treasurer, the secretary, the movers and seconders of resolutions, and that others be named by them.

The following gentlemen were named as the committee:

Earl of Altamont	John C. Garvey, Esq.
John Browne, Esq., Mountbrowne	William Levingston, Esq.
Richard Levingston, Esq.	M. MacDonnell, Esq.
Major O'Malley	Rev. George R. Gildea
Capt. F.G. Higgins	T.T.S. Stewart, Esq.
Rev. P. Pouden, Rector	W.M. Patton, Esq. (Treasurer)
Very Rev. Dean Burke, P.P.	F. Burke, Esq., M.D.
James Pinkerton, Esq.	T. Dillon, Esq., (Secretary)

Resolved - That the 1st meeting of the Committee shall take place on Monday, 31st July, at 12 o'clock in the diningroom of the Grand Jury, Courthouse, Castlebar.

(Signed) John Browne Chairman  
J. Dillon Secretary

Proposed by J.C. Garvey, Esq., and seconded by Major O'Malley, Resolved - That Mr. Browne do leave the chair and that Mr. Pouden be called thereto.

Resolved - That the thanks of the meeting be given to Mr. Browne for the efficient and dignified conduct of the meeting.

(Signed) P. Pouden Chairman  
J. Dillon Secretary

The monument was erected as a result of the above meeting on the eve of the famine. It consisted of a full length statue of Clendining on a column, over an octagonal podium, with two female figures sitting on the podium, representing his benevolence and philanthropy, one clutching a young child. The Clendining coat-of-arms in relief was rendered on two sides facing Shop Street and the Market House. The inscription 'To the memory of George Clendining' faced James's Street and Peter Street, and the inscription 'Born

in Westport 1770, died in Westport 1843' was on the remaining four sides. The monument was an imposing one for a provincial town, as can be seen from the Laurence print of circa 1910.

From the date of its erection (circa 1845), this monument has been the subject of controversy. As early as 1853 it is reported by Sir John Forbes, a visitor to the town, that there are those who 'even now, prognosticate the precipitation of his effigy, one of those days, from its present lofty position.'

His figure was used for target practice by Free State troops billeted in the Town Hall in 1923-4, when his head was shot off. Finally the end came in 1943 - the centenary of his death - when the Urban Council were debating a motion on the removal of Queen Victoria's statue from outside Leinster House. They decided that they would also remove the statues, crests and inscriptions, from the monument. Their remains now grace a local sculptor's yard.

There have been a number of proposals down the years as to what should be done with what remains of the monument. Christ the King was proposed in the 1940s, St. Patrick in the 1950s, Major John MacBride in the 1960s. An Foras Forbartha in their Urban Design Study in the 1970s, recommend a full restoration of the monument as it was. Now in 1985, the present Urban Council are taking up the matter, and are seeking advice from interested parties with a view to a partial restoration.

PEADAR Ó FLANAGÁIN, B.A., B. Comm., (N.U.I.): Officer in charge Order of Malta Ambulance Corps. Local historian and lecturer. Founder Secretary of Westport Historical Society.

A survey of the general textbooks on Irish history would reveal a fairly standard interpretation of the outbreak of the 1641 rebellion in Ireland: the native Irish of Ulster rose in late October 1641 and by late December the war had spread to the Pale, and the hitherto loyal Old English there were forced to join the rising. Then by mid-1642 an umbrella organisation, the Confederation of Kilkenny, had been established. Thereafter the textbook writer can abandon the chaos of late 1641 and with some justice concentrate on the history of the Confederation itself. The western part of Ireland rarely finds a niche in this narrative and the reason is not difficult to establish. Most historians have treated the rising as an almost exclusively political event, combining, with different degrees of emphasis, an explosive mixture of native reaction to colonization, land confiscation, and religious and political discrimination by the Dublin government. In this model Connacht is something of an embarrassment. There was little colonization of early seventeenth century Connacht; as late as 1659 probably considerably less than 10 per cent of the Connacht population was of settler origin. There had been little land confiscation, the vast bulk of Connacht land remaining in the hands of native landowners. Great lords, such as the earl of Clanricarde, managed to keep Dublin's influence in the province to a minimum, and while edicts of religion may have been promulgated in Dublin, they rarely had a significant impact on the western localities. Indeed so insulated was Connacht from religious persecution that by the mid-seventeenth century almost half the Franciscans in the country were based there.

However, historians are now beginning to see the outbreak of war in 1641 as a more complex phenomenon than a straightforward reaction to persecution. A wide variety of social, economic and cultural factors as well as the well known political ones, are now recognised as having played a part in fomenting rebellion. It has therefore become more important to study the war not just from a national viewpoint but from the perspective of the provinces as well. In attempting this we are fortunate in having the depositions taken in 1641, 1642 and in the 1650s as a guide to events in the localities. Admittedly these were not taken to be used in reconstructing a narrative of the rebellion, but rather as a record of losses and with the prosecution of rebels in mind. Nevertheless when used with other sources in their proper context, they can illuminate the causes and early history of the war of late 1641 and early 1642. The aim of this case study is to try to shed some light on the origin of the war and the early weeks of its history in Mayo.

Dating the outbreak of the rising in Mayo is difficult and the evidence is contradictory. One deponent dated it to the beginning of November while another favoured Christmas.<sup>1</sup> Another series of dates is provided by the earl of Clanricarde based at Galway. On 7 December he wrote to Lord Cottington that Connacht was 'in perfect obedience' but by 16 December he recorded 'almost the whole province of Connacht is revolted'.<sup>2</sup> Such apparent

discrepancies in dating the outbreak of war can be explained by the nature of the rising in Mayo. It was not part of a nationally coordinated plan, but rather the result of a gradual build up of rumour and raiding from outside the county which provoked localised reactions within Mayo. Following the outbreak of the provincial rising in Ulster on the evening of 22 October the war spread slowly. By the end of October trouble had broken out in Leitrim, and by early November there were signs of disturbances in Sligo. In fact much of the early trouble in Mayo during mid-November was caused by raiders from Sligo crossing the border in search of more booty.<sup>3</sup> Gradually during late November and early December local raiding within Mayo became more common. This was not the result of any grand strategy but rather took the form of sporadic disturbances by opportunists hoping for rapid gain; by a few religious zealots mainly inspired by a small number of Franciscan clergy; and by the discontented in general who were suffering from the difficult economic conditions of the late 1630s.<sup>4</sup> Deponents did not report a great rebel army of attackers but rather small bands of local men, usually relatives, who were frequently known to those they attacked and were often named in the depositions.<sup>5</sup> Their activities were fuelled by panic among the settlers fearing that the rebellion that was in progress in Ulster had spread there, and they were given confidence by the reports of Ulster successes. As the Galway man, Sir Richard Blake, wrote to Miles Bourke, Viscount Mayo, in early November 1641, Mayo 'abounds with many loose desperate men and therefore it will be most needful to have the progress of all rumours that may in any way extol or magnify the force or success of the rebels to be stopped there'.<sup>6</sup>

Many of those 'loose desperate men' had been reduced to that position as a result of the economic difficulties of the late 1630s. Poor harvests and difficulties in Mayo's principal trade - cattle - had placed many men in a financially difficult position. A new book of rates for Irish Customs imposed in the early-1630s had over-valued cattle with the result that the trade slowed up somewhat. Moreover, as part of the general malaise of the Irish economy, farmers attempted to raise money for rent and food by selling cattle in large numbers. As a result, cattle prices collapsed, so that in 1641 a cow was fetching less than half the price of twenty years earlier.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the main engine of growth in the Mayo economy, the port of Galway, was also in difficulty. Due to competition from many of the new ports on the south coast, and a rapidly expanding Dublin, Galway's share in the Irish trade, as measured by its customs returns, was declining by the 1630s. Consequently many of the small Mayo landowners were forced to mortgage land in order to raise money to survive. It was unfortunate that at a time when more than ever before, men's fortunes depended on their title to land, which allowed them to mortgage land or let it to tenants at higher rents, that this title then came under attack. Lord Deputy Wentworth challenged Connacht land titles in his attempt to establish royal title to Connacht in a move which was a prelude to plantation. While his scheme came to nothing it made a deep impression on all sections of Connacht society, and the issue of title to land figures

prominently in the grievances of the Connacht natives in early 1642.<sup>8</sup>

While economic factors had been of crucial importance in originating the sporadic discontent of late 1641, by early 1642 a degree of cohesion emerged among those at war. The element which gave cohesion to diverse economic motives was religion. From the early 1630s Catholicism in Mayo had begun to undergo a profound transformation. Sheltered from an incursion of Protestant clergy by the poverty of the benefices, language difficulties, and the theological preconceptions of the Church of Ireland, Mayo was ripe for the adoption of the ideas of the Counter Reformation as set out at the Council of Trent.<sup>9</sup> The Tridentine decrees had been modified to suit local circumstances, at a provincial Synod in 1631 and expanded upon in another Synod in 1639. By 1637 there were 91 secular and 45 regular clergy in the Archdiocese of Tuam, which included most of south Mayo. By 1641 every Catholic church in Tuam archdiocese had a priest; Mass was openly said and there is even some evidence that confessions were being heard. Considerable progress was being made in implementing the decrees of the 1631 synod, with a detailed parish structure being established and rules on ecclesiastical discipline being laid down. The laity were being catechised regularly and clerical retreats were well established.<sup>10</sup>

A key figure in carrying out these reforms of the Catholic church was the Archbishop of Tuam, Malachy O'Queely, or Kelly as he was referred to by deponents. O'Queely was born in the diocese of Killaloe about 1592, and had been educated in the ways of continental counter reformation Catholicism at the Irish College in Paris, from where he graduated as doctor of Theology and later taught at the College of Navarre in France before returning to Ireland as Vicar Apostolic of Killaloe in 1622. Shortly afterwards he was elevated to the Archbishopric of Tuam.<sup>11</sup> To a man such as O'Queely, the rumours which were circulating widely in mid-1641 that the newly ascendant 'puritan' administrations in London and Dublin intended to clamp down heavily on Catholicism, were an anathema. Consequently, Sir Phelim O'Neill's rising in Ulster in defence of the royal prerogative against 'puritan' counsellors and for liberty of conscience for Catholics, was a cause O'Queely could readily espouse.<sup>12</sup> According to one deponent he:

... went in circuit over the said county [Mayo]. . . to induce the inhabitants to take arms for the removal of the English and Protestants. . . he informed the people that by an order conceived in the parliament in England all the lords and gentry were to be cut off and destroyed at their next meeting in the parliament in Dublin. . . further that they the Catholics of this kingdom had authority to proceed against the Protestants for their remove. The said Protestants being in truth puritans and contrary to the king's power and prerogative.<sup>13</sup>

O'Queely was not alone in holding such views since such rumours were circulating widely in Ireland. Indeed his claim that he was defending the king from 'evil counsellors' was no more than Sir Phelim O'Neill claimed in Ulster when he produced the forged Royal Commission. O'Queely's achievement was that he bound disparate Mayo groups together into a fairly unified force and in fact stopped much of the random raiding which had occurred. John Lynch, the Archdeacon of Tuam in the 1660s described O'Queely's role as

that of:

... a tower of strength for the lives and fortunes of many, as he was enabled, to influence the rage of the infuriated lower orders, who tumultuously rushed to plunder and slaughter. Nay, even at his own expense, he raised a company of armed men, not so much for repelling the attacks of the enemy as for checking the licentiousness of his own people.<sup>14</sup>

For O'Queely the defence of religion was to be an orderly affair.

This amalgamation of religious defence and economic discontent created tensions and problems for the governing elite within county Mayo. Miles Bourke, second Viscount Mayo, was by tradition a constitutionalist. His family was one of the few who had made a successful transition from the old order to the new settler one. Miles was a Privy Councillor and a member of the House of Lords. He had taken his seat at the parliament of 1640-41 which had tried to effect constitutional change in the wake of the impeachment of Lord Deputy Wentworth, and had sat on a number of Committees at parliament. He had conformed to the Church of Ireland, albeit probably only nominally, but his mother and brothers remained Catholic. In the 1630s he had allied himself with the Old English of the Pale and had acted with them in trying to exact concessions for Catholics from the King.<sup>15</sup> In the early months of the war he was appointed Governor of Mayo, but as the war dragged on, Miles Bourke was becoming increasingly alienated within Mayo. The resurgence of Catholicism left him isolated in terms of religion. Politically he was also under pressure. To the north and east of county Mayo a rebellion against the Dublin administration was in progress, while to the south in county Galway, the most powerful Lord of Connacht, and Miles's cousin by marriage, Ulick Burke, fifth earl of Clanricarde, was holding out for the crown.<sup>16</sup> Thus Miles was being squeezed between two power blocks. His position was increasingly difficult as the war progressed. Whichever way he turned he would be beset by problems, and if he tried to remain neutral in the hope of pleasing both sides, he risked becoming like Viscount Costello, Governor of Roscommon, 'very distasteful to the English and not acceptable to many of the natives.'<sup>17</sup>

In the early months of the rebellion, Miles remained loyal to the government even to the extent of trying to play one faction of rebels off against another. As he explained to one man he hoped 'to subdue those of Costello by the men of Gallen and those men of Gallen by those rebels that lived in Carragh'.<sup>18</sup> His resources, however, were limited. The depositions record a number of cases of his helping beleaguered families, but he could not continue to do this indefinitely. Unlike the earl of Clanricarde, who succeeded in maintaining tight control over his territory, Miles's estate was widely scattered throughout the county, and hence his control was lessened. As the earl of Clanricarde noted in December 1641 when the sporadic disturbances in Mayo were at their height, 'my lord of Mayo. . . offered some resistance but was too weak for them [the rebels]'.<sup>19</sup> Some late deponents preferred to see this as collusion with the rebels, but there is little doubt that it was a case of two great a problem for too few resources.

As 1642 opened Miles was becoming increasingly desperate, and on

Sunday 14 February 1642 came what seems to have been a decisive turning point in his attempts to hold out against the rebels. A convoy of clergy and settlers under his protection, were massacred at the bridge at Shrule on its way to the safety of Galway.<sup>20</sup> Miles was not even present, having left his son to escort the convoy the last few miles, and having himself left for home suffering from the effects of over-consumption of alcohol at the house of John Browne of the Neale on the previous night. Those who actually carried out the massacre while holding Miles's son at sword point were two men in Viscount Mayo's force, Edmund Burke of the Owles and his brother-in-law, John Garvey, Burke had been active in much of the early raiding in north Mayo and had been drafted into Miles's force in an attempt to control his activities, while Garvey was there in his capacity as sheriff of Mayo. According to Henry Bringham, who was in Miles's house when the news of the 'massacre' arrived, Miles did not take the news well. He 'wept bitterly, pulling off his hair and refusing to hear any word of persuasion and comfort', he spoke of 'the irreparable dishonour done unto himself' since the convoy was under his protection, and he feared that as a Protestant he himself was now in danger. He also felt that he would be blamed by the Dublin government for events, and wrote to the earl of Clanricarde, expressing his grief and resentment 'affirming it was done out of malice to both of us' and requested Clanricarde's help in finding the culprits.<sup>21</sup>

Shruly was a turning point in Miles's attitudes. He realised the impotence of the Dublin administration to give him any help to support his position, and commented to one deponent 'in what despicable care the state had left him, without help or succour he having sent unto them [The Lords Justice] for relief'.<sup>22</sup> Miles's change of attitude and confusion was noted by Richard Bellings, the Old English historian of the rising, who recorded in early 1642 that Lord Mayo 'seeming afar off to look that way [against the government] by the tenor of his perplexed letters intimating a kind of unresistable enforcement that would at length captivate a mind willing to resist all invitations'.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after the 'massacre' at Shruly, Miles became a Catholic, probably because he feared his protestantism would make him a target for the rebels, but still remained loyal to the Dublin administration, probably because his political background dictated constitutional action rather than rebellion. However, developments elsewhere were to change his attitude dramatically. In early December the Ulster rising had spilled over into the Pale and the Old English had been forced into rebellion. One of their first actions had been to write to their political sympathisers of the 1630s to explain their actions, and these included Viscount Mayo. Like Clanricarde, who was also contacted, Mayo's letter probably did not reach him until well into February 1642.<sup>24</sup> The letter set out the Palesmen's purpose in taking arms to 'vindicate the honour of our sovereign, assure the liberty of our consciences and preserve the freedom of this kingdom under the sole obedience of his sacred majesty'. The establishment of the Confederation of Kilkenny in May 1642 gave coherence

to these sentiments.<sup>25</sup> In this way Miles's dilemma was resolved for him. He could join the loyal rebellion as defined in the sentiments of the Confederation, and with one action unite the aims of Malachy O'Queely, the most powerful ecclesiastical figure in Connacht and later a prominent figure in the Confederation, with his own and so bolster his local standing. He could also throw in his lot with his natural political allies, the Old English, while still claiming to the earl of Clanricarde, with some justice, that he was not a rebel. By August 1642 Miles was on the Provincial Council and by November he was representing Connacht on the Supreme Council of the Confederation.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately for him, he had no sooner found an answer to his problem than the problem itself was transformed. In August and September 1642 civil war began to erupt throughout England. Ideas of loyalty and royal government were cast into the melting pot.

The history of the 1640s in Ireland is the history of shifting allegiances and regional rivalries, and cultural, political and economic conflict. It was easy for the Cromwellians to read history backwards and discern the good from the evil, and execute Miles's son for the massacre at Shruly. The conspiracy theory so well portrayed in Sir William Temple's *History of the Rebellion*, first published in 1646, certainly had appeal for contemporaries since it told them much of what they wanted to hear. The reality was rather different. Miles Bourke, second Viscount Mayo, was not an untypical figure, trying to tread a narrow path between a core of discontented natives and a government which was too paralysed economically and militarily to provide much help. His reaction to rebellion was not pre-ordained but resulted from rapidly evolving local political and religious circumstances. Such men had to find their own salvation in a turbulent world.

1. Trinity College Dublin, MS 831, ff 163, 170.
2. John Smyth Bourke (ed.), *The memoirs of the Marquis of Clanricarde* (London, 1757), pp 32, 38 (hereinafter cited as *Memoirs*).
3. For example, T.C.D. MS 831, f 153; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Carte MS 11, f 162.
4. Richard Burke, a friar, was mentioned (T.C.D. MS 831, f 273) as were other friars (f 144). Only one instance of overt religious motives is known, when John Duff O'Costellor took a bible 'which he flung in the faces of those he plundered' (f 242).
5. T.C.D. MS 831, ff 143, 163.
6. *Memoirs*, p 7. According to one deponent, Mayo inhabitants were oblivious to the rising until a proclamation reached them in early November 1641, when they panicked. (T.C.D. MS 831, f 145v.)
7. John O'Donovan, *The economic history of livestock in Ireland* (Cork, 1940), pp 35, 37-9; Raymond Gillespie, 'Harvest crises in early seventeenth century Ireland' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xi, (1984), pp 16-17; Raymond Gillespie, 'The end of an era: the outbreak of the 1641 rebellion' in Ciaran Brady, Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Natives and newcomers: essays on the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, forthcoming).
8. Hugh Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland 1633-41* (Manchester, 1959), pp 85-103.
9. Alan Ford, *The Protestant reformation in Ireland, 1590 - 1641* (Frankfurt, 1985), pp 123-52.
10. This is based on L.F. Rénéhan, *Collections on Irish Church history*, i, (Dublin, 1861), pp 490-8; J. Hogan, 'Miscellanea Vaticano-Hibernica' in *Archivum Hibernicum*, v, (1916), pp 97 - 100; *Calendr of State Papers, Ireland, 1633-47*, pp 308-9.

11. On O'Queely see Renehan, *Collections*, i, pp 402-5; J.F. O'Doherty (ed.) *De praesulibus Hiberniae*, ii (Dublin, 1944), pp 147-53, 330 ff.
12. On rumours see Gillespie 'The end of an era'; on Sir Phelim's motives see Aidan Clarke, 'The genesis of Ulster rising of 1641' in Peter Roebuck (ed.) *Plantation to partition* (Belfast, 1981), pp 29-45.
13. T.C.D. MS 831, f 170.
14. C.P. Meehan (ed.) *The life and death of Rev. Francis Kirwan*, (Dublin, 1884), p 109.
15. Anne Chambers, *Chieftain to knight* (Dublin, 1983) pp 145-9; Aidan Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland 1625-42* (London, 1966), pp 86, 119.
16. W.J. Lowe, *Letterbook of the earl of Clanricarde, 1643-7* (Dublin, 1983), pp xvii - xxvi.
17. *Ibid*, p 81.
18. T.C.D. MS 831, f 146-146v.
19. *Memoirs*, p. 38; Bernadette Cunningham, 'Political and social change in the lordships of Clanricarde and Thomond, 1569 - 1641' M.A., U.C.G., (1979), pp 278-9; for Miles's estate see R.C. Simington, *Books of Survey and Distribution, ii, Mayo*, (Dublin, 1956) in baronies of Tirawley, Gallen, Carra, Murrisk, Burrishoole, and Kilmaine.
20. This account of the 'massacre' is based on the depositions in T.C.D. MS 831, in particular, ff 148-8v, 158-62, 163-4, 201-8, 209, 227, 230-1, 243, 246, 251, 261-2. Some, but not all, of the relevant papers are printed in part in Mary Hickson, *Ireland in the seventeenth century*, i, (London, 1884), pp 387-99; *ibid* ii, pp 1 - 9.
21. *Memoirs*, p. 80.
22. T.C.D. MS 831, f 146.
23. J.T. Gilbert (ed.) *A history of the war and confederation in Ireland*, i, (Dublin, 1882) p. 104.
24. *Memoirs*, p 67; for the text of the letter see Gilbert, *History*, i, pp 244-5.
25. J.C. Beckett, 'The Confederation of Kilkenny reviewed' in J.C. Beckett (ed.) *Confrontations* (London, 1972), pp 52-56.
26. T.C.D. MS 831, f 171; Gilbert, *History*, ii, p 86. The reaction of the native Irish in Mayo to the rising of the Old English and the Confederation was very different to that of Viscount Mayo. One deponent recorded that 'the Old Irish gave out that they thanked God they had put a trick on the Old English of the Pale for all the old tricks they had put upon them' (T.C.D. MS 831, f 153.)

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## MAGISTRATES, PEASANTS, AND THE PETTY SESSIONS COURTS: MAYO 1823-50

by Desmond MacCabe

Provincial Irish magistrates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rarely ran short of critics. Thomas Reid, speaking in 1822 of the Sligo magistracy felt that the title of Justice of the Peace was quite misplaced: 'Disturber of the Peace would be much nearer the truth'!<sup>1</sup> Critics such as Reid lamented the plight of the peasantry and considered it little wonder that alienation from law was, as they perceived, so commonplace. Calls were made to change the composition of the magisterial bench, and to alter the structure of local justice so as to win the lower peasantry over to the use of law. Little was done by the central (Dublin Castle) executive until the early 1820s, when two initiatives in this direction took place - the less than thorough revision of the list of Irish magistrates in 1822 - and the unexpectedly successful establishment of petty sessions in the country from 1823. This paper presents the results of some preliminary research into the workings of the petty sessions in County Mayo - how the magistrates of the area bore their increased responsibilities, and how the peasantry responded to the expansion, from 1823, of opportunities for statutory litigation. Conclusions are, for the present, and in the absence of detailed research in the legal system of the eighteenth century, tentative; and certain generalizations, therefore, may hold only temporarily.

These reservations aside, it may be said that until the 1820s the administration of justice in the west of Ireland essentially satisfied the legal needs of the county élite - landed and commercial. Prosecution of crime at assizes, and, after 1796, the quarter sessions, seems to have been prohibitively expensive for the bulk of the peasantry. Statutory justice - of a limited kind - was available to the average smallholder only through the patronage of a magistrate - generally the smallholder's landlord, acting alone - a circumstance which inevitably put the litigant in an unsatisfactory position. Suitors for civil justice might visit the seat of a convenient or a conveniently well-disposed magistrate, where informations might be taken and a case dispatched to assizes or quarter sessions; or, if both suitor and accused were willing to avoid the expense this would entail, problems might be tendered and settled on the spot.

'Private chamber' justice, as it was known, could work amicably, as it seems to have done on the Sligo estate of Mr. Wynne, M.P., where, in 1812, he had fixed:

... certain days for the administration of justice. . . the litigants. . . make known their case which is often some trifling quarrel, through the medium of an interpreter. . . these people enter into a previous agreement to abide by his determination, although he explains to them that his authority as a magistrate does not extend so far as to make a lawful and final decision.<sup>2</sup>

But it could also be administered irresponsibly by less high-minded, or more careless magistrates (Major Denis Bingham of Kilmore-Erris kept a private jail in the demesne of Binghamstown castle)<sup>3</sup> and the establishment of petty sessions was encouraged by the government from the early 1820s, to make

better provision for summary justice, and to prevent J.P.s from acting in isolation from each other.

The petty session was not itself an administrative innovation. An elegant, legally minimal definition of these courts makes this clear: 'mere voluntary associations of magistrates meeting at such times and places, and acting according to such rules as local circumstances, the exigence of public business, or the discretion of the individuals who compose them, may suggest'.<sup>4</sup> As this description is provocatively vague, it can be made to fit many magisterial gatherings, and it can be presumed, though no record has as yet been discovered, that such sessions had taken place, now and then, in Mayo, before 1823. It was observed in 1825, for instance, that something like a petty sessions court had been run in Ballinasloe, County Galway, by 'Two or three of one family or connection' for 'a long time'.<sup>5</sup> The difference was, that from the early 1820s these courts of summary justice were organized systematically to serve more than a few of the larger town centres, and, despite the faint cynicism of the above-quoted definition, were regularized in procedure to an extent unknown before.

It was in August of 1823 that Mayo magistrates first assembled to put into force the desires of government. On the 11th of that month the magistrates of Tyrawley resolved that a petty sessions was henceforth to be held in Ballina every Monday, Ballycastle every Wednesday, Crossmolina every Thursday and Killala every Saturday. Each court was to begin at twelve noon, a printed schedule of fees (it is not evident how these were arrived at) was to be pinned to the door of each court-house, legal documents were to be given to the chief constable of the district at the close of the sessions, and the day's proceedings were to be transcribed by a clerk into a journal and countersigned by the chairman of the court.<sup>6</sup> Three days later (14 August) the magistrates of Carra and Murrisk met in Westport to announce the start of a petty sessions court there. Sometime earlier a petty sessions court had been set up in Newport, and Randle McDonnell, a witness to the Parliamentary Committee on the State of Ireland in 1825, believed that by that date the courts had 'got generally into practice' in Mayo. They were said, by Dominick Browne, M.P. to have had, within two or three years 'an extremely good effect', through imparting to the peasantry 'a confidence in the decisions of the magistrates assembled', and hence in the legal process, unobtainable where magistrates had been free to behave more arbitrarily. But McDonnell was more measured: 'I dare say that whoever succeeds is satisfied and whoever is not equally successful is frequently dissatisfied'.<sup>7</sup>

The first legal statement on the conduct of petty sessions came with the Petty Sessions Act of July 1827 (7 and 8 Geo. IV Cap. 67) wherein, as the experiment of their organization had been a success, the government authorized grand juries to present a sum annually for the rent of any courthouse but one where 'fermented or spirituous liquors' were sold. A clerk was to be appointed for each court by justices of the peace. The clerk was to charge only legally-prescribed fees for his labour (a table of which fees – listed in the act – was to be posted). Each court was to keep a registry-book, and

legal documents, signed by a minimum of two magistrates, were to be sent every month to the clerk of the Peace or Crown of the county. Petty sessions districts were also to be delimited.

By January 1828 sessions were held in 17 Mayo towns, weekly or fortnightly. Their catchment areas varied from one parish to several, (cf. Map). There were few changes in this arrangement until 1839, when, after lobbying by Nangle of the Achill Missionary Society, a petty sessions was set up in Achill Sound. Then in September 1841, in an effort to ensure punctual attendance by the overburdened stipendiary (or government paid) magistrates at petty sessions in South Mayo, those at Cross, Shrulle, Ballindine and Kilmaine were discontinued, and the districts served by Claremorris, Ballinrobe and Cong enlarged.<sup>8</sup> From 1836 petty sessions clerks were obliged to return a list of the offences tried in each court but the information thus made available was not used, before the Famine, to change the system.

The provisions of the 1827 Petty Sessions Act were in general, and for some time, imperfectly obeyed. Although sessions districts were in fact defined with precision – by magistrates assembled for that purpose at Ballinrobe quarter sessions in January 1828 – this had the shortcoming that boundaries came to be treated almost as frontiers. This outlook made a certain amount of sense, as the Reverend Francis Lynch-Blosse accepted when, in January 1833 he spoke of not liking 'to act outside of my own district among people with whom I am perfectly unacquainted',<sup>9</sup> but it also strengthened the exclusivism of magistrates who resented the intervention, or even appearance, of neighbouring magistrates, in what they regarded as 'their' courts. This to Randle McDonnell, was 'very injurious to the cause of the poor man', for magistrates shrank from amending or criticising the decisions of their fellows.<sup>10</sup> Sylvanus Jones, Chief Magistrate, reported in January 1833 after a shooting at Keelogue, that John C. Garvey of Murrisk Abbey 'said that he would feel picqued if any other magistrate but himself went on duty to the westward of Westport'. This 'doctrine of non-interference' was sustained by the conviction that 'it would but be considered friendly to interfere' in the (evidently seen as private) dealing of other gentlemen.<sup>11</sup>

Another, and related, defect of these courts was the wide latitude, especially in the collection of fees, given, before the Act of 1858, by magistrates to their clerks. Government officers, trying to enforce those fees tabled in the 1827 Petty Sessions Act, found it difficult to break down the self-protective solidarity of local magistrates. Daniel Cruice, resident magistrate, chaired, in August 1838, an inquiry into the inordinate fees, and the allegedly unfair dismissal, by Michael Bermingham and Francis French, J.P.s, of Charles Killeen, sometime petty sessions clerk of Ballindine. But though the charges, evidenced in fourteen cases which the Reverend MacNamara of Ballindine drew up against Killeen, appeared to Cruice well-grounded, he was outnumbered and so out-voted by the local magistrates on the inquiry, and, after two days discussion, was obliged as chairman to sign a resolution to

reinstate Killeen and judge him 'entirely guiltless of in any shape. . . exacting illegal fees'.<sup>12</sup> Despite such publicity, clerical fees often remained 'irregular'. That many local magistrates were remiss in their supervision of clerical fees, as they were weak in the appointment and later the sheltering of the poorly educated and often venal court clerks, was admitted in a somewhat back-handed manner by the Grand Jury of spring 1845; who, in a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, requested the appointment of professional clerks 'of a superior class of persons to those at present employed'. But the problem of excessive and illegal fees did not end until a statute of 1858 required clerical payment by salary.<sup>13</sup>

Magisterial absenteeism was perhaps the most debilitating problem of local justice, however. An almost diffident circular by the Marquess of Sligo to the Mayo gentry in January 1832, pleaded for 'as regular an attendance on Petty Sessions as can possibly be made convenient to you' but attendance remained lack-lustre.<sup>14</sup> In May 1832 the Mayo Bench was rebuked by the Lord Lieutenant for its lax attention to duty, one of the worst courts in the county being Ballaghaderreen, where 17 non-attendances had been attained out of a possible 26.<sup>15</sup> In August 1841 the parish priest of Claremorris wrote to Lord Sligo of how, at the courts of Claremorris, Ballinrobe and Hollymount 'every day numerous crowds of people are obliged to retire with their complaints unheard'.<sup>16</sup> Out of a possible one hundred petty sessions in Castlebar between January 1843 and December 1844, forty-nine were postponed or unattended.<sup>17</sup> Cases marked for court examination were often, on this account, given up. Because the sessions held in Castlebar on 7 August 1844 was the first for six weeks, the persons concerned in seventy-five out of one hundred and forty-four cases on the criminal book failed to appear and their cases were written off.<sup>18</sup> Renewal of these cases involved the expense of another summons and the drudgery of further attendance, and it is likely that most were abandoned. The problem lasted until well after the Famine, and Connacht, with 13.5% (to a national average of 6.33%) of petty sessions courts unattended in 1877, was still the most backward of Irish provinces.

Few of the rooms used for petty sessions in pre-Famine Mayo had the refinements expected of courts, and the business of prosecution was itself carried out with a genial lack of formality. Exceptions were the courthouses of Ballaghaderreen, Castlebar and Ballina. Most courts held only a desk for the magistrates and some benches for the litigants. Witnesses clambered for examination on to a table. Henry Inglis, visiting Westport in 1834, saw in the hotel room used for petty sessions:

. . . more of the free and easy. . . than I had seen elsewhere in Ireland. Everyone took a part in what was going on. Lord Sligo's driver, who was sitting near, would say of a witness 'Don't believe it, Your Worship'. and a clerk, an interpreter, or even a reporter for a newspaper would suggest a question and the magistrate would interrogate accordingly.<sup>19</sup>

The summary powers magistrates exercised at petty sessions grew considerably over the early nineteenth century, particularly in the areas of theft and assault, and this development helped in part to swell the number of

litigants. There were, on average, between August and December 1823, thirty-six cases, both civil and criminal, adjudicated each week in the Westport sessions.<sup>20</sup> By the 1830s sessional use seems to have roughly doubled. In 1839, 10,967 cases passed through the petty sessions in Mayo.<sup>21</sup> Assuming that at least two protagonists belonging to different families took part in most of these cases, it seems reasonable to suggest that about 18,300 (or 24.4%) of the families in Mayo had a member in these courts that year. Civil business at the petty sessions has to be left unreckoned for want of statistical evidence. Costs (legal or illegal) were not, then, prohibitive, though the two shillings and sixpence for a summons and a conviction was a troublesome 2% of the average smallholder's yearly income.

A myriad of complaints was presented at petty sessions, ranging from (to an outsider) bizarre quarrels connected with Mayo superstitions (a woman was charged in 1843 with having transferred warts from her own skin to the skin of her neighbour's children with the magical assistance of a wisp of straw and a small wool bag)<sup>22</sup> to more worldly and familiar ones over land tenure and inheritance. Of cases on the Mayo criminal books between January 1839 and September 1840 - 34.5% were of common assault - 27.3% of trespass - 8.3% of injury to private property - and 7.9% of larcenies. The majority of these prosecutions seem to have been taken by country-people against their neighbours. It seems that - at least in this timespan - about 69% of criminal prosecutions at petty sessions were brought by the peasantry - about 15½% by the constabulary - 10½% by landlords or their agents - 4% by the millers, storekeepers and merchants of the town - and ½% by the commissioners of excise and the inspectors of weights and measures.<sup>23</sup>

It is likely too, that most of the civil business at petty sessions, rows over promises made or broken, tuition fees or 'scandal', concerned only country-people. Prosecutors were predominantly male, but figures made out for the Westport sessions in 1823 show that about 19% were made by women. Often these were widows defending their farms, but there were also cases of women summoning men for the maintenance of a child, or wives having their husbands bound-over to keep the peace for having beaten them.<sup>24</sup>

Witnesses fudged prosecution at times by insisting on a case being examined through Irish. There were also, of course, genuine monoglots. Interpreters were kept at the petty sessions courts in the early 1830s, but it seems that magistrates, later in the decade, listened grudgingly if at all to prosecutions through Irish, and dismissed cases readily if suspicious. At Swinford petty sessions in April 1839, when Pat Gerty objected to giving evidence in a case of trespass 'except in the Irish language', Matthew Gallagher, J.P., on being informed by a 'respectable man in court' that 'Gerty could in fact speak English sufficiently well' consigned him to the guard-room.<sup>25</sup>

Magistrates found it less easy to get around the attornies, who began virtually to take over the courts during the 1830s. Scaling their fees to the means of their clients, attornies (solicitors) traded on the bent for litigation which was becoming apparent from the early 1820s. Until 1836 suffering from

restrictions in the courts of assize and quarter sessions (not permitted for instance to address a jury in a client's defence) attorneys hastened to exploit the scope offered by the new petty sessions courts. Peter Kelly 'a young attorney. . . lately sworn', who was in 1834 one of the most sought-after lawyers in the Ballina petty sessions district, was ticked off that year by the *Connaught Ranger* for encouraging, as it saw things, unnecessary litigation.<sup>26</sup> By the mid-1830s at least twelve attorneys plied the Mayo petty sessions circuit, hired apparently by almost everyone, for almost every kind of case. Frequently employed against the excise, attorneys were so tenacious and successful against the naive revenue officers, that the Excise Board was obliged by the 1830s to have their own attorney permanently at hand in Mayo. Peter Kelly ran rings around a flustered sub-inspector of revenue police in Ballina in May 1842, quoting 'Paley on convictions' to show that the onus was on the Revenue to prove that one Thomas Mulrooney, his client, had knowingly harboured poitín. Though the sub-inspector pleaded that 'There is strong evidence that Mr. Mulrooney was aware of it, and if the magistrate dismiss this case it will be useless for the police to seize whiskey under similar circumstances', the magistrates considered they had no option but to do so, later sending a query to Dublin Castle on the case.<sup>27</sup>

Though sporadically expressed, magisterial doubts about the status in law of attorneys at petty sessions came to nothing. Sir Samuel O'Malley refused a cross-examination to a Mr. O'Donel in a case at Castlebar petty sessions in March 1835, saying 'it was against his duty to take evidence by question and answer. . . A witness should tell his own story', adding that magistrates should not give way to attorneys; 'They [magistrates] are not to take upon themselves to discharge the duties of a judge or assistant-barrister and a jury; though it may be the custom, it is an illegal practice.'<sup>28</sup> Granted such unease, it seems that attorneys in fact raised the tone of the sessions, so that by 1845 the Mayo Grand Jury were compelled, in a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, to confess their uncertain knowledge of law and their need for assistance. The intervention of attorneys in court also changed the relationship between peasant and magistrate, giving the peasant, as client, a formal dignity probably unobtainable in the earlier 'private chamber' system. Cross-examination was carried out by some of the attorneys with a flair that often left hapless magistrates in the cold, and their clients were continually advised of their rights, and of what ought to be said in court. That law could be thus manipulated to advantage must have been important in coaxing country-people into sessions.

The point of an attorney's forensic skill was, of course, to influence magisterial decisions. These judgments were not in Mayo conspicuously partial – there was, after all, in most court cases, little opportunity of taking a side self-evidently in the landed interest. The revenue police and the constabulary were not always assured of magisterial favour. It can be made out, though, that one of the most consistent principles by which the magistrates were guided was, ironically, a deep-seated prejudice that a court was not the most fitting place to settle most peasant disputes. At a time when the government

was declaredly trying to wean the peasantry away from the private resolution of conflict, and stamp out the 'compromise' or out-of-court settlement, magistrates at petty sessions seem to have regarded civil or criminal justice as needful only when a problem became absolutely irretrievable by all other means. It seems to have been their instinct that the tribunal of the court did not cement social relationships as it ought. In fact for this reason many cases were dismissed from the petty sessions. Disputes pertaining to land were referred to the land agent or the landlord often as a matter of course. Henry O'Malley, for instance, at the Castlebar petty sessions in September 1837, dismissed a case of assault between two brothers, explaining the 'land disputes should be decided by the landlord'.<sup>29</sup> When a man was prosecuted for assault at Ballina petty sessions in April 1842, 'the court considered it a mere dispute about a right of passage and would therefore leave its settlement to the agent of the respective parties.'<sup>30</sup> Such judgements may not have indicated merely an effort to maintain old usages, but may have been, in addition, the natural consequence of agents and landlords now wanting purview over the minutiae of their estates after the relative neglect of the eighteenth century. This was poor consolation for the tenant who had preferred court to the arbitration of his agent.

But if the county gentry hindered prosecution in this way, their confusion can be understood, ill at ease as they were in a time of rapid social change. The period from 1823 to 1850 saw an increasingly sophisticated use of law by the western peasantry. It was principally in the petty sessions courts that the peasantry cut their legal teeth. The scene of litigation may have been itself part of the coming of age. The peasantry had gone to estate houses as supplicants for their agent's or landlord's attention, but they went to petty sessions as complainants with a civic right to expect magisterial attendance and audition. Their approach to law was thoughtful. It is hard to make out whether attorneys created their own market or responded to demand, but their infiltration of petty sessions presupposes a peasant seriousness towards the law. Popular feeling towards law and the courts was not quite the intractable antagonism some historians have suggested. That the vast majority of prosecutions at petty sessions were initiated by the peasantry was hardly a sign of deep distrust of law on their part. Though obviously slaves in many respects to their economic fate, and subject to much class-based injustice, the lower courts offered a degree of self-determination to the peasantry.

1. Thomas Reid, *Travels in Ireland in the year 1822* (London 1823), p. 369.
2. Edward Wakefield, *An account of Ireland statistical and political* (London 1812), ii pp 749-51.
3. *Ibid.*, pp 335-7.
4. John O'Donoghue, *The summary jurisdiction of magistrates in Ireland* (1835)
5. Select Committee on the State of Ireland, H.C. 1825, VIII, p. 754.
6. *Ballina Impartial*, 25 August 1823.
7. State of Ireland, VIII, p. 753; H.C. 1825, IX, p. 588.
8. *Ballina Impartial*, 28 January 1828; Registered Papers (S.P.O.) 1843: A 18622.
9. Private Index (S.P.O.) 1833: S.47.
10. State of Ireland, H.C. 1825, VIII, p. 754.
11. Private Index (S.P.O.) 1833.
12. Registered Papers (S.P.O.) 1838: 209.
14. *Ballina Impartial*, 2 January 1832.
15. *Connaught Ranger*, 15 May 1839.
16. Registered Papers (S.P.O.) 1843: A 18622.
17. cf. *Mayo Constitution*, January 1843 to December 1844.
18. *Connaught Ranger*, 14 August 1844.
19. Henry Inglis, *Ireland in 1834: a journey throughout Ireland during the spring summer and autumn of 1834* (London 1834), ii p. 103.
20. Westport Petty Sessions Book, NLI MS 14, 902.
21. Home Office papers 1839.
22. *Connaught Ranger*, 25 October 1843.
23. Home Office Papers, 1839-40.
24. Westport Petty Sessions Book, NLI MS 14,902.
25. Outrage Papers (Mayo) 1839 (S.P.O.).
26. *Connaught Ranger*, 9 July and 16 July 1834.
29. *Mayo Constitution*, 3 October 1837.
30. *Ballina Advertiser*, 15 April-1842.

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## MAYO PETTY SESSIONS DISTRICTS JAN. 1828



- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Westport Petty Sessions    | 10. Ballinrobe Petty Sessions      |
| 2. Newport Petty Sessions     | 11. Cong Petty Sessions            |
| 3. Claremorris Petty Sessions | 12. Kilmaine Petty Sessions        |
| 4. Ballycastle Petty Sessions | 13. Hollymount Petty Sessions      |
| 5. Killala Petty Sessions     | 14. Ballindine Petty Sessions      |
| 6. Ballina Petty Sessions     | 15. Claremorris Petty Sessions     |
| 7. Swinford Petty Sessions    | 16. Ballaghaderreen Petty Sessions |
| 8. Castlebar Petty Sessions   | 17. Bainghamstown Petty Sessions   |
| 9. Ballyglass Petty Sessions  | ■ Unaccounted for.                 |

Source: *Ballina Impartial* 28 January 1828.

FAMINE AND THE LAND WAR:  
RELIEF AND DISTRESS IN MAYO, 1879-1881, PART I

by Gerard P. Moran

Prior to the great famine a picture of destitution and poverty was constantly reported from Ireland. A slow realisation of the want and distress suffered by the indigenous population was dawning on the world. When the great famine did occur it was generally anticipated that better conditions would ensure due to a necessarily decreased population and the evolution of changing social patterns. However this was not to be the case, especially in the west of Ireland. It is now accepted that the famine was not a major transformation for the population in the poorer regions of the west. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s the continuous threat of famine hung over the population. The whole country, as has been shown by James S. Donnelly,<sup>1</sup> suffered greatly in the early 1860s as a consequence of disastrous wet weather. Its effects were, however, most catastrophic for the subsistence communities of the poorer regions, like Partry, Erris and Connemara. As it was, these communities survived on a knife-edge, and the slightest fluctuations in market forces sent immediate economic and social shockwaves throughout the whole area. They then became dependent on the charity and subscriptions of external agencies and individuals. The most devastating of these shockwaves was to be the famine of 1879-80, and hereunder the background causes of relief measures and the overall and long term extent of the distress are examined.

I

At the end of the 1860s Irish society was shocked to find out that the social conditions of the peasantry in the west of Ireland were amongst the worst in Europe. In 1869 the *Irish Times* sent a commissioner to the west to report on the social conditions of the people, and his correspondence informed the country of the poverty and destitution that plagued the region. In his report on the conditions of the people of Murrisk and Louisburgh, he commented that 99 per cent. of the people were amongst the most wretched he had ever seen:

I have seen much of the misery of Polish and Russian villages. I have read of the squalid and filthy huts in which the Bulgarian peasant hides his scanty savings from the greedy scrutiny of the Turkish masters; but I do not believe that even beyond the Vistula and the Danube life is sustained under harsher conditions than in Murrisk, and that industry is bowed down under burdens so heavy and hopeless.<sup>2</sup>

There is little doubt but that large sections of the population of Mayo and Galway were indeed subjugated by the yoke of severe poverty throughout the 1870s. Despite the evident prosperity throughout the rest of the country in this period, many districts experienced unabated distress. In 1872-4 reports of continuous distress were common from such places as Clare Island, Achill Island, Connemara, Inishturk and Inishbofin. Poverty and the failure of the potato crop were ever recurring themes in these regions, and the problem of

relieving the distress was exacerbated by their geographical remoteness. The extent of the distress on Clare Island was so severe in 1874 that the *Freeman's Journal*, the principal nationalist newspaper in the country, opened a subscription fund for relief.

In this instance the poverty on the island could not be attributed to crop failures but was the direct result of landlord activity. Mr. Martin MacDonnell, a Westport poor law guardian, purchased part of Richard Berridge's Clare Island estate, and from the outset declared his intention of extracting as much rent as was possible from his new investment. He increased the rents, and the tenants, who fished the surrounding waters to supplement their meagre income, were forced to sell their fishing equipment to pay this increase. Under Berridge's ownership, the landlord paid the taxes and rates in return for a rent increase of 25 per cent. On acquiring the estate, MacDonnell refused to honour this agreement and ensured that all taxes and rates were collected from the tenants. Contrary to the law, he exacted the poor law rates from those tenants whose holdings had a valuation of under £4, thus only compounding the tenants' problem. As it was, the disastrous potato and oats crops of 1872 and 1873 meant the rent for those years remained unpaid. Consequently MacDonnell evicted thirty-six families in April 1874.<sup>3</sup>

Under the 1843 Amendment Poor Relief Act, all tenants under £4 poor law valuation were exempt from paying the poor law rates.<sup>4</sup> These rates were to be paid by the immediate lessor but in some cases the landlord extracted the money from the tenants. Most Mayo tenants were in theory exempted from paying the poor law rates, as 55 per cent. of them had valuations under £4. A further 32 per cent. were valued between £4 and £10. A higher proportion of Mayo farms were exempt from the payment of the poor law rates than in Connacht as a whole, where 47 per cent. of the tenants held holdings under £4 valuation.

While the figures do illustrate the extent of small holdings in the county, they fail, however, to reveal the differences that existed within Mayo itself. In Belmullet union 87 per cent. of the people lived on holding which were valued at under £4. Consequently a small proportion of the entire population of the region was paying for the upkeep of the poor law union. During those years of severe distress, such as 1878, 1879, 1880 and 1883, an excessive burden was placed on this small group. At times even they were unable to pay their rents and their rates. Even some landowners had difficulties in paying the rate collectors for they were having problems collecting their rents. As a result of this there were occasions when the guardians were forced to take extreme measures, such as the reduction of officials' salaries, in order to keep the workhouses open.

The Killala union, on the other hand, had only 28 per cent of its holdings valued at under £4, but this was an exception in the county. In Newport, 75 per cent. of the holdings were under £4, and 73 per cent. of the Mayo portion of the Castlerea union were in this category.<sup>5</sup> The effect of this was that in times of distress the numbers in receipt of relief increased dramatically. Between 1877 and 1878 the numbers in receipt of outdoor relief in Ireland

increased by nearly 12 per cent. to 75,236. At the same time there was a 25 per cent. increase in the number of inmates in the workhouses. During those periods when the potato crop failed, the numbers in the workhouses rose accordingly.

As problems with the potato crop were incessant and continuous in various parts of Mayo throughout this period, the statistics of distress in Mayo did not increase as dramatically as in the rest of the country. However, the numbers receiving relief in the workhouses of Mayo increased by 16 per cent. and those on outdoor relief rose by 11.5 per cent, during this time. For many of these people the potato, along with seasonal migration remittances, meant the difference between the workhouse and independence. There was no major decline in potato cultivation in the poorer regions of the west of Ireland between the great famine and the land war. The potato continued to be the mainstay of the people in areas like Belmullet, Newport and Swinford, at a time when there was a significant decline in sole dependence on the crop in the rest of the country. By 1881, 48 per cent. of the total area under tillage in both Belmullet and Swinford was planted with potatoes.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently the ravages of blight were a constant threat to the potato, as the events of 1872 and 1873 displayed when the crop was under 2.5 tons per acre. It meant that other pursuits, such as seasonal migration or kelp collection, had to bring in maximum earnings to ensure the people did not become dependent on charity. However, the fine balance between these alternative sources of income was finally ruptured in 1879 bringing about the famine situation.

Each year was to bring distressing reports of blight from isolated areas of the country. In 1877 the continuous heavy rains resulted in harvest operations being severely curtailed. The potato crop of 1.8 tons per acre was one of the worst on record. The extent of the distress can be gleaned from the fact that the mean national average for the 1871-6 period was 3.3 tons per acre. The crisis was overcome mainly because of the credit extended by understanding local shopkeepers. In 1879 the problem recurred with the crop in Mayo only attaining 1.4 tons per acre, the result of the continuous rains between March and June and the extremely low temperature for that time of year. As a result the value of the potato crop plummeted from £14.7 million in 1876 to £6.77 million in 1879.<sup>7</sup>

It was generally accepted by James Hake Tuke, the English Quaker who distributed relief in Ireland both in the 1840s and the 1880s, the Richmond Commission and other contemporaries, that the size of the holdings was too small to support the average family. It was felt that a holding of under 15 acres would not adequately support the average family. Prior to the famine, most farms in the country were unviable, if this criterion is applied, as in 1847 half of the holdings were under 15 acres. The legacy of the great famine had resulted in clearances and consolidations in the following decades and this resulted in fewer and larger farms. Most landlords and tenants were by the 1850s well aware of the dangers of small holdings. By 1881, only 32.3 per cent. of Irish holdings were classified as being in this uneconomic category.

However this reduction in the number of small farms occurred mainly in the more productive lands outside of the west of Ireland. Whereas 68.1 per cent. of the Mayo holdings were classified as uneconomical in 1847, the decline had only dipped to 65 per cent. in 1881. In the corresponding period for Connacht, the decline was from 69.1 per cent. to 55 per cent.<sup>8</sup> Once again the major disparities were in evidence within Mayo, with the poorer poor law unions characterizing the imbalance, having the largest number of uneconomic holdings. In Belmullet, 71.9 per cent of the holdings were under 15 acres, 68.8 per cent. in Swinford, 67.7 per cent. in Newport and 61.3 per cent. in Castlebar. This problem was exacerbated by the tenants' failure to cultivate their holdings on a more productive level. The majority of these smallholders utilized their property for the almost exclusive production of a subsistence crop, the potato, and neglected to grow a cash crop.

Very often these tenants who fell victim to the failure of the potato, found that their application for outdoor relief was rejected by the guardians. Since many of the guardians were in fact landlords or their agents, their vested interests dictated this course of action. An increase in the numbers receiving outdoor relief would only place a further financial burden on them. Already they were experiencing a growing difficulty in securing rents, mainly because of the distress, and also because of the decline in seasonal migration remittances at the end of the 1870s. Many of them had financial commitments such as taxes and mortgages, so that the last thing they wanted was a further demand on their already overstretched finances through increased poor rates. As a result they were reluctant to place more people on the list for outdoor relief than was absolutely necessary.

The structures of relieving distress in Ireland differed greatly from those in England, and ironically it was the poorer districts which suffered as a result. In England, poverty in a region was combated by a levy on the whole union. In Ireland, the poor rate was levied on each individual electoral division according to its requirements, instead of those of the whole union. There were quite substantial variations within the individual unions themselves. Those electoral divisions fortunate enough to escape the ravages of blight, found they had little increase in their poor law rates, whilst other less fortunate divisions, often close by, were burdened with a heavy financial imposition.

Despite the severe problems of some tenants, others were finding ways of weathering the storms. Up to 1879, many were succeeding in gaining credit to see them through. The 1870s was a decade of rising expectations for Irish tenant farmers. They were borrowing on an increasing scale due to the prosperous state of agriculture, and as was noted by the Richmond Commission,<sup>9</sup> tenants now felt they had acquired an increased interest in their holding. Since the 1870 Land Act, access to credit allowed both labourers and small farmers to migrate to Britain for half the year. By the end of the decade, the indebtedness of many Mayo tenants was attributed to the easy access to credit they had enjoyed in the first half of the decade, when interest rates varied from 6 to 25 per cent. Both the Bessborough and Richmond

Commissions were informed that tenants were unable to meet their commitments, for the remittances from agriculture and seasonal migration were no longer sufficient to repay their loans. It resulted in whole districts being greatly in debt to shopkeepers and gombeen men. As it was, the major extension of credit facilities in the 1870s originated through the growth of the banking system. Between 1870 and 1880 the number of banks in Ballina increased from one to four.<sup>10</sup> This situation existed in many towns in the west of Ireland. As a result, credit was available, not alone in the wealthy grazing areas of the south and east of Ireland, but also in the subsistence regions of Connacht. Much of this money was borrowed in lieu of migrant earnings. Consequently all sections of society found credit easy to obtain.

It was the network of shopkeepers who were offering credit to the tenants. They originally obtained their capital from these newly established financial institutions, in order to pass it on to the tenants. As the economic depression deepened towards the end of the 1870s, the shopkeeper could no longer extend such facilities to the tenants. The extent of the indebtedness was clearly evident in Mayo, where it was estimated in 1879 that the shopkeepers were owed £200,000. In 1878 the Ballyhaunis shopkeepers were owed £50,000 by the tenants, in Castlebar the figure was £18,000 and in Castlerea £40,000.<sup>11</sup> In times of crisis the shopkeepers had been an important buttress for the tenants, supplying them with the meal and the food which warded off famine. This had certainly been the case during the distress of 1859-64 and in the early 1870s. However, the indebtedness of the shopkeepers themselves in the late 1870s, compounded with the tenants' failure to pay off their old debts, meant that credit became almost impossible to obtain. Throughout the land war, the tenants were urged by the Land League leadership to pay their allies, the shopkeepers, before paying their rents. The decline in credit in this period centred round the low level of deposits coming into the stock banks. Bank deposits had increased substantially since the famine, but between 1876 and 1880 there was a 14 per cent. decline in deposits, and this had profound consequences for credit. As a result of this fall in deposits, agricultural investment for such products as livestock was greatly curtailed. In the period of rising expectations from 1871-6, 88 per cent. of the sheep brought to the great fair in Ballinasloe in September were sold, but sales plummeted in the following years until only 30,000 (67 per cent.) were actually sold in 1879.<sup>12</sup> For the smaller tenants it meant many were unable to obtain the necessary loans to allow them to migrate to England, as the remittances from seasonal migration were no longer regarded as sufficient security. However while the tenants were in an acute position, the lot of the labourers was causing greatest concern.

As labourers were unemployed for much of the year, there was a seething discontentment fermenting within this group. They were worried by an increasing tendency amongst landowners to employ not labourers, but their own small tenant farmers and their sons during harvest time. Such a policy was beneficial to the landlord as it reduced his wage bill, for the

farmers accepted lower wages than the labourers. This change in the structures of employment was a direct result of the increase in wages sought by the labourers. Between 1850 and 1870 their wages doubled, standing at 1/- per day in 1870 and increasing to 2/6 during harvest time.<sup>13</sup> As a result of their precarious employment position, many of them were forced to emigrate. Those who remained in Ireland found they were constantly in distress as they were unable to obtain alternative employment. In those areas where large numbers of labourers emigrated, such as in Ballinrobe, it had the effect of creating labourer shortages during harvest time operations.

The decline in employment opportunities for both urban and rural labourers, resulted in those classes constantly beseeching the poor law guardians for relief. This relief was insufficient in nearly all cases and the labourers had to depend more and more on private help. There is little doubt but that the labourers constituted the most desperate section of Mayo society during the land war. The fact that guardians and town commissioners privately subscribed for their relief, indicates that the local authorities were well aware of their plight, but were unable to do anything because of the legal restrictions placed upon them. The bureaucratic adherence to the poor law by the poor law guardians was a major obstacle in obtaining relief for this, the most distressed section of Irish society. The majority of them would only accept outdoor relief and not that which was available, namely, help within the workhouses.

It would be difficult to classify Mayo society into distinct agrarian groups. The sections who held small plots of land behaved in a manner which more resembled landless labourers than any other group. Many tenants only held on to their farms through the annual practice of migration to Britain for part of the year, returning home with adequate funds to pay their rent. Outside of the labourers this group was the most vulnerable to changes in the market. The decline in the demand for migrant labour, caused by the influx of cheap American grain into Britain, had disastrous and far reaching consequences for this group, who mainly inhabited the more remote districts of the west of Ireland. The effects can be seen in the declining amount of remittances being forwarded through the post office system to their dependents along the west coast. In Mayo the receipts from seasonal migration were down by £100,000 in 1879.<sup>14</sup> Consequently many tenant farmers were unable to meet their rent commitments. The problem spiralled and before long the landlords were issuing ejectment notices against their defaulting tenants. Evictions were imminent, yet it was not the level of rents that was responsible for the problem in the west of Ireland. These were merely a product of external forces rather than the cause of internal pressures. As has been highlighted by W.E. Vaughan, overall rent increases from 1850 to 1879 were in fact below the increase in agricultural prices.<sup>15</sup> In the more productive areas of Ireland this had resulted in rising expectation amongst the tenants, and it was the economic downturn in the second half of the 1870s which led to a decline in living standards. In those areas of the west where the threat of famine was a constant feature, an increase in ejectment notices indicated the prevalence of

distress. In January 1879, 54 ejectment notices were granted to landlords in Swinford against defaulting tenants.<sup>16</sup> Between the great famine and the land war, the number of tenants evicted in Ireland were few, accounting for one per 1,000 holdings per annum, indicating that tenants were able to pay their rents. When the number of evictions measures 2.07 per thousand holdings in 1879,<sup>17</sup> it shows that tenants were experiencing hardships in paying their rent. As it was, it was of little benefit for a landowner to evict a tenant during periods of distress as there were few people to replace them. Therefore, most landowners, and in particular those with smaller holdings, only evicted to keep their estates solvent or to rid themselves of the troublesome tenants. Many landowners had only a few tenants as their estates were not large, and it was on these estates that the distress hit heaviest when the potato crop finally failed in 1879.

## II

As the activities of the Land League agitation had gained momentum in 1879, there were increasing reports from around the country of approaching distress. Initially, the clergy highlighted the extent of the problem experienced by their flock and over the ensuing twelve months continued to do so. Father Griffen, the parish priest of Parke, near Castlebar, reported that there were 500 destitute families living in his parish on holdings of poor and barren land of less than eight acres.<sup>18</sup> Very often such priests were the only people who could bring the plight of the people before the public view, for the local landlord was often an absentee or there was no poor law guardian to represent their interests. In Kiltimagh, the clergy took more practical action by convening a meeting of townspeople in July to obtain relief for forty families in the area.<sup>19</sup> Similar demonstrations were reported from other areas as the plight of the labourers and small farmers became more desperate. The Ballina labourers protested to the poor law guardians about the lack of employment opportunities in the area, and their banners summed up their situation: 'Our wives and children are starving'.<sup>20</sup>

Mayo in 1879 experienced a 75 per cent. decline in the quantity of potatoes, compared to the high yield of 1876. In many instances tenants lost both their 1878 and 1879 potato crops, and it was estimated that half of the potato crop in the latter year was diseased. By the time the Registrar-General issued his report in November of that year, the situation was daily worsening. It was reported that the potato crop in Connacht was at a level comparable with that of 1847-8. In many places, such as Swinford and Newport, the potato crop was only sufficient to provide for the people for a two month period, although in some instances the crop had already been consumed by a people who lacked any alternative food supply. As potatoes constituted the staple diet of the labouring and small farmer classes, being 65 per cent. of the green crops grown in Ireland, it was they who bore the brunt of the destitution. With little or no food available they were in a desperate state, as was shown by the parish priest of Ballintubber, who told a public meeting of the potato failure in his parish:

... I instance Dunelleagh, with its twenty-eight families. The story of the poor people is 'Everyone owes three half year's rent and last year's meal yet.' Eight families have no potatoes in this village, eleven only one barrel each, and the remainder less than two.<sup>21</sup>

Overall the situation in the county was such that only a three months' supply of potatoes was available, and it was the labourers and small farmers who were most affected. The reports at the end of 1879 indicated that there was widespread starvation amongst the people in Aughagower, Bangor Erris, Charlestown and Kilmovee.

While the labourers and small farmers suffered greatly, they were not the only group to experience difficulties. Those sections who were considered to be well-off were also adversely affected by the distress. Tenant reformers regarded those tenants who had purchased their holdings under the 1869 Church Disestablishment Act, as models for emulation in their fight for peasant proprietorship, but now most of them were also severely in debt.<sup>22</sup> Even those groups who normally escaped the ravages of the periodic crop failures, were not left unscathed and were now reduced to the level of their poorer neighbours. In some instances they were forced to pawn off their last few remaining possessions to buy meal for their families. Within a short time large sections of the community became dependent on relief, as the situation in Mayo and Connacht approached the scenes of 1847. That it never reached these depths of misery was in part due to the intervention of the private relief organisations early in 1880. Many of the officials who worked with these agencies were appalled by the exceptionally severe distress that they were witnessing in Mayo.<sup>23</sup> Father MacHale, the parish priest of Laherdane, in reporting that there were 800 families, 3,000 people, in need of relief in his area said:

... Will you believe it, gentlemen, we have seen the poor labourer wrestling with the frost to recover the potato that might have been left behind at the first digging last harvest.<sup>24</sup>

Similar scenes were reported from Ballaghaderreen, Attymass, Bonniclon and Kilmovee. By the end of 1879 over 142,000 people in Mayo were in need of relief, with the entire populations of places like Mulranny, Turlough and Addergoole on the relief lists. There were 8,400 people dependent on relief in Westport, 8,000 in Clonbur, 6,000 in Kilmovee and 4,000 in Carracastle, all as a result of the potato failure.

At the earliest stages, the poor law unions were the principal mode of relief for the people. The extent of the problem which they faced can be seen in that there were 47,994 inmates of the workhouses by July 1879,<sup>25</sup> the largest number of paupers in the workhouses since the distress of 1872. It represented a 7.4 per cent. increase on the preceeding year. However, the figure was taken at a time when the full effects of the distress had not yet become fully apparent, because the potato crop had still to be dug in many areas. Considering the hatred the Irish person had for the workhouse, the substantial increase in workhouse numbers helps to illustrate the extent of the impending distress. With large increases in the inmate population being reported from all over the country, the *Freeman's Journal* went on to state:

... It is when all is gone and when even hope itself has fled that the poor Irishman or poor woman will think of becoming an indoor pauper. Yet the workhouses are once more beginning to fill.<sup>26</sup>

The numbers in receipt of relief in Ireland doubled to 549,874 between September 1877 and 1880, while in Mayo these on relief trebled to 20,242. The most marked increases occurred in Belmullet union (from 520 to 6,308) and Claremorris (606 to 2,960). The rise is mainly attributable to the failure of the potato crop, and this is seen by the eightfold increase in Mayo to 12,769 of those on outdoor relief. Whenever there was a crop failure or local distress, the numbers in receipt of outdoor relief rose accordingly, as they were not entitled to outdoor relief because they held more than the  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of land. In Belmullet 94 per cent. of those on the relief list were receiving outdoor relief in 1881 and in Castlebar the figure was 74 per cent., indicating the rise was of a temporary nature. At the same time Ballina experienced a sixfold increase in the numbers on outdoor relief.<sup>27</sup>

The magnitude of the distress is demonstrated from the fact that in 1877 the average daily relief for each workhouse inmate was 112 days, the long period indicating that many of these were primarily old and infirm people who were unable to support themselves in relatively prosperous times. By 1881 the situation had changed with the average number of relief days for each pauper being 86. In contrast to 1877, many of these were small farmers and labourers who were entirely dependent on relief as a result of the potato failure. By this stage many of the poorer unions had just made it safely through the period of distress.

The increased demands on the poor law system, caused by the rising number in inmates, resulted in higher poor law rates. By September 1879, Belmullet at  $4/5\frac{1}{2}$  in the £, had the highest rate in the country, and the full impact of the distress in the region had not yet been determined as the potato crop, although deficient, showed no major change from previous years. It was the withdrawal of credit and the decline in seasonal migration remittances, which had culminated in the starvation problem. The problem of increased expenditure was felt by many of the poorer unions, such as Newport and Swinford, and a positive approach was taken to cut down on their outgoings. In August, the salaries of the Newport union officials were reduced by 20 per cent. in direct response to the resolutions adopted by the ratepayers. They were unable to pay the increased poor rate because of the downturn in their economic positions.<sup>28</sup> Many of these people had valuations of about £6, so they were almost as destitute as those being relieved. Even during the periods of prosperity these ratepayers had difficulty paying their dues, because the onerous burden fell on such a small number of people. Consequently these people found it difficult when any increased demands were made on their finances. In the relatively better off unions, such as Westport and Claremorris, the position was not as acute and the officials did not have to succumb to the ratepayers' pressures. The attempts to have the officials' salaries reduced in these unions failed miserably.

All of the unions, irrespective of the level of their financial burdens,

experienced problems collecting their rates, as the distress of 1879 affected everyone. In many cases legal action had to be threatened on those in default, while in others it was clearly pointless seeking money from people who simply did not possess any, as was witnessed in the poorer unions of Belmullet, Swinford and Newport. Consequently these unions quickly fell into debt, as the financing of the poor law rose dramatically. In Newport the financial situation deteriorated to the extent that the liabilities of the union were three times greater than the total annual receipts. As a result, the union was unable to maintain the workhouse inmates properly and the possibility of bankruptcy became increasingly real. In 1880, Belmullet union had a debt of £3,247 and had no option but secure a £600 loan to keep the workhouse open. At the same time the liabilities of the Swinford union amounted to £1,652, and this did not include the £1,773 outstanding to the local government board for the Seed Act.<sup>29</sup> There was little likelihood that this would be collected as the tenants were in a wretched and distressed state.

In 1880, the total receipts for Belmullet, Newport and Swinford unions amounted to £2,187, £2,138 and £4,967 respectively, while their expenditure totalled £3,443, £2,681 and £6,498.<sup>30</sup> The extent of the distress in these poor unions meant that 71 to 82 per cent. of the total poor law expenditure was being spent exclusively on relief. By 1880 these were the most highly-rated unions in the country standing at  $6/3\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $3/11\frac{3}{4}$  and  $3/2\frac{1}{4}$  in the £. As a result of these high rates the unions were unable to collect the money which would meet their requirements. In June 1880 the three boards of guardians were dissolved because of their failure to keep their financial affairs in order, and they were replaced by paid officials (vice-guardians) who were appointed by the local government board. The chief objective was to reduce the deficit incurred by the elected guardians and ensure that the unions' operations were kept functioning. This was only achieved through drastic financial measures, which saw the poor law rate increase to an unprecedented high of  $11/-\frac{1}{2}$  in the £ in Belmullet,  $6/5$  in Newport and  $3/4\frac{1}{2}$  in Swinford.<sup>31</sup> These measures were implemented at a time when distress was on the decline because of an improved harvest, and the people were not as radically opposed to the payments as they had previously been. In addition to the increased poor rate, a major effort was made to have all arrears collected. This was aided by the general overall improvement in the conditions for collecting money, helped by the upturn in the economic situation in 1881. As a result of this concerted effort, 66 per cent. of Belmullet's income was derived from rates arrears, while they contributed 52 per cent. of the total income in Swinford. This resulted in major financial implications for both of these unions, as Belmullet now had a working surplus of £1,388 and Swinford one of £4,418. At the same time there were large rises in expenditure, with a 75 per cent. increase in Belmullet in 1881. The vice-guardians had been forced to use ruthless fiscal policies to stabilise the finances of these unions, at a time when the burden of having to repay the Seed Act had also to be met. Their achievement in sorting out the financial problems of these unions resulted in the re-introduction of the elected guardians in 1882. While most other unions

did not experience problems of this magnitude, there were still regional variations within them which had to be overcome. There was also the problem where unions would not put those who were entitled to relief on to their lists, in order to keep expenditure down. In Murneen district in Claremorris union, there were 300 families in need of relief, but only four were provided for.<sup>32</sup> While it did keep the rates down, it meant that many people who needed aid were not being helped.

With no let up in the distress, the people began to equate their situation with that of 1847 and a general air of alarm is evident within newspaper articles, letters and general correspondence of the period. By the beginning of 1880, there were 6,400 people dependent on relief in the Ballina region, compared to 4,600 in 1847. Such statistics caused concern amongst all sections of the community, and in many instances the general alarm was exacerbated by the reported deaths from starvation of people around the country. By May, the newspapers were recording these deaths, just as they had done 30 years previously, with the *Nation* the first to open a column detailing the deaths from starvation. The first deaths in Mayo were recorded on 15 May when four tenants on Mrs. Gill's property near Murrisk were victims of the distress. However, at this stage such occurrences were exaggerated, the result of the growing panic and alarm that was sweeping the country, giving rise to a fear that the scenes of 1847 were once more upon the people.

The food scarcity exacerbated the problem of disease such as typhus and fever, diseases which at the best of times were rampant amongst the poorer section of society. While the term 'famine fever' was widely used during this period, it was incorrectly used. The situation was the consequence of an imbalance in the diet. By 1880 fever was rampant throughout the country and it was certainly poverty-related, since it was the poorer classes who primarily succumbed to it. As the people were without their staple diet, the potato, Indian meal was substituted, which according to contemporary medical opinion, left them susceptible to disease. It was generally believed that the meal on its own was difficult for a starving people to digest properly, and it was recommended that it should be consumed with flour and oatmeal, items which the poor rarely possessed. Nevertheless the numbers contracting fever increased, so that by June there were nearly fifty victims in Swinford workhouse. This occurred at a time when the people were totally dependent on Indian meal, as the potato crop was completely exhausted.

The fever and typhus epidemic that hit the Swinford-Charlestown-Ballaghaderreen region was as bad as that of the great famine. The problem in dealing with the outbreak was the deep fear which paralysed the community once it appeared in their midst. The normal close family bonds and neighbourly approach was put to one side by a people who under no circumstances would come in contact with the disease. However, while reluctant to get too close to these affected, people were prepared to provide the victims with some comforts, such as drinking water. Even the burial of the dead and the transportation of the sick to the workhouses, were left to others, even outsiders, if they were prepared to do so. In most cases these tasks were

left to the priest and the doctor, as the fever victims were treated as lepers of old by their friends and neighbours. The extent of this isolation can be seen from this account from near Swinford:

... The neighbour leaves a gallon of water outside the door, and to see the creatures getting up and staggering about for food and drink, half delirious, their eyes burning out of their heads, and their tongues like pieces of dried liver, was a sight such as I hope I shall not often see again.<sup>33</sup>

Without the courage and attentiveness of the medical officers and the priests, there is little doubt but that many more would have died in their homes because of the fever. Eventually the whole situation was only taken in hand when an adequate potato harvest made a welcome appearance the following August. By this stage however great efforts were in progress to help with relief.

(To be continued)

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**JAMES JOSEPH MacDONNELL,  
'THE BEST-KNOWN OF THE UNITED IRISH CHIEFS OF THE WEST'  
by Sheila Mulloy**

James Joseph MacDonnell of Carnacon, described by Dr. Hayes as being 'the best-known of the United Irish chiefs in the west,'<sup>1</sup> was undoubtedly the most important Mayoman to rally to Humbert's colours in August 1798. Politically and socially he was of the correct calibre, although, like so many of the United Irishmen, he appears to have had no military training.<sup>2</sup> His father, Joseph MacDonnell, a magistrate and extensive landowner, had raised a corps of Volunteers at his own expense and been active in obtaining the legislative independence of Ireland in 1782. James Joseph had been educated in Austria and settled for a time in Westport. He was later to study law, and became a friend of Wolfe Tone while there were both students in London. On their return to Ireland Tone was supported by MacDonnell in the work of the Catholic Committee, and later in the organization of the United Irishmen.

Wolfe Tone describes MacDonnell as seconding a motion proposed by Christopher Dillon Bellew of Galway at the Catholic Convention in December 1792. This proposal was to the effect that a petition from the Catholics of Ireland praying relief from their grievances should be presented directly to the King by a deputation to be chosen from the General Committee, and not through the usual channels of the administration in Ireland. Tone describes the sensation created by this motion:

. . . The question on the original motion was at length unanimously decided in the affirmative. By passing over the administration of their country, in a studied and deliberate manner, and on solemn debate, the General Committee published to all the world that his Majesty's ministers in Ireland had so far lost the confidence of no less than 3,000,000 of his subjects, that they were not even to be entrusted with the delivery of their petition. A stigma more severe it has not been the fortune of many administrations to receive.

That MacDonnell was still an important member of the Catholic Committee is proved by his membership of a sub-committee appointed to study the situation in January 1793.<sup>3</sup>

A few years later James Joseph was active in organizing the spread of the United Irish Association in Connacht, and more particularly in Co. Mayo. Here, Lord Altamont and his brother, Denis Browne, kept the administration in Dublin fully informed on the state of the county. During the years up to the French invasion, Denis reports repeatedly on the peaceful and loyal disposition of Mayo, but gradually the Brownes begin to suspect that treasonable doctrines are being spread among the people, and their suspicions fall on the 4,000 odd Northern immigrants and such well-known western activists as MacDonnell and his friend James Plunkett. The Brownes and the other Mayo landlords had at first welcomed these refugees, many of whom were linen weavers, as an economic boon, probably considering that as the majority were Catholics who had suffered at the hands of their Protestant neighbours, they would reinforce the loyalty of the local inhabitants. Denis

Browne writes to the government from Westport on 30 December 1796 as follows:

... The Inhabitants of this part of Mayo have connected the French and the Presbyterians of the North, who they hear have [invited] the French over. Consequently they have transferred a *portion* of their Hatred to the Enemy, who they are persuaded are coming with their Northern Allies to drive them from their Habitations and property, and so *strongly* does this operate that I am persuaded they would beat the French out of this Country with stones – The Unfortunate Emigrant Northerners are acting quietly and inoffensively. They are strong examples of the Consequence of confusion. You may be sure that *every opinion* and every principle that leads to good order is encouraged. . . . A sensible intelligent man of the name of *O Neil* from the County of Tyrone, who came lately here, has informed me of the Principle and intentions of the United Irishmen of the North, of which I *suspect* he was one. He says their object is to obtain a *universal* combination of Persons through the Kingdom in favour of Reform of Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

Browne's sense of false security was shattered in May 1797 by a letter from a G. A. Manning to Lord Altamont, who was requested to communicate the contents to his brother. This would indicate that his friend O'Neill had not entirely renounced his connection with the United Irishmen.

... Meetings are held at *O Neil's*, a Northern schoolmaster, on every Wednesday and Sunday night – he [the informer] says he saw on last Sunday night seven or eight men sitting at a table, one of whom was writing – I have laid my plans for tomorrow night and Sunday night to try to seize any persons so suspiciously assembled, in order to get any papers they may have – I have employed four persons that I think I can depend upon, to go about for information – *Jas. McDonnell* is called the officer. I happened to be in company with him at a party lately, when he and three other young men of this county expressed the most violent and wicked principles I ever heard – I would have attacked McDonnell upon the spot, being the leader – but two of his associates were *fireeaters*.<sup>5</sup>

The following month Denis Browne was to state categorically that 'I now know that the Northern Emigrants here are *United Irishmen*, and that they are poisoning the minds of the Inhabitants of this place.'<sup>6</sup>

James Joseph MacDonnell is now the main object of attack in the letters of the Browne brothers. In March 1798 he features on a list of names of suspect persons in Mayo.<sup>7</sup> In June Altamont wishes to have 'that Demagogue *forthwith* arrested', for

... he is certainly one of the greatest rascals of our Province – *He and all his family* disaffected and ill disposed men, he himself a notorious Villain, a United Irishman of the first order, and of such Diabolical dispositions as to be up to and beyond the greatest barbarities which his associates have committed.

Denis writes that MacDonnell 'is now at Rosbeg with a spy at his Huts.'<sup>8</sup>

During this time MacDonnell paid several visits to Lord Edward Fitzgerald in Dublin, and in fact was on his way to meet the Directory at Oliver Bond's house when his carriage broke down at Kilcock. He thus narrowly avoided the fate of those members who were arrested on 12 March 1798. He returned to Mayo and was ready to start the insurrection when countermanding orders came from Dublin. Years later MacDonnell learnt in Paris that his friend Colonel James Plunkett had brought these orders. He went to Hamburg to meet him and quarrelled with him about the matter, a quarrel 'which resulted in MacDonnell's arrest and temporary detention.'<sup>9</sup>

He joined Humbert at Castlebar with 1,000 followers, and was appointed

a general by him. Wounded at the capture of that town, he recovered sufficiently to lead the march from Castlebar a week later, which ended in the ill-fated battle of Ballinamuck.<sup>10</sup> He was lucky enough to escape from that battle (Appendix 1), and make his way to France, where he joined other Irish exiles such as Thomas Addis Emmet and Miles Byrne. Here he married Henrietta Mackie, a lady of Scottish origin, and had a daughter, Josephine Mary, born in France in 1805.<sup>11</sup>

MacDonnell was made a captain in the Irish Legion in France in 1803,

... but in consequence of an altercation he had with adjutant general Mac Sheehy, who was then commanding the legion, he resigned his commission and went to reside at Cadix in Spain, where several of his relations has been settled in commerce.<sup>12</sup>

The family went to New York about the year 1805, according to Mrs. Josephine H. Phillips, a great-great-grandchild of James Joseph, from New York, who is now living in Co. Clare. She inherited the MacDonnell correspondence which is now in the Public Record Office Dublin. These letters prove that James Joseph was much loved by his family, especially by his daughter, sister and nephew. One of his letters to his daughter displays an affectionate whimsicality which is worth recording (Appendix 2). Mrs. Phillips bases the following account of her famous ancestor's later life on the family papers:

... In 1809 Henrietta set sail from New York for France, taking the child with her. I presume she was going to visit her parents in Paris. The vessel 'was seized by a British cruiser' and taken into Plymouth Harbour. In Plymouth Henrietta Mackie McDonnell died, leaving 4-year-old Josephine alone in a strange land 3,000 miles from home, a land where her father was wanted for High Treason.

Josephine 'was fortunate enough to find the wife of a British Admiral an amiable protectress. She brought her to and kept her for three years at her residence, Hampton Court Palace, one of those belonging to the King of Great Britain' – for this Lady Whitshed was, it seems, a Lady in waiting to the Queen. 'This lady,' writes James Joseph in 1813, 'educated her with her Children and parted with her with Great Reluctance.' (Nevertheless, J.J. could not bring himself to address this kind lady as 'Lady Whitshed', but only as 'Mrs. Whitshed' – so steeped in republican principles was he!) 'My little girl Josephine,' he adds, 'came to New York to me last October . . . which means that 7 year-old Josephine crossed the Atlantic alone in a sailing vessel in the very year, 1812, in which war broke out between Britain and the United States.

Sometime in 1813 MacDonnell went back to Cadiz, leaving Josephine, 'a beautiful, Amiable and interesting little girl' at school in a convent at Emmetsburg, Maryland, of which the foundress, Mother Elizabeth Seton, was then Mother Superior. (She has recently become St. Elizabeth Seton). James Joseph's sister, Henrietta French, of Snipe Hill, Ballimore, Co. Roscommon, was eager to have Josephine come back to Ireland and live with her and her three children, Jane, Mary and Nicholas. Had she done so, she might not have done badly. Her Aunt French complains in letters to James Joseph that Nicholas, her son, has no ambition – doesn't like farming and is not interested in studying law. However, in 1831 Nicholas married Betsy O'Connell, 'the [youngest] daughter of the man who stands highest in the esteem and regard of his countrymen both in the old and the new world . . . Dan'l O'Connell who has so well deserved to be called the Great Liberator of his Country.'

In 1824 or 1825 Josephine married Robert Hutton, a Scotsman born in Glasgow, to whom she bore 10 children, of whom my grandmother, Josephine, was

one. They lived in 'Powles Hook' or 'Paulus Hook', now Jersey City, at 194 So. 6th Street. The post-war 1820s were hard years, and by the time of Josephine's marriage her father was not well off. Some years later he had to explain in a letter to his nephew, Joseph of Carnacon, that 'she had nothing from me on her marriage. I had not then anything to give; the place we live in I received as payment of a debt from a friend who had been unfortunate in business, and I was obliged to raise about six hundred pounds British secured by a mortgage on it before her marriage.' Nor was he well. During the winter of 1825-6 he had an attack of influenza which 'reduced me to be as slender as I was at 17 years old.' In 1829 he was 'greatly prostrated by an attack of fever and ague . . . which affected my mind as well as my body.' During all this time, and, so far as I know, until his death, he lived with his daughter and the growing Hutton family in that mortgaged house in Jersey City. There is still a Hutton Street in the old section of the city.

In 1843, when he was 80 years old, he was appointed a Judge of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas of Hudson County, New Jersey. Dr. Hayes - and the little monument at Carnacon Cross - say he died in 1849, but records in the Jersey City Library indicate that his will was probated in 1848. In 1976 I went searching for the old Catholic graveyard in Jersey City. It seems to have been obliterated by an immense and terrifying twist of superhighway where thunder the juggernauts of today.

Thus ends the rather sad story of General James Mac Donnell, the most distinguished of the Mayo men who joined the French. He had escaped the punishments of hanging, transportation and flogging, but like so many others who had taken part in the 1798 insurrection, he spent the remainder of his life in penury, an exile from his family and country. An unsuccessful business venture and bad health had forced him to beg from his nephew in Carnacon, and to accept the charity of his son-in-law. His hopes for employment were not fulfilled until the year 1843, when he was made a judge at 80 years of age, an appointment which must have owed much to the influence of his daughter and her husband.

Perhaps the last word should be left to his contemporary Miles Byrne, revolutionary and fellow-exile, who has left us so many valuable pen-portraits of the United Irishmen.

. . . Of the many fine fellows who had escaped from Ireland after general Humbert's capitulation there in August 1798 and whom I met at Paris, counsellor James Joseph Mac Donald was one of the most distinguished. They were all no doubt equally brave and zealous in their country's cause, but he seemed to possess the talents, acquirements and energy necessary to become a great leader: he was handsome and well informed, and he spoke the french language fluently. General Humbert at once appointed Mac Donald to be one of his generals, to command the Irish forces flocking to join his standard when he landed on the Irish coast, and to have them armed and organized forthwith in the best way possible, under the urgent exigency of the moment; and Humbert in his report to the Directory, said, that if he had had a sufficient force to have made a longer stand in the country, that Mac Donald would have been invaluable to him, that he was enterprising and quite equal to the difficult task he was entrusted with.<sup>13</sup>



*Mrs. Josephine Phillips, great-great grandchild of James Joseph MacDonnell.*



*Carnacon House, home of James Joseph MacDonnell, now the home of Mr. Walter Hughes.*

## APPENDIX 1

(Description by his niece of James Joseph MacDonnell's escape after Ballinamuck, National Library Manuscript 7335.)

I was born in Grange in the County of Roscommon, within two miles of Boyle, on the 23rd December [1795] where my Respected Father was located for a few years having lease taken [out on] a large tract of the plains of Boyle from the Earl of Kingston of the day. But like a true *Milesian*, he felt unhappy until he got back to his own native county (sweet *Mayo for ever*.) where his memory is respected and beloved to the present hour. In addition to this there were other circumstances of a very peculiar nature which made him very unhappy and anxious to leave the vicinity of Boyle.

At this point the people of Ireland were so tortured in every way, that they were organizing throughout the Kingdom in every possible means to commence the Rebellion which broke in 98, and a brother of his, who he loved dearly, took a leading part in this Rebellion. He was a fine dashing game fellow, highly accomplished, a splendid [James], and spoke almost every language. His first step was to plant the tree of liberty in the centre of the green in Castlebar. He then joined General Humbert the French General and accompanied him to Belaghy, where a difference of opinion arose, and not agreeing, as to which road to take, my uncle James Joseph MacDonnell, insisted the proper route was to proceed to Ballyhadrine [Ballaghaderreen] and attack Lord *Cornwallis* who occupied with his officers my Grandfather's Home,<sup>14</sup> while the town was crowded with military. But Humbert turned off to Tobercurry en route to Sligo, and *history* has told of the result, and battle of Carrick at Camp Hill.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless my uncle James Joseph, joined the French at Ballinamuck, where they were defeated and three Mayo men, Blake of Caracloon, O'Dowda of Bonyconlon and James Joseph MacDonnell made this retreat, concealed themselves in bog holes. The two former were arrested by Captain Nesbit of Dericarne, then the property of the Nesbits, and lately purchased by Major Ormsby Gore the present member for Leitrim. One of the two arrested cried out, 'Spare my life and I will point you out a rebel general.' The captain's reply was 'The information of such a<sup>16</sup> can be of no avail.' But let me observe that Mrs. Captain Nesbit and my mother were first cousins and lived and loved as sisters.

My uncle remained in the same spot, and after dusk commenced his Journey, and spud his way as best he could to Mayo. He faced all dangers, and they were before him in all quarters. His first object was to cross the Shanon, and how did he accomplish this? By speaking Irish fluently, he made great friends of the peasantry and he *carried his point* and crossed the Shanon *absolutely* in Captain Nesbit's own Boat, manned by two of his own men, the particulars of which were not discovered for many months after.<sup>17</sup> His object was to get to *Conamara*, the Western highlands. Having a fair knowledge of the line of Country, he worked his way across the plains of Boyle and escaped his Enemies until he reached the new church of Frenchpark. There is a long stretch of Road between the Church and the town, and consequently a good

view, which enable him to observe mounted cavalry moving towards him in a slinging trot, so he instantly took off his coat, and commenced speaking Irish to a number of men who were making hay cocks quite close to the church, and asked permission to go on the ladder, which was willingly granted to him then, and thus he joined in forking up the hay amusing his fellow labourers with some amusing stories, and laughing at the horsemen as they passed, which turned out to be the Frenchpark Yeomanry and most likely in pursuit of himself. Be this as it may, they passed within *fifty* yards, rather too near to be pleasant.

He remained until Evening working away, and availed himself of the most favourable opportunity, but was in no great hurry to move by daylight, as the Yeomanry who passed had not returned, and the friends he wished to stop with, lived only between four and five miles distant from the Church.

He got away across the fields and passed to the north of *Ratra*, and made his way without interruption, until he reached the hospitable mansion of John Dillon Esquire of [Lung],<sup>18</sup> one of the fine old Irish stock. In addition to this Mrs. Dillon was a near relative, and watched for him and *cared* him with every thing that could comfort his troubled mind for about a week or ten days, which he remained there to rest.

This well known seat of Hospitality and Friendship, for it was an open house for all kinds to visit, was situated on the brink of a fine river without a Bridge and within two miles of Ballyhadrine [Ballaghaderreen].<sup>19</sup>

At this particular period, my mother was on a visit with my grand Father James Hughes who lived, and I may say built that town of Ballyhadrine [Ballaghaderreen]. She had myself, then only two years old, and my Brother James, *then* a baby on the Breast. Fortunate for my Uncle James Joseph, it was so, as you shall presently hear a circumstance arrived connected with the Baby, which not only saved my Uncle from arrest, but his life also.

Any person with a tender heart such as she possessed all her life, can well appreciate the feelings of a sisterinlaw, and one she esteemed and valued, to be within two miles of the Brother of her husband and not be able to see or visit him, which was the case in the present instance up to the night of his departure. Great caution was absolutely necessary to guard against suspicion, as in every *county* *villains* are to be found and rewards offered [by] men of a high character. Besides this my Father was an officer in the Boyle Yeomanry, while on the other hand my Grand *Father*, and my four uncles, the Hughes, were officers and members of the Laughlin [Loughglynn] Yeomanry, and were as great Loyalists as my Uncle J. Jos. was the opposite, so that she had to play a steady game. Mother remained quiet, however, for some days, when my Uncle began to think, and properly so, that it was not prudent to remain *too long* in one place, so he wrote a letter by a confidential friend, to my mother, requesting that she would have my Father's Black Mare (a celebrated huntress well known on the plains of Boyle) at a certain hour at her Father's Gate, and that he would be punctual as to time and move on for Carnacon, the place of his birth and his Father's Residence.

This arrangement was carefully carried out, and the horse well appointed



Josephine MacDonnell Hutton, daughter of James Joseph MacDonnell, ca. 1885.

at the spot to *the minute*. He was up to time, embraced my Mother and got *at once* into the *saddle*. The interview was *short* but *interesting*. He stated that all that day nothing could persuade him but danger was at hand. To use the words of my Beloved Mother (now numbered among the saintly dead), 'Never was there a more heavenly night seen. The Moon was beautifully brilliant, the night calm, you could read a letter on the street as the night was almost as bright as day.' The dogs were barking at more than a mile from the town, but just as if providence had a hand in the part, Patrick J. Jh., my brother, who was in the nursery at the top of the house, commenced crying and very *loud*, for she heard him and said she should run up to calm him, but [?] of awaking her Father and Brothers, and that she would return in a couple of minutes.

Almost within the minute she moved, my uncle discovered the militia troop, who were within two hundred yards of him in a brisk trot, when he put spurs to the mare and dashed off the Kilkelly road, where they rushed to within a mile of this little village, and there was only *two outpartys* could be seen or heard, never coming within a quarter of mile of the *Black* mare at any time of the *chase*.

Finding that he was free from the Enemy, he gave himself and the horse more breathing time, and again he quickened his pace, on by Ballyhurly

[?Ballyhowley] and Murneen, until he reached Mt. Pleasant, then crossed the fields of [?or] Parks on the verge of the Carnacon Lake, in view of his Father's house. Here let me observe that there was *one* pass across this lake that a horseman could venture on, but I have been well informed that no man ever ventured it but my Father and my uncle Jas. Josh. The latter with the heart of a Lion, put the mare in the water and got safe to the opposite side close to the Farm yard, and when halfway across, the herd and his son were up on Duty and concealed themselves in a large ditch, thinking that he might not wish to be recognized on landing, and watched his movements.

Immediately he commenced to strip the mare, and carefully hid the saddle and bridle in a corner of the same fence where the Heard and his son were on the watch, then allowed the honest animal to rove about on the grass, but unfortunately, the long ride (40 miles) and coming through the cold water, in less than an hour she got convulsions and in a very few minutes was *dead*. The heard and his son shewed great presence of mind and acted with good sence and Judgement on this occasion. They instantly made a grave on the spot and buried the poor mare before a soul in or about the place was up, which caused the whole affair to be kept a profound secret, and it occured on the most private part of the Carnacon demesne, the nearest point Thomastown.

Previous to the poor mare's illness, the 'General' proceeded across a rocky and brushwood country untill he reached a small Cottage near the wood of Clogher, which was occupied by his *nurse* and *Foster Father*, where he remained about a month without any interruption whatsoever, and where he had every luxury he could wish for, everything save his liberty. The faithful nurse was the trustworthy confidant, who not only announced his arrival to his affectionate sister Mrs. Kirwan, who was at [the] time living with her Father at Carnacon and had the management and control of the whole establishment, and no doubt she took good care that the nurse brought a good supply both from Larder and Cellar, and it is a well known fact that a secret was never better kept between the only five who were in possession of the facts which I now state in truth.

From this cottage he made up his mind to make a dash still forward for Conamarra, and although Westport was only fourteen miles from him, yet it was a most dangerous route to decide upon. But his foster Father, who was always on the watch and gathering all the information he could pick up, discovered that the most private roads into Conamarra were the most patrolled, and consequently he started by night and followed the most public road, and even passed before day light through the town of Westport and got without interruption half way between Aclare [?Belclare] and Morisk. Any person who ever travelled that road will recalled [sic] there are a vast number of small hills and hollows, Esker like, which was another bit of luck for the 'General' and another trump turned up like the hay making at the church at Frenchpark. For it so happend that a fisherman was calking his boat quite close to the road and shore, with the keel uppermost, and as he got a full view of the yeomanry moving on towards him, he instantly got to the Boat and



*Memorial to James Joseph MacDonnell at Carnacon House.*

worked himself under her, and fortunately in addition, the fisherman recognized him, and 'the General' told him in Irish, if they stopped and asked any questions, to tell them that a *smart looking man* was about two miles ahead. So they went off, and quickened their pace, no doubt quite certain they had it all their own way, while the General and Fisherman both enjoyed the *sell* they got, as well as the fortunate escape the poor Patriot had.

He then had plenty of time to alter his course, and quickly decided on crossing the mountain, south side of the Reek, so he made his way through Lord Sligo's Deer Park, very nearly opposite the entrance to the present Race Course, and after getting a few miles west of the Reek, he was in safe quarters surrounded for miles [*sic*] by his Father's herds, who were in charge of Hundreds of Bullocks. So he worked his way in safety to the Killeries and then to Claggan Bay, where he took shelter with the kind and hospitable Parish Priest and the Cunnises, where he remained till he left Ireland.<sup>20</sup>

## APPENDIX 2

(J. J. McDonnell to his daughter Josephine,  
Public Record Office, Manuscript 999/49)

New York, Friday eveg, 21 March, 1823.

Dear Josephine,

I red both your very long letters, and should have answered them sooner but the confounded post is always in such a hurry and so precise in setting out a certain hour every morning that I never could be ready time enough for it, and when I determined to write of an evening the pens were so bad, or Mr. Berreau had the writing materials below stairs, or he had somebody upstairs playing chess with him, or he was engaged in repetitions on the fiddle, or Laura was here teasing me to play cassino – or some other impediment equally insurmountable invariably occurred to frustrate my intentions. On Saturday last I was confident that I should have had an opportunity by Mr. Thebaud and I called on him to know if he was going to Bottle [?] Hill, but the same fatality that put the numerous and perpetually recurring obstacles which I have already mentioned in my way, was equally adverse on this occasion. I found him engaged with two females one of them very very pretty, and I could get no other answer than an impatient 'No' three times repeated 'No.No.No' – and then it was too late for the post. And the next day was Sunday, and Monday was Patrick's Day, and Tuesday of course I had a headach, and on Wednesday . . . Mr. Berrau who came upstairs just as I came to the headach, has with his harmony deranged my pericranium, oh que ce charmant fal la de &c, and for the world I can't, since he interrupted me with his ejaculation, recollect what it was that hindered me on Wednesday – I have it, it was on that day I received your last letter, and as you desired me mention something to Mr. Thebaud I thought I would let you know if he was to go on Saturday, and on Thursday when I made the enquiry and found he intended going then, I thought you would receive my letter by him on Saturday as soon as by the mail on Friday, and thus you have in a few words my reason for not writing until now . . .

### NOTES

1. *The Last Invasion of Ireland*, p.275.
2. Possibly he received some military training in the course of his education in Austria.
3. *The Autobiography of Wolfe Tone*, ed. R. Barry O'Brien, i, pp 167, 177.
4. State Paper Office, Rebellion Papers, 620/26/184.
5. State Paper Office, Rebellion Papers, 620/30/7.
6. State Paper Office, Rebellion Papers, 620/31/70.
7. State Paper Office, Rebellion Papers, 620/17/33.
8. State Paper Office, Rebellion Papers, 620/38/184; 620/38/204. It is ironic that MacDonnell was to occupy Lord Altamont's residence while Westport was in the hands of the insurgents. (Hayes, *The Last Invasion of Ireland*, p.67.)
9. Hayes, *The Last Invasion of Ireland*, p.276.
10. MacDonnell distinguished himself in that battle, receiving the following tribute from the French General Fontaine: The two MacDonnell brothers gave proof in this engagement of the greatest courage together with the most consummate skill. For several hours, at the head of a band of Irish sharpshooters, they defended a position which prevented the enemy

from debouching and causing disorder in our ranks. (*Notice Historique*, p.41, note 16.)

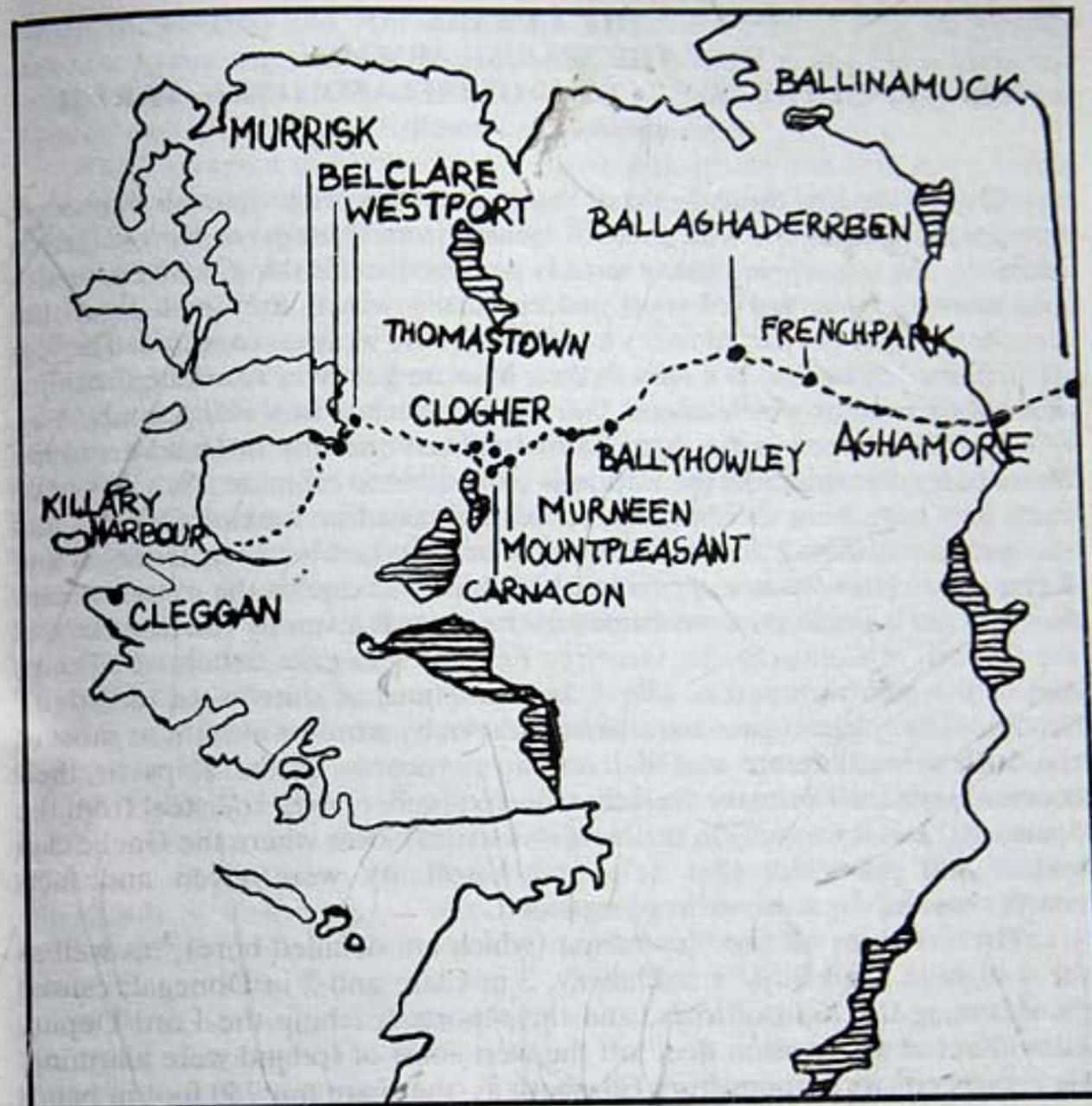
James Joseph had a cousin, not a brother, in the allied force.

11. I am indebted for this information to Mrs. Josephine Phillips.
12. *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, Irish University Press, 1972, iii, p.54.
13. *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, Irish University Press, 1972, iii, pp 52-3.  
The two names MacDonald and MacDonnell are frequently confused in contemporary writings.
14. This house is the present residence of James Dillon, Esq., former Leader of Fine Gael. I am indebted for this information to Mr. Dillon. It was in fact Generla Lake who occupied the house.
15. This is the battle of Collooney, which is half a mile from Carrignagat where the Teeling monument is. Hayes mentions Colonel MacDonnell as having taken part in the preceding engagement at Tubbercurry. (*Last Invasion of Ireland*, p.89.)
16. Left blank in MS.
17. The Nesbits had property at Aghamore near Roosky. One cannot help suspecting some connivance on the part of Captain Nesbit in view of this incident and the preceding one.
18. This family lived at a bend of the river Lung near Ballaghaderreen, on the left hand side of the road to Frenchpark.
19. There is a note in the margin: 'A pass through the wood.'
20. There is a note at the bottom of this page to the effect: 'Geofry Cunnis and his Family were tried and *old* friends of the MacDonnells and I believe were relatives also.' A letter in the State Paper Office (State of the Country Papers, No. 3493) written by Richard Martin of Ballinahinch on 23 July 1803, gives further details of MacDonnell's escape:

James McDonnell escaped from Aughris in a smuggling vessel belonging to the Coneyses and commanded by a Captain Agnew, who ran in to France with McDonnell, but he pretended that he was captured by the French, and the better to favour this story, he pretended to have been in Prison, and that the Vessell was sold by the enemy. McDonnell writes often, and whether by way of Guernsey, or whether any of the smugglers venture into the Ports of France I cannot tell, but this I am confident of, that Jordan and Wat Coneyses have both received letters from France, and I think it would be wise to give general instructions to the cruisers to search all those Vessels for letters.'

There are frequent references to correspondence between MacDonnell and the rebels on the run in Connemara, and it was widely reported that he had returned from France to the area in 1803 and again in 1805. (State Paper Office, Rebellion Papers, 620/14/189/1-10; State of the Country Papers, 1023/5.)

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MAP SHOWING  
JAMES JOSEPH MacDONNELL'S ESCAPE FROM BALLINAMUCK.

**THE ARMADA**  
**HOW THE SPANISH ARMADA**  
**'FELL UPON THE WEST COAST OF IRELAND' (1588) – PART II.**  
by Colette Purcell

During the first three weeks of September 1588<sup>1</sup> huge Spanish ships were being sighted along the west coast of Ireland from Donegal to Kerry. Driven inland by the fierce gales, many already damaged and leaking, with crews sick and starving from lack of food and especially water, they now faced the treacherous and uncharted rocky headlands of the western coastline. The loss of anchors, left behind at Calais in their haste to get away from the fireships, was another factor which caused them to be wrecked in shifting sands.

Every squadron in the Armada lost at least one ship in Ireland and the losses of smaller ships like the *Zabras* is impossible to estimate. As many as 60 ships may have been driven onto the western coastline looking for food and shelter, and at least 26 (accounted for) were wrecked between Donegal and Kerry. The difficulty in identifying these ships was due to the extraordinary fact that not a single ship was named in the records given by the Secretary of the Council of Connacht, Sir Geoffrey Fenton, who gave details of 17 ships and of the men drowned or killed, but no names of ships were recorded.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, place-names were handed down by word of mouth, as most of the Irish were illiterate and did not keep records of the ships or their commanders; their primary objective was to plunder, strip and steal from the Spaniards, and it was only in the North-west and North where the Gaelic clan system still prevailed, that help and hospitality were given and facts concerning ships and crews were recorded.

The five ships off the Mayo coast (which are detailed here),<sup>3</sup> as well as the 4 ships in Sligo Bay,<sup>4</sup> 2 in Galway, 3 in Clare and 7 in Donegal, caused panic among the local officials, and the reports reaching the Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam of an 'invasion fleet' off the west coast of Ireland were alarming. He requested more troops from Elizabeth as 'there are not 750 foot in bands in the whole realm and they had neither men, money nor munitions to answer these services. . . we look rather to be overrun by the Spaniards than otherwise.'<sup>5</sup> The Queen immediately ordered 700 soldiers to be levied in England, ready to embark at an hour's notice only if needed, but she did not send them.

Nor did he need them. It soon became evident that the Spaniards who struggled ashore were in no condition to fight and were only looking for help. Over 1,000 got ashore only to be slaughtered by English soldiers after being robbed and stripped by the native Irish. One Castilian Captain Francisco de Cuellar of the ship *La Lavia*, wrecked at Streedagh Strand off Sligo Bay, survived. After being robbed of his gold chain and money and left naked, he covered himself with rushes and made his way to McGlancy's Castle in Leitrim where he stayed for 3 months with 5 other Spaniards. Eventually they all reached Antrim, where they were helped by Sorley Boy McDonnell of Dunluce Castle and Bishop Raymond O'Gallagher of Derry. From there they

sailed to Scotland and Antwerp, from where in October 1589 de Cuellar wrote a harrowing account of his adventures in Ireland and his remarkable escape from death in three shipwrecks, while never losing faith in God, himself and Our Lady of Encantora (his birth-place).<sup>6</sup>

The Governor of Connacht, Sir Richard Bingham was kept busy, riding up and down the province from castle to castle, writing letters to Fitzwilliam and Elizabeth on what was happening. Fitzwilliam's orders to Bingham were 'to take all hulls of ships, treasures, etc, into your hands, and to apprehend and execute all Spaniards of what quality soever. . . torture may be used in prosecuting this enquiry.'<sup>7</sup>

Bingham carried out these orders ruthlessly. Every Spaniard who set foot in Mayo or Galway was either captured or handed over by the natives under threat of execution for harbouring them. At one time there were between 300 and 350 prisoners in Galway Jail, and 300 Spaniards were taken to St. Augustine's Monastery, now Fort Hill, outside the city and executed there. After the Crown forces left, the townspeople made shrouds for them and buried them. A mass grave in Fort Hill Cemetery is said to hold 37 Spaniards. Bingham rode from Athlone to witness their execution. The threat of invasion was brutally dealt with.

The English intelligence system was highly efficient; reports were coming in of 'a ship of 900 tons cast upon sand at Ballycrouhie (Ballycroy), 13 of their gentlemen taken, the rest to the number of 400 are come to land and fortify at Ballycrouhie.'<sup>8</sup> This was the *Santa Maria Encoronada* with Don Alonso de Leiva and his men who fortified themselves at Fahy Castle (Doona) in Blacksod Bay. Later, on 26 September, Bingham learned 'that the 600 Spaniards at Ballycrouhie were conveyed to the castle of Torane (Tiraun) and there joined with 800 more who came out of another great ship which lay at anchor in the road of Torane. . .', in fact, at Elly Cove. Bingham had already asked the Lord Deputy for 'two bands of foot soldiers to enable him to attack the castle' (at Tiraun) to no avail. Now there were 1,500 armed Spaniards on his territory, and if the local Irish were to join them and attack and conquer the province, he was helpless.<sup>9</sup>

Then another messenger arrived with the news that 'The ship that was at Pollilly by Torane has sailed. . . towards the south west. . . taking the company that was wrecked. . .' This was welcome news for Bingham. The threat of invasion had departed with the Spaniards.

By the end of September 1588 he was able to write to the Lord Deputy from Shrule Castle, Co. Mayo, that he had executed about 800 men:<sup>10</sup>

. . . I had intelligence sent me from my brother that the 700 Spaniards in Ulster were despatched, which I know your Lordship heareth before this time. And this I dare assure your Lordship now, that in a fifteen or sixteen ships cast away on the coast of this province, which I can in my own knowledge say to be so many, there hath perished at least a 6,000 or 7,000 men, of which there hath been put to the sword, first and last, by my brother George, and in Mayo, Thomond [Clare] and Galway, and executed one way and another, about seven or eight hundred, or upwards.

At Shrowle [Shrule], Co. Mayo,

Richard Bingham.



As Don Alonzo de Leiva is the only Knight of Santiago known to have been on the Girona this cross of the Knight of Santiago only recently found on the Girona site almost certainly belonged to him. It would therefore have traversed the bogs of North Mayo on its way from the Santa Maria Encoronada in Blacksod to the Duquesa Santa Ana in Elly Bay. Photographs in this article – courtesy of Laurence Flanagan, Ulster Museum.

Fitzwilliam came on a tour of Connacht and north-west Ulster to see for himself that his orders were being carried out, during the wettest months of winter from 14 November 1588 until 2 January 1589. It was a tough undertaking for a man of 63, but shows how determined he was to exterminate the Spaniards. In a letter written to the Privy Council, a week after his return, he recorded. . . 'riding still along the sea coast, I went to see the bay [Streedagh, Co. Sligo] where some of those ships wrecked, and where, as I heard, lay not long before 1,200 or 1,300 of the dead bodies. . .'<sup>11</sup>

These were from the Sligo wrecks, with a total of 1,252 men. In Galway from the two ships, the *Falco Blanco* near Clifden 103 men, and the *Concepcion Delcano* (Carna) with 225 men, a total of 328. In Donegal from 7 ships the total was 1,413 men and in Clare, 948 men from 3 ships. In Kerry, 908 men from 4 ships and in Mayo 1,411 men from 5 ships, bringing the full total of men lost on the west coast to 5,250 men, of whom 1,500 were executed by the English and the remainder 3,750 were drowned or died by shipwreck, while 750 survived.<sup>12</sup>

Bingham, however, did show mercy to some of the Spaniards off the *Falco Blanco* wreck near Clifden, knowing that being noblemen and gentlemen they were worth a good ransom. He was reprimanded by Fitzwilliam for his disobedience and ordered to execute them. Bingham, angered by this decision, promptly wrote to Elizabeth stating his case.

From Sir Richard Bingham, to Elizabeth I, 3 December 1588.<sup>13</sup>

Their loss upon this province, first and last, and in several places, was twelve ships, which all we know of, and some two or three more supposed to be sunk to seaboard of the out isles; the men of which ships did all perish in the sea, save the

number of 1,100 or upward, which we put to the sword; amongst whom these was divers gentlemen of quality and service, as captains, masters of ships, lieutenants, ensign-bearers, other inferior officers and young gentlemen, to the number of some fifty, whose name I have for the most part set down in a list, and have sent the same unto your Majesty; which being spared from the sword till order might be had from the Lord Deputy how to proceed against them, I had special direction sent to me to see them executed as the rest were, only reserving alive one, Don Luis de Cordova<sup>14</sup> (brother of The Marquis of Ayamonte) and a young gentleman, his nephew, till your Highness's pleasure be known.

From your Majesty's Castle of Athlone

Richard Bingham

#### SPANISH ARMADA WRECKS OFF THE COAST OF MAYO SEPTEMBER 1588

	Squadron	Tons	Guns	Men	Captain	Place
1. <b>Ciervo Volante:</b>	Urcas	400	18	222	Juan de Peramato	Tyrawley
2. <b>Santiago:</b>	Urcas	600	19	86	Juan Hernandez de Luna	Inver, Broadhaven Bay, Erris
3. <b>El Gran Grin:</b>	Biscay	1160	28	329	Don Pedro do Mendoza, Squadron Commander.	Clare Island
4. <b>San Nicolas Prodaneli:</b>	Levant	834	26	355	Capt. Martin Prodaneli	Toorglass, Curraun Peninsula
5. <b>La Rata Encoronada:</b>	Levant	820	35	419	Don Alonso de Leiva, Commander-in-Chief designate	Fahy Strand, Ballycroy, Blacksod Bay.

1. The **Ciervo Volante** was wrecked in Tyrawley between Kilalla and Belderg. Edward Whyte, Clerk of the Council of Connacht wrote to his brother Stephen, Alderman of Limerick 'There was about that time, one other great ship cast away in Tirrawley and that there are three noblemen, a bishop, a friar, and sixty other men taken by William Burke of Ardnearie;<sup>15</sup> They were so miserably distressed coming to land that one man, Melaghlen McCabb (a Scottish galloglass) killed 80 of them with his galloglass axe. The rest were executed by Bingham.
2. **Santiago:** Wrecked at Inver, Broadhaven Bay. Her crew of 80 men came ashore and then marched southwards down the Mullet Peninsula where they joined the *Duquesa Santa Ana* anchored in Elly Bay (Polilly) later to be wrecked in Donegal. This ship had a broken mast and was traditionally known in the area as 'an long maol' (the mastless ship).
3. **El Gran Grin:** A huge ship of 1160 tons, wrecked off Clare Island in Clew Bay. A converted grain carrier, she had been in the thick of the fighting in the Channel side by side with her squadron commander Don Juan de Recalde, Vice Admiral, whose ship put in off the Blaskets for food and water and made it safely back to Spain, where he died on board without coming ashore. El Gran Grin, a square rigger, struck a rock on the south shore of Clare Island and quickly sank. About 200 of her crew of 329 were

drowned in trying to swim ashore. Her commander Don Pedro de Mendoza and 16 senior officers including her captain Gaspar de Los Reyes and 100 men, managed to get away in a pinnace before she sank. An anchor found by local skipper Kevin Heanue off Clare Island in December 1983 may have been from this ship.<sup>16</sup>

The Spaniards were met by the island chieftain Dubhdarra Rua O'Malley (in the absence of Granuaile) and were given food and shelter in O'Malley's castle. The State Papers say that their arms were taken as well as their clothes and valuables. Their pinnace was wrecked and they had no means of escape. It is not clear how long they were kept on Clare Island, but it is thought that they tried to escape in O'Malley's currachs and were caught, and in the ensuing fight for freedom 68 were killed, including Mendoza. Bingham wrote to Fitzwilliam from Dunmore Castle on 24 September that he would gladly recover Mendoza from Clare Island (no doubt for a good ransom) if he could, and next day from Castlemagarret in Mayo he again wrote: 'I will send into Dowdarraugh O'Mallie to recover Don Pedro de Modosa [sic] if I may.'<sup>17</sup> But by this time Mendoza was dead. Two survivors, one Irishman from Wexford and one Spaniard escaped. The rest were sent to Galway where they were executed on Bingham's orders.

4. The **San Nicolas Prodanelli** was also claimed by Clew Bay at Toorglass on the Curraun Peninsula between Achillbeg and Mulranny.

George Bingham (brother of Richard) Sheriff of Sligo had been sent 'on a tour of Erris and Owle' to salvage whatever he could in the line of cannon and ordnance from the wrecks, and to take as prisoners any survivors. Sixteen men survived from this wreck and were spared by Bingham, but were later executed by order of Fitzwilliam.

#### 5. The fate of **La Rata Encoronada**

Don Alonso Martinez de Leiva, Knight of Santiago Commander of the Galleon *La Rata Santa Maria Encoronada* and Commander-in-chief designate of the Armada, lost contact with the fleet around 58°N off the north-west coast of Ireland.

A favourite of Philip II, he had a distinguished military and naval career, and had been appointed as Commander-in-Chief of Land forces in the event of a landing in England. With him on board were 60 of Spain's finest young noblemen and their servants (De Leiva had 36), 335 soldiers and 54 seamen. Don Alonso and his officers had entertained the Duke of Medina Sidonia on board the *Rata* at Lisbon in grand style with gold-plated candelabra, silver plate and cutlery. As a flagship of the fleet, the *Rata* was in the front line of the fighting in the Channel, and had given and taken considerable punishment.

Battered by fierce gales, and short of fresh water, De Leiva and his officers feared that the ship would not make it back to Spain. On 10 September, in the height of a fierce storm, they decided to head inland for the Irish coast. A week later on 17 September<sup>18</sup> the *Santa Maria Encoronada* safely entered Blacksod Bay and anchored north-west of Fahy Castle

(Doona). On board also were a number of Irish exiles including Maurice Fitzgerald, at least one priest and some pilots who may have helped in guiding the ship safely past Erris Head and into the bay. Maurice Fitzgerald was the son of James Fitzmaurice-Fitzgerald, leader of the Desmond Rebellion who was forced into exile in Spain in 1575. Unfortunately, Maurice Fitzgerald died forty leagues out to sea a few days before the landing, and his body was 'cast into the sea in a fair cypress chest with great solemnity before Torane' (Tiraun on the Mullet Peninsula).<sup>19</sup> His body had been kept aboard for four days and within sight of his native land was cast into the Atlantic.

Having safely anchored in Blacksod Bay, De Leiva sent a scouting party ashore to get fresh water and discover the reaction of the natives. An Italian soldier Giovanni Avancini and 14 men took the only remaining boat on the *Rata*, and came ashore at Fahy Castle and headed inland towards Ballycroy. They ran into a gang of natives led by Richard Burke (known as the 'Devil's Hook'), the local chieftain, hated by Bingham. Burke and his men stripped the Spaniards of their clothes and small weapons and valuables. They did not kill them, however, but eventually Avancini and his men ended up in Bingham's hands and were executed in Galway.

When after several hours, the patrol did not return, De Leiva sent some of the best swimmers in his crew ashore astride empty wine casks, to recover the boat and take it back to the *Rata*.

The following day with a strong westerly gale the *Rata* began to drag her only anchor and ran aground on Fahy Strand. The worst had happened and there was no hope of getting her off in a strong gale with only one boat. All the crew of 600-700 managed to come ashore as she was not far from land, and fortified themselves in Fahy Castle (Doona). From their stranded ship they removed all their possessions silver plate, apparel, money, jewels, weapons and armour. They left behind the heavy artillery and anything else that could not be carried ashore.

Then at the next low tide, a group of men rowed out to the *Rata*, poured tar and pitch over her, and according to custom set her on fire rather than leave her to be plundered. After they had gone, however, the natives descended on the charred hulk and 'took out of the wreck a boat full of treasure, cloth of gold, velvet, etc.'<sup>20</sup> As late as 1906, the Chief Inspector of Irish Fisheries, Rev. Spotswood Green, recorded that 'he had secured one of her frame timbers of Italian oak burnt off at one end' as she was still visible and accessible at low tide.

De Leiva and his men did not stay long at Fahy as they had sighted another ship coming into the bay. She had gone farther north than the *Rata* to the sheltered side of the bay, and anchored at 'Polilly' or Elly Cove, a much safer anchorage. She was the *Duquesa Santa Ana*, a 900 ton ship from the Andalusian squadron with 23 guns and 280 soldiers and 77 sailors. So De Leiva now headed northwards towards Belmullet, then south down the Mullet peninsula to Tiraun. They must have had a local guide to enable them to follow this difficult course across the wet and treacherous boglands. In fact, another ship had also anchored in the bay, the *Nuestra Señora de Begona*. She

later reached Spain safely and reported having met up with the *Duquesa Santa Ana* and her crew. Unfortunately for De Leiva, she had sailed out of the bay just before he arrived so the only ship left was the *Duquesa*.

So, De Leiva and his 700 men with all their possessions boarded her, and the *Duquesa* sailed out of Blacksod for Spain with 1,000 men on board, only to be driven back again in a strong gale. Although she had been repaired while at anchor in the bay, De Leiva and his officers feared that she would not survive the Atlantic gales on the southern route to Spain. The only alternative then was to head northwards to Scotland where they would be aided by the Catholic nobility.

So on the second attempt the *Duquesa* left Blacksod, but being driven northwards by a strong wind she was forced to anchor in Loughros More Bay near Rossbeg in Donegal. Here again disaster struck; in a strong current her only anchor dragged and the ship ran aground. For the second time De Leiva and his noblemen with 800 men came ashore at low tide carrying all their possessions, and fortified themselves in a castle on O'Boyle island in Kiltorish Lake. There within sight of the ship they stayed for nine days. Fortunately for them they were in friendly territory, the local chieftain was McSweeney ne Doe (na dtuagh) one of O'Neill's vassals, who gave them hospitality. An Irish cleric, Fr. James ne Dowrough, who had been aboard the *Rata* had been sent by De Leiva to McSweeney.

All of this had been reported to the Lord Deputy through his spies, who were of course double agents, and were quick to inform McSweeney of the Lord Deputy's plans to capture them. Before these could be carried out, word came that a Spanish galleas and two more ships were in Killybegs harbour.

De Leiva decided to leave the safety of Kiltorish and head south for Killybegs. He had been wounded in the leg by the capstan while aboard the *Duquesa* and could not walk, so he had to be carried in a litter by four men. (This information was given by a survivor of the *Duquesa*, an Irishman James Machary of Holy Cross, Co. Tipperary, who later deserted and told the story of the wreck). Once again they took with them all their possessions taken from the *Duquesa* and only left behind at Kiltorish one small cannon taken for defense. This gun, small, cast-iron, typical of the period, a falcon, was found in 1968 by Robert Sténuit. Nothing remained of the wooden carriage, and it was left flat on the ground. A year later there was no trace of it. It had been bought from the local farmer after a photograph appeared in the *National Geographic* magazine and taken away, although it had lain there for nearly 400 years.

At Killybegs, they found only one ship instead of three. This was a galleas – the *Girona* – of 700 tons, 150 ft. long with 36 oars, 18 on each side pulled by 244 rowers. The other two ships had sunk, one inside and one outside the harbour. The *Girona* had been damaged by the gales and with timbers from the other ships, they set about repairing her and taking on supplies of food and water for the homeward journey via Scotland.

Just before dawn on 26 October 1588, the crews of three ships, at least 1,300 men, with all their valuables, money and possessions, set sail once more

for Scotland and Spain in the *Girona*. About 200 Spaniards were left behind, some sick or injured, including Fr. ne Dowrough, to await another ship. McSweeney was left 12 butts of wine and all the muskets and ordnance in return for his hospitality. (McSweeney is reported to have killed 40 Spaniards after the *Girona* sailed).

The voyage to Scotland was 200 miles – about 4 days with a favourable wind. Once there they could all disembark and find other vessels to take them home. The *Girona* sailed northwards around Bloody Foreland Point and then headed east for Scotland. But a fierce gale blew up once more and at midnight on 28 October, sailing too close to the shore in the darkness, she struck a reef off Lacada Point at Port na Spaniagh, near Dunluce Castle in Antrim. The ship broke in two and sank within minutes scattering its crew and all their possessions to the bottom of the sea. Only 5 survivors struggled ashore to tell their story to Sorley Boy McDonnell of Dunluce Castle. One, a gunner, was still at Dunluce a year later. The others got back to Corunna in February 1589. 250 bodies were washed up on the sands and were buried there.<sup>21</sup>

And so perished Don Alonso de Leiva and 60 of Spain's finest noblemen off the coast of Ireland, including the Captain of the *Girona* Fabricio Spinola. They were only 8 miles from Scotland and safety.

For them, all Spain went into mourning and Philip 'mourned his loss more bitterly than that of all the rest of the fleet.'<sup>22</sup> The total loss of lives in Ireland was 6,529 men.

#### The *Girona* Treasure

When the *Girona* left Lisbon she had on board 600 men including two companies of soldiers. When she sank she had the crews of two more sunken ships and their possessions. Each man carried 2 months' pay in gold and silver given before he sailed at Lisbon. The ordnance consisted of 50 bronze cannon and ammunition totalling 8,166 rounds.<sup>23</sup> All these facts excited the mind of a Belgian diver and marine archaeologist, Robert Sténuit, who found her in 1967 on his first dive in 30 ft. of water at Port na Spaniagh almost 400 years later. In the following two summers with a team of 6 and 6,000 hours of work on the seabed, the sea yielded her treasure – 12,000 items in all, including 405 gold coins, 756 of silver, 115 copper – coins of sixty different kinds from 14 different mints in six different countries – Spain, Portugal, Republic of Genoa, the Kingdom of the two Sicilies, Mexico and Peru. The wide assortment represented the 1,300 men who went down in the *Girona*.

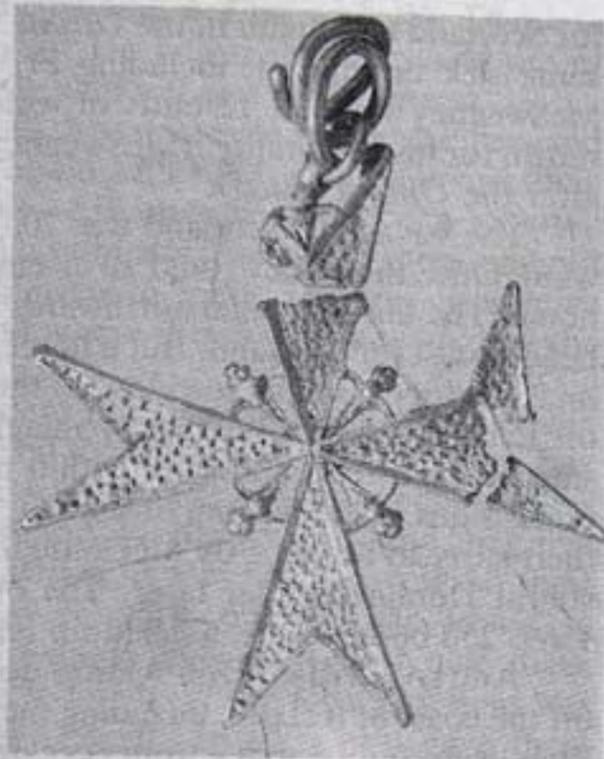
Among the ordnance salvaged from the wreck site were two bronze cannon, 188 iron and stone cannon balls, 1,865 lead bullets and 17 lead ingots (used for making ammunition). Navigational instruments recovered were two astrolabes, (one in fragments) used to establish the ship's latitude, three sounding leads (for depths) and two anchors.

Silver tableware included forks with two, three, four and five prongs, silver knives and spoons, plates and dishes, bowls and goblets, 30 silver candlesticks; silver inkwells; pewter vases, plates and dishes; copper dishes and pots.

The jewellery found – all worn by men – included 8 gold chains, one



Gold Cross of a Knight of Alcantara.



Gold Cross of a Knight of the Order of Malta.

measuring 2.5 metres long, weighing almost four lbs. engraved medallions, silver crucifixes, a small gold book which was an Agnus Dei, twelve gold rings; a gold cross of a Knight of the Order of Malta (belonging to the Captain of the *Girona*, Fabricio Spinola); a gold medallion of a Knight of Alcantara – one of the three Military Orders of Knighthood in Spain. A gold cross of a Knight of Santiago (St. James) belonging to Alonso de Leiva was found recently on the site.

Some personal items of jewellery found were a set of 11 lapis lazuli cameos in a setting of gold and pearls bearing the profiles of Byzantine Emperors (the 12th disappeared under a boulder at the bottom of the sea); a gold dolphin (used as a toothpick and earpick), gold buttons from tunics, a gold salamander with ruby eyes (a charm against fire) and several decorated sword pommels.

A number of inscribed rings, one bearing the name and date 'Madame de Champagny 1524' took many hours of research to identify. She was Nicole Bonvalot and had married Nicholas Perrenot, Minister and Chancellor of Emperor Charles V. One of her sons became Cardinal de Granvelle, Prime Minister of Philip II and his nephew, Don Tomas Perrenot de Granvelle sailed on the *Rata* wearing his grandmother's ring. Another ring with one hand clasping a heart, the other an open buckle, bore the poignant inscription: No tengo mas que dar te: (I have nothing more to give thee). We shall never know to whom this ring belonged.

The Ulster Museum in Belfast acquired this fabulous collection which Robert Sténuit and his team handed over – every item meticulously catalogued, and in July 1972 this unique example of Post-Mediaeval Underwater Archaeology in Ireland was opened to the public. And so at least a part of the treasure of the Armada, which at one time in September of 1588 may have been carried through the boglands of North Mayo, now rests in Ireland – a most eloquent and poignant reminder of Philip's Great Enterprise.

The *Girona* was the last ship to go down in Irish waters but no major remains of the ship were found due to its having been wrecked in shallow waters. Two other ships have also been excavated: The *Trinidad Valencera* in 1971 which sank in Kinnagoe Bay off the Inishowen peninsula, discovered by the Derry Sub Aqua Club under Dr. Colin Martin of St. Andrews University, Scotland. Her four bronze cannon now stand at Magee University, Derry. A matched pair of 50-pounders, they were the largest guns used by the Spanish or English during the Battle. The *Santa Maria de la Rosa*, which sank off Stromboli reef in the Blasket Sound, was discovered in July 1968 by a Royal Navy Team under Sydney Wignall and Dr. Colin Martin in the largest underwater search ever recorded, covering 15 million sq. yds. of the most dangerous area of the Atlantic, and these three excavations are of prime historical and archaeological importance in providing details of the construction, armament and lifestyle aboard these magnificent sailing ships of the 16th century.<sup>24</sup>

\* \* \*

The fact that the landing of Armada ships in Ireland might have changed the course of Irish history is one of the interesting 'ifs' of history. Philip's letter to Medina Sidonia, Commander-in-Chief of the Armada, with detailed instructions on how he was to conduct the 'invasion of England' also refers to Ireland.<sup>25</sup> In the ultimate paragraph he states:

... You will have to stay there [England] until the undertaking be successfully concluded, with God's help, and you may then return, calling in and settling affairs in Ireland on the way if the Duke [Parma] approves of your doing so, the matter being left to your joint discretion. In this case you will leave with the Duke the greater number of the Spaniards you take with you and receive in exchange for them such of the Italians and Germans as may be deemed necessary for the task.

Dated 22 March/1 April 1588

Madrid. The King.

What then might have been the historical consequences for Ireland, had de Leiva's forces (a total of 1,500 men including 2 companies of soldiers and their arms, guns and cannon) joined up with the Irish Chieftains of the North, O'Neill and O'Donnell, at a time when they outnumbered the English force by 3 to 1? The King of Spain's armies so often sung about and hoped for in the Irish ballads of the time, were right here on Irish soil. Yet the Irish Chieftains failed to take the advantage, being too occupied with their internecine warfare. Had they been able to combine forces with the Spaniards against only 750 English soldiers, then Elizabeth's rule in Ireland might well have ended in 1588. But it was not to be. The next and last time Spanish soldiers would set foot in Ireland would be at Kinsale in 1601.

1. In 1582, Continental countries accepted Pope Gregory XIII's revision of the Julian (Old Style) calendar, which at that time was ten days in arrears. So 20 July English date became 30 July Spanish. Spanish documents bore the dual date 20/30 July.
2. In the *State Papers* Fenton reports: 'there were wrecked in Clare Island, one shipp, 300 men; in Fynglasse [Tóorglas] O'Mailies country, one shipp, 400 men; in O'Flahertie's country, one shipp, 200 men.'
3. The difficulty in identifying the wrecked ships was an enormous task. Niall Fallon's meticulously researched book *The Armada in Ireland* is taken as the most up-to-date and accurate source of information on the wrecks at the time (1978). Since then, another ship, the *Juliana*, has been located at Streedagh, Sligo Bay.
4. In July 1985 another wreck was found in Streedagh, the *Juliana*, 860 tons, 32 guns, 395 men, previously thought to be wrecked off Arranmore, Co. Donegal.
5. Robert Sténuit, *Treasures of the Armada*, p. 118, quoting from the *State Papers*.
6. Captain Cuellar's account published by Bernard Mac Donagh, Sligo.
7. Fallon, *Armada*, p.54.
8. Sténuit, *Treasures*, p. 125.
9. *Ibid.*, quoting from the *State Papers*.
10. *The Great Enterprise*, p. 156.
11. Fallon, *Armada*, p. 123.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
13. *The Great Enterprise*, pp 157-8.
14. Don Luis de Cordoba and his nephew Don Gonzalo de Cordoba from the *Falco Blanco* Galway wreck, were spared and eventually ransomed and returned to Spain, where de Cordoba denounced the Irish natives who had handed him over to Bingham, and blamed them 'for letting the Spaniards range up and down the country after they had stripped them of their apparel and robbed them of their money and jewels.' (Fallon, *Armada*, p. 56). He and his nephew were among the 750 survivors who returned to Spain and lived to tell their story.
15. Fallon, *Armada*, p. 189.
16. See photograph, *Cathair na Mart*, vol iv, No. 1, p. 17.
17. Fallon, *Armada*, p. 48.
18. See Note 1.
19. Ed. Whyte, Clerk of Connaught council's Report on Spanish Wrecks, State Papers.
20. Sténuit, *Treasures*, p. 127.
21. Fallon writes that 'at least one Irish bishop, that of Killaloe, was drowned off an Armada ship in Antrim.' However, Micheline Kerney Walsh has drawn our attention to a letter from Cornelius O'Mulrian, Bishop of Killaloe, to King Philip II, written in Lisbon, 3 September 1593. This could, of course, have been a successor to the drowned bishop. (*Armada*, p. 11; Archivo General de Simancas, E. 839).
22. Sténuit, *Treasures*, p. 139.
23. The information on the *Girona* treasure is from Sténuit, *Treasures*.
24. Fallon, *Armada*, pp 218-19.
25. *The Great Enterprise*, p. 69.

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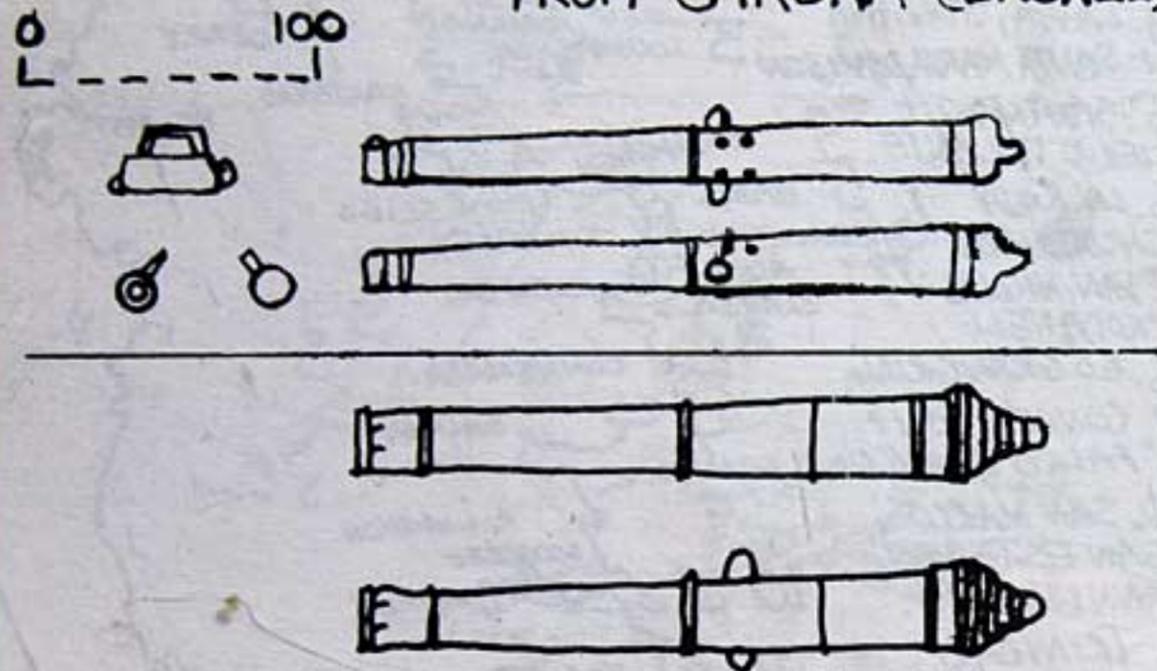
FROM DERRYKILLEW TO FRONGOCH  
UNDER THE DEFENCE OF THE REALM ACT

by Patrick M. Tunney, D.C.

(Reprinted from *Mayo News*, 5, 12 and 19 Jan., 1918)

The golden rays of a glorious summer's sun were just brightening the heavenly canopy on Tuesday morning the 9th May, 1916, when I suddenly awoke from my slumber to the tramp of marching feet, which were fast approaching my parental home, to the door of which a gentle knock was immediately given. My time for consideration seemed limited then. Whilst still barefooted I instantly opened the door and I was more than a little surprised when I saw standing outside three armed Constables with Sergeant Coughlan, Carrowkennedy, and Head Constable Creighton, Westport. The latter entered, bade "good morning" and said "Are you Patrick Tunney?" to which I replied "yes." "Well get ready, we want you," said he. "All right," said I, as I began to prepare for my first route march under an armed escort, but never dreaming at the time that I had committed any political sins for which I should suffer inside iron bars and barbed wire in Castlebar Jail, Trinity College and Richmond Barracks, Dublin; in Wandsworth Detention Barracks - Surrey Co. Jail - in Frongoch South Detention Barracks, in Wormswood Scrubbs Prison, London, and in the North Frongoch Camp, Merrioneth, Wales. Whilst I was lacing my boots the Head-constable sat down and chatted freely. I asked him what the "authorities" wanted me for, but he failed to give a clue, though he was very courteous otherwise. He gave me permission to have breakfast which I did in haste. Breakfast over he rose and said: "Under the Defence of the Realm Act I place you under arrest." I made no statement, or the Head-constable sought for no information, so we cheerily left the home of my childhood. A short distance away from the house Mr. Edward Kelly, Castlebar Street, Westport, was waiting with his horse and car for me. He was commissioned by the R.I.C. that morning to drive me to Westport. On leaving Derrykillew, I calmly glanced o'er the haunts of my boyhood which no doubt looked beautiful that glorious summer's morning, the gentle dew was rising off the green fields and in chorus the feathered tribe was sweetly singing. To leave such scenes behind I inwardly felt very lonesome, though outwardly my mood was indifferent. I was driven to the Carrowkennedy barracks where I met another "suspect" like myself in the person of *Mr. Manus Keane, Lankill, Aughagower*. Manus had been arrested at an earlier hour that morning. His disposition then was cheery and his appearance was robust. After a short delay at Carrowkennedy the two of us were placed on the car - the owner of which was as silent as George Glendenning's monument is now - and the seven miles journey to Westport was begun, a journey which was slow, silent and uneventful. Our escort then consisted of a Head-constable, two sergeants and five constables, neither of whom showed any discourtesy to us though to my mind some of those gentlemen would be much better employed elsewhere defending small nationalities or the mighty British Empire on which the sun never sets (or

DEMI-SAKER with missing part  
FROM GIRONA (BRONZE).



FALCON FROM KILTOORISH LAKE.  
FROM DUQUESA SANTA ANA  
(IRON).

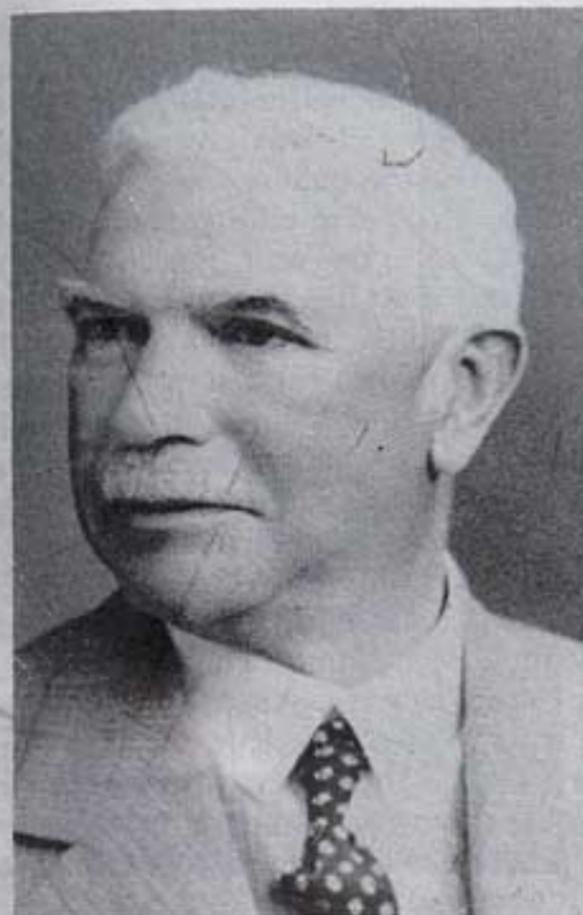
ORDNANCE SALVAGED FROM THE  
GIRONA AND THE DUQUESA SANTA ANA  
(BASED ON DRAWINGS IN  
R. STÉNUIT, *TREASURES OF THE ARMADA*).

never will moryah), escorting Redmond's Irish Party clique, or disarming Carson's armed covenanters. We reached Westport at 6.30 a.m., the inhabitants of which were all astir. On arrival at the Westport R.I.C. barracks I was first led to the day-room where I was diligently searched, but I was then too wide awake for anything like an unpleasant surprise. Some private letters were found in my possession which were burned in my presence and a pen-knife was taken from me which was returned to me by Constable Fury, Newport, on the 16th March, 1917. After being searched a grim looking official led me to the "black cells" which were then occupied by Messrs. *Charles Hughes*, draper, Westport; Edward Haran, U.D.C.; Thadeus Walsh, P.L.G.; Chas Hickey, Patrick Kenny, John Logan, Martin Geraty, Hubert Heraty, James Malone, Ed. Sammon, John Berry, Bartley Cryan, Michael Reilly, *Patrick Hughes*, Thomas O'Brien and John Gavin, Westport.

It may not be out of place to mention here that the above-named Patrick Hughes lost his youthful life in a bathing fatality at Westport Quay, August 1917. He was a youth of much promise, faithful and true to the very core, and his early demise was much regretted by his fellow prisoners and a host of admirers, - R.I.P.

At 7.30 we were all handcuffed and let out through the barrack yard on to Shop Street where hundreds of spectators were assembled, some of whom were sympathetic looking, others scornful looking; curiosity attracted the remainder - the entire spectacle was nature's own. Some forty members of the R.I.C. and a large number of cavelrymen escorted us from the barrack on by Mill Street, the Fair Green, Altamont Street, to Westport Railway Station, and at 8 o'clock, Irish time, our first train journey was begun. Our train arrived at Castlebar station about half-past 8 or a little later. We had a short delay there putting a guard in order, this being done, "quick march" was given and in a few minutes we were bravely marching into the county town, and in less than half an hour we were inside the grim looking walls of Castlebar jail. We were then led on to a large, but narrow, hall where our eighteen names were called out. The other seventeen men were first called out, and finally the warder or jailer or whatever his profession was, shouted out "Peter Tunney." I stayed still and said "my name is not Peter, you must have the wrong man." Ah! but what a shock I got when he yelled out at the top of his voice: "You have come in here as Peter and as Peter you will get what you deserve, come on." His horrid yells amused me, so without a murmur I followed him till he showed me a door to cell "49" which I entered and then locked the door leaving me in solitude.

When I found myself locked up in the prison cell, I for a few moments sat down in contemplation after which I put a "blossom" on my "Forty-three." At the time I never knew an eye was watching me at the "peep-hole" (a peep-hole or spy-hole, is in every prison door). No sooner had I the pipe kindled than I heard a terrible roar outside the door, I knew not what it was for. Immediately the door banged open and the warder or jailor who was after locking the door rushed in and shouted: "What the devil are you doing?" "I thought 'twas no harm," said I to him. "Harm be damned" said he, "I'll soon



*Charles Hughes.*



*Owen Hughes.*

part yourself and your pipe me boyo." He rushed out again quite passionate and by the time the door was locked I had repented enough for the offence.

At 10.30 I was brought from my cell to some kind of an office, where I was searched by the warders. I was also weighed and measured. All my small belongings were packed up carefully and I was again ordered back to my cell. When going into the cell I noticed on the door outside a tiny card bearing the following:

Name of prisoner - PATRICK TUNNEY.

Religion - R.C.

Offence -

Terms of Imprisonment -

Cell 49 in Castlebar Jail is 14 feet 6 inches long, four feet six inches wide, in the centre. The floor is boarded and the cell is fairly well ventilated. It is furnished with a bare plank which is about 6 feet 6 inches long and about 30 inches wide a small table, a form shaped stool, a wooden salt cellar and a big horn spoon. There are no books or anything in the shape of literature whatever. There are some charts hung on the wall regarding the "Prison Diet Scale," "Remission of Sentence," and "Prisoners Convicted or Waiting Trial." I read them all over several times to break the monotony. About 1

o'clock I got dinner which consisted of bread and vegetable soup. The vegetable soup is anything but palatable, it is simply a mixture of water with minced swedes, turnips, and onions. 'Twas served warm and I drank it because I felt very cold. The amount of bread which was given to me in Castlebar jail for each meal was eight ounces, and the quality was good. At 2 o'clock I was ordered to the exercise grounds which is in reality a small yard more oblong than square, with a small path close to the wall. For curiosity I used to step the path and to the best of my judgement it is about one hundred yards long and is covered over with cinders or partly burned coke. When I entered the exercise ground somebody said "A subject for a song," and the warder exclaimed in solemn tones: "Quit that talking." Whilst at exercise I saw many true and familiar friends of mine, but I dare not speak to them then. The seventeen men who were with me from Westport that morning were "on exercise", along with Messrs. Thomas Derrig, University College, Galway; Joseph Ring, Drumindoo; Philip Waldron, Gaelic League Organiser, Ballyhaunis; Eamonn Gannon, Charles Gavin, John McDonagh, Michael Derrig, Michael Duffy, Joseph Ruddy, and Thomas Ralph, Westport; Joseph Gill, Westport Quay; *Owen Hughes, Aughagower*; John Joyce, Irish Teacher, Tourmakeady; John Corcoran, Kiltimagh; Peter O'Rorke, Castlerea and Colman O'Geary, Cong. There were also two other men I did not know. I was afterwards informed that one of them was an excise officer, and that the other was the hotel proprietor with whom Mr. O'Geary was lodging in Cong.

For an hour the thirty-six of us in single file travelled round and round the path of the exercise ground without a murmur, after which we were all sent back to our respective cells. On returning to my cell I felt happier and consoled myself with the thoughts of being in good company with such fellow prisoners; truly I felt more proud than otherwise.

At 5 o'clock I got supper which consisted of bread and cocoa, without either milk or sugar. At eight o'clock I prepared the plank on which I lay for a sleep. I slept quite well during the night. At 5 o'clock the following morning I was roused from my slumbers, and as I had only to drop off the rug which I had wound round me and put on my boots, I was soon ready. My boots were my pillow that night. At 7.30 I got breakfast which was just the same as my previous night's supper.

After breakfast I resolved to ask the warder for permission to write a letter; however when he entered said I to him with all humility: "Could I write a letter home, sir?" He stood erect, looked at me and exclaimed with a thunderous roar "remember you are under martial law now. Conduct yourself or I will make you conduct yourself, you are not on the mountain now, you scoundrel you." Nothing else noteworthy took place during the day. The day was passed in silence, 'twas uneventful, long and lonely. At 9 o'clock p.m. I was ordered to the office again and all my earthly belongings (which were in safe keeping) were given back to me and I was ordered to be "ready" in an hour that I was leaving - "Leaving for home," said I "is it?" "As soon as you get outside the gate you can go to hell," he said. Above all the officials - civil



*Edward Sammon.*



*Pat Tunney.*



*The Huts, North Camp.  
(From W. J. Brennan Whitmore, With the Irish in Frongoch).*

or military – with whom I came in contact a more heartless official I never met; his voice was harsh, cruel and commanding. I dreaded his appearance, his voice shocked me; I longed for a prison cell elsewhere, or my freedom, and surely I pitied the poor unfortunate creature whose lot it was to be a month, or even a week, under his mercy. If all governors, warders, jailors, and turnkeys were of his disposition, prison life would certainly be unbearable. At ten o'clock I and thirty-one of those already mentioned and Mr. Joseph McBride, Craob Mor, Westport – thirty-three all told – were lined out in single file in the prison hall, our names were read out; we were led to the door of the prison where we were handed over to the Fifth Staffordshire regiment who were waiting fully armed to escort us. We then got the orders "Form two deep," "right turn," "by the left, quick march." Soon we were marching through the streets of Castlebar under a heavy escort, and about eleven o'clock we were all entrained for Dublin. The men who escorted us were very courteous to us, they gave us biscuits and cigarettes and were very cheerful; anything they could do for us was done, and amid song, cheer and laughter our train steamed forth from Castlebar Railway Station. Our journey was slow from Castlebar to Athlone. Joy shone forth in all our faces as each of us narrated our tales of our first prison experiences.

Our train gently steamed along through the fair plains of Westmeath, as the grey dawn of Thursday morning, the 11th May, began to brighten our carriage windows, and as the red sun of a beautiful Summer's morning began to peep away in the distant horizon, I went to the window of my compartment and I glanced for miles and miles o'er the fertile plains of Westmeath. Far away in the distance I viewed the peaks of the Tipperary and Wicklow mountains, but I failed to see a vestige of human habitation. I could see no congested villages, or no labourers' cottages; all I could see were prime cattle grazing on the prime arable land which God and nature intended should be inhabited. Then for a few moments I reflected on the neglected and deplorable state of our poor country, how the hardworking honest peasantry, who lived along the western seaboard from the foot of Nephin to the foot of Croaghpatrick, and all along the coast to Leenane bay, have to eke out a livelihood on barren patches, on unreclaimed mountains, or congested hamlets. Certainly I thought it the duty of our representative, or mis-representative, the Imperial Irish Party, to see that such a sad state of affairs would no longer exist, and that the rich depopulated plains of Leinster should be adopted homes of thousands of Irishmen who are forced to emigrate from the shores of Ireland and labour in foreign regions – I thought then, and I think now, that the united action of a faithful body of truly representative Irishmen would certainly alter the present state of affairs (of course I am aware that quite a number of elected representatives are now much worried about Russia, Belgium, Jerusalem, and Timbuctoo). Whilst all these thoughts were glaringly before me the remainder of the prisoners were freely singing or debating or spinning stories until 6.30 a.m., when our train, loaded with unconvicted rebels, steamed slowly into Broadstone Station, Dublin. We had

about half an hour's delay at Broadstone station, after which we were formed into ranks of four men deep and handed over from the fifth to a body of the sixth Staffordshire Regiment, who apparently came to the station to receive us, and who with rifle and bayonet were all fully armed. In regiment style, with a lively pace we left from Broadstone and with spirits high we were soon marching through the streets of Dublin on our way to Trinity College. Though pretty early in the morning, at various centres, we were loudly cheered. From the spirited cheers we received, instinctively I learned that I was an Irishman and silently unseen I congratulated myself. The sights which I witnessed in Dublin that morning are vividly before my gaze still. I saw the shattered windows, the ruined homes, the wrecked buildings, the debris of which was then freshly burning; the entire scene could be better imagined than described. It instantly reminded me of the many thrilling tales I read about devastated Belgium and the burning homes of Wexford in 1798. We arrived at Trinity College at 8 o'clock, where we were detained for about two hours. Almost all the College seemed to be occupied by the military authorities. Apparently there was no room for us there. We were kept standing still for two hours. We got no refreshments of any kind though the unpalatable cocoa in Castlebar was served and drank at 5 o'clock the previous evening. At ten o'clock we got the order "Left turn," and soon again we were on the streets of Dublin on our way to Richmond Barracks. Again and again we were cheered loudly, and one young lady who waved a small Republican flag at Christ Church-Place, said as we passed along: "Cheer up, men, our cause is just, God will strengthen you," and as she said the words a rum looking Metropolitan peeler rushed towards her, and with a burly voice shouted: "Shut up, or I will arrest you," to which she replied defiantly: "You can if you wish, you did it before." We had then passed by and I know not whether she was arrested or not. After a long tramp we reached Richmond Barracks at 11 o'clock, and on arrival there we were first brought into the gymnasium hall, which is indeed a fine spacious apartment. It was empty until the thirty-three of us entered it. I felt very fatigued and tired after the night's journey, and the long marches of the morning. The pinch of hunger was telling on me. The other prisoners were also a bit worried looking. We got a pint of tea and a biscuit each about an hour later. Then in groups here and there we sat down on the floor of the hall where we discussed many topics – the rebellion, court-martials, probabilities and improbabilities. About 1 o'clock a batch of prisoners from Belfast entered the Hall. Immediately after a batch of Tyrone men, who came that morning direct from Derry jail. Some Dublin men also came in. With all the new-comers we conversed freely. Finally a tall, stately young fellow entered; he was dressed in a blue serge suit wearing puttees and bare-headed. He leisuredly, and very unconcernedly, walked up and down the hall several times. He asked me for a match, and I, being somewhat inquisitive, was glad to have a conversation with him, in the course of which I asked his name and from whence he came. He was a fluent speaker who knew his country's history well, and in the course of a long harangue which he made he said: "My name is Frawley, my father was a



*Michael Derrig.*

Head-constable in the R.I.C. and did duty in that capacity in Cork and Kilkenny, and was pensioned off in Queen's County. Well when I heard of the rising, myself and a few others entered and took possession of the Wolf Hill R.I.C. Barracks in Queen's County; I was arrested while in the barrack." I cannot vouch for the truth of Mr. Frawley's adventure; I am merely telling it as 'twas told to me. About two o'clock we got dinner - two potatoes each and about 2 ounces of "bully beef." The vegetable soup which I got in Castlebar jail was simple in its composition, but with all my experiments I failed to diagnose the 'bully beef.' It was absolutely tasteless. When I got my beef I was looking at it, and my friend Manus Kane whispered to me: "Take it man, anything rather than eating them dry." About three o'clock Mr. John Berry and the late Mr. Patrick Hughes, Westport, were brought away from the gymnasium hall, and I saw them no more as prisoners; they were afterwards deported to Berlienne, Scotland. About four o'clock twenty-seven of the Mayo men were called out, *Joseph M. McBride, Charles Hughes, Colm O'Geary and Joseph Gill*, and we were taken to a room in block L. At 6 o'clock we got for supper one biscuit each and a can of clean water. Some time afterwards *Mr. Owen Hughes, Aughagower, and Mr. Peter O'Rorke, Castlerea*, reverentially recited the Rosary; we all responded loudly and with devotion - Whilst we were repeating the second or third decade, one of the guard from outside the door entered and said "What the hell are you bally fellows shouting for?" None of us replied; he made no further inquiries but left quietly. After prayers we all took off our boots, and to the sound of the bugle we all lay down on the bare floor for a sleep. The twenty-seven of us lay side by side with our heads towards the wall, our boots covered with our vests were our pillows. In spite of hunger and hardship I believe a more cheerful lot of prisoners could not be together. When the humours of evening abated, I went to sleep and slept well. So ended the 11th May.

**PATRICK M. TUNNEY:** D.C. Tailor, small farmer, poet and writer. Popular personality, always to the front in the National Movement. Died 1951 aged 64 years.

The following pages were inadvertently omitted after page 68 in Cathair na Mart, Vol. 4:

#### APPENDIX 4

To his Excellency the Marquis of Cornwallis  
The Memorial of John Moore Esqre  
(State Paper Office, 620/8/82/20, 25 May 1799)

Your Memorialist humbly begs leave to submit his case to your Excellencies Consideration, hoping from the Spirit of Merciful Justice which Characterizes your Excellencies Government that you will not Deem it undeserving of Relief. Your Memorialist was some time in September last ordered into Confinement by Colonel Crawford on a Charge of aiding and assisting the Kings Enemies. He has ever since with the Exception of about a Month that he was Transferred to the Prevot Prison in Dublin, Remained in the County Goal in Castlebar Confined to a single apartment. There is no Court or yard belonging to the said Goal so that the Prisoners are Completely Excluded from the benefit of Exercise or breathing the fresh air. So long and Close Confinement operating on a Constitution naturally feeble, has Reduced your Memorialist to such a Deplorable degree of Debility that he Cannot Walk a step without support - Your memorialist presumes to Referr your Excellency to an affidt Signed by two of the most Eminent Physicians of the Country which was laid before your Excellency some Months ago. They Visited him for the express purpose of Examining into the State of his Health, and Delivered it as their Opinion upon Oath that Should his Confinement be much longer prolonged his life would be Endangered. Your Memorialist has but too much Reason to Dread from the Injury which his Constitution has already Sustained, the Event to which this Declaration pointed. And Should not this humble Memorial Induce your Excellency to Interpose in his behalf, he is apprehensive that he will be forever Deprived of the opportunity he has always anxiously Sought of Vindicating his Character from the Charge of Disloyalty and Disaffection before a Jury of his Country. Your Memorialist humbly begs leave to Represent to your Excellency that Relying on his Innocence, he has on all occasions been solicitous to meet Tryal and has Courted the Investigation of every Mode of Established Jurisdiction. When the Kings Commission last Came down he was particularly Earnest for Tryal, and Expressed in the most Authentic manner his Readiness to wave every privilege Extended to Prisoners by the humanity of the Law which might occasion Delay - Tho your Memorialist does not presume to lay before your Excellency any part of his Defence, yet he Trusts it is of such a Nature and supported by such Strong and Respectable Evidence of Innocence, that he may without presumption address himself to the Constitutional fountain of Mercy, Whatever may have been his Demerits in the particular Transaction which has Reduced him to his present State of accusation and Imprisonment, upon which he does not Venture to anticipate the Result of judicial Enquiry - The habits of his past life offer no presumption of Traitorous Disposition. They were the Habits of a Recluse Student unconnected with Politics and never Implicated in any Scheme or association Levelled against the peace or Good order of the State - Your Memorialist relying on all these Circumstances presumes to lay this humble prayer before your Excellency.

that you will permit his Removal from the Goal in which he is at present Confined, to some Lodging which your Excellency or the General of the District shall approve of, and be allowed some Mode of Exercise proper to Reestablish his broken Constitution under all the Guards and precautions which your Excellency shall prescribe, your Memorialist giving ample security to stand his Tryal whenever it shall be judged Expedient and being at every Expence which may attend such a Change in his Circumstances.

And your Memorialist will pray – Signed JOHN MOORE

#### APPENDIX 5

(A letter from John Moore to Randle McDonnell, State Paper Office, State Prisoners' Petitions, Carton No. 22.)

Waterford 18th November 1799

My Dearest Friend,

The calamities and misfortunes with which God has been pleased to afflict me have been great. The last one which you cummunicated me in your letter of the 14th inst. of the death of my Father may be sayd to have put a melancholy seal to them. Since I was first capable of knowing him I found all his efforts directed to the advancement in life and benefit of his Children. He was a good husband and a good Father. May the Lord God rest his Soul in a otturnal peace. I am exceeding enfeebled in my constution by confindment – not entireley recovered from Jaundeice, my feet swoln and my legs reduced to mere Spindles unders me, inceapable of rising out of bed and of course standing on my feet without assistance. By the lenity and indulgunce of General Johnson who considered my weakness has permitted me to take lodgings in the City under a Guard. I do not know what idea you Gentlemen of Dublin or my Brother George have of New Geneva. Please to take the following narrative As soon as you arrive there your cloaths and property are taken from you. Being Stript you are put into a tub and in this warm season you feel the pleasure of a cold bath under a pump. You are then provided with cloath with red jackets and military caps. As to the bedding, you have a mat and a rug. No one is permitted to see you without a pass from the General, and what ever then can obtain to eat they are obliged to Dress for themselves, with a scanty portion of course. To be sent there is it a treatment due to a Gentleman, and purticularly who made every effeort to be brought to tryal either by the Civel law or in court martial at an onormous expence. There is a letter of marque carrying 24 Guns derectley for Lisbun, which is to sail in 10 days. For God sake obtain for me an order from the Castle to sail in her with John Nally my servant. In your use and friendship I trust, of which I have so many repeated proofs that you will settle the bond they may require. I should be the greatest villion on earth if I breake a tittle of its condisions. By the first post you will heare of my being sent to New Geneva, by the second you will heare that of death. I am so feoble that I am obliged to make use of the pen of a confidential servant.

I remain,

My Dearest freind

Your sincere affectionate Humble servant

(Signed) JOHN MOORE