

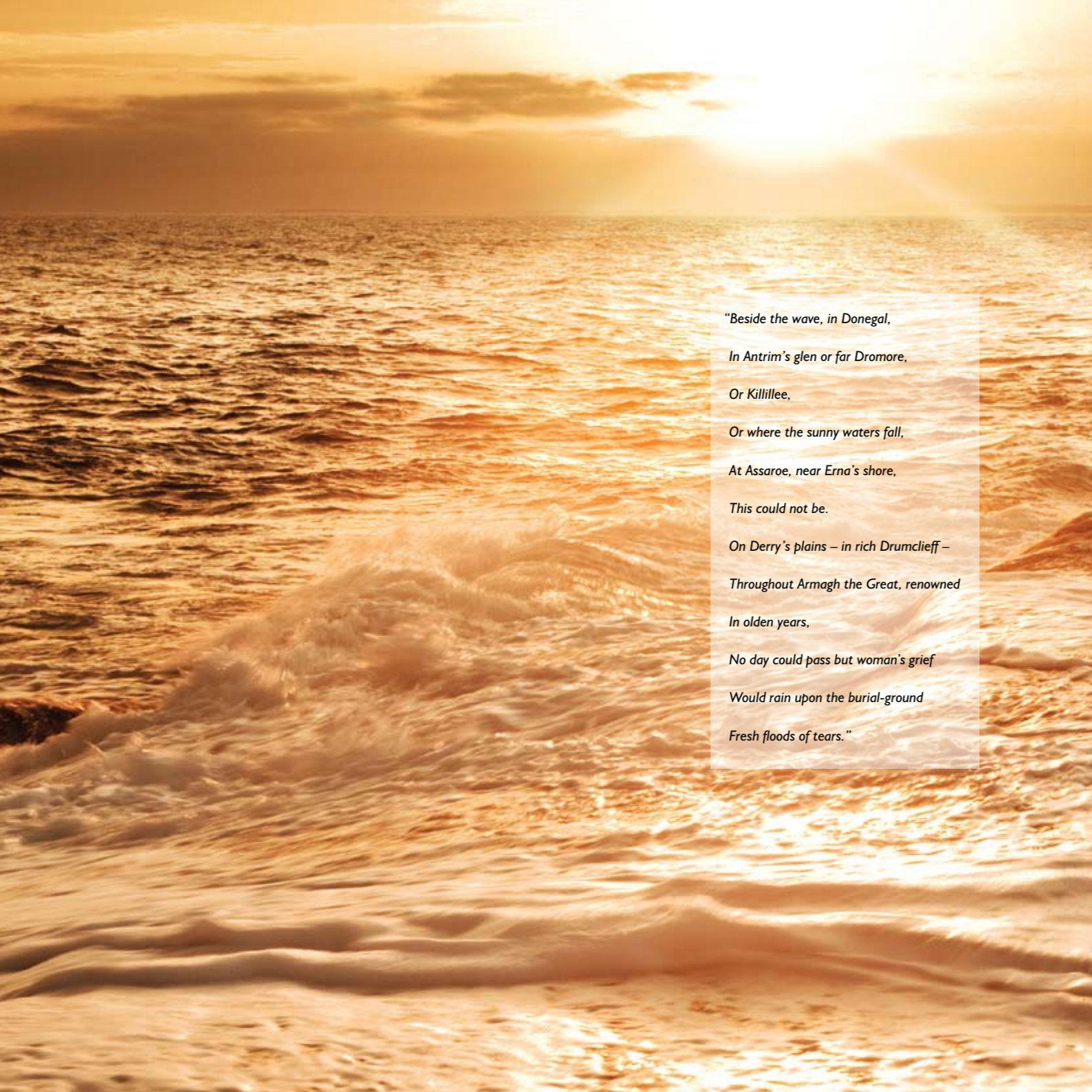
Imeacht Na nIarlí The Flight of the Earls 1607 - 2007



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Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library & Archive,
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*“Beside the wave, in Donegal,
In Antrim’s glen or far Dromore,
Or Killilliee,
Or where the sunny waters fall,
At Assaroe, near Erna’s shore,
This could not be.
On Derry’s plains – in rich Drumclieff –
Throughout Armagh the Great, renowned
In olden years,
No day could pass but woman’s grief
Would rain upon the burial-ground
Fresh floods of tears.”*

Introduction

The face of Ireland changed in September 1607 when the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell along with their companions stept aboard a ship at Portnamurry near Rathmullan on the shores of Lough Swilly and departed their native land for the continent. As the *Annals of the Four Masters* records ‘Good the ship-load that was there, for it is certain that the sea has never carried nor the wind blown from Ireland in recent times a ship-load that was better and more illustrious and more noble’. With these words Ulster’s Gaelic leaders were lost to their people and as history unfolded Ireland’s northern-most province was changed utterly and in time permanently as a consequence of that departure.

In 2007 the Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive (CÓFLA) marked the four hundredth anniversary of the Flight of the Earls with an exhibition

and outreach programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The emphasis of that exhibition was to bring the material held within the library and archive relating to the flight and the personalities involved to a wider audience.

In 2009, to examine how those events played a role in laying the foundation for the subsequent Ulster plantation, this brief publication has been assembled again to reflect the many sources within CÓFLA that will assist in the study of this important aspect of our past and to demonstrate the depth and range of those resources.

The Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library and Archive would like to acknowledge and thank the Heritage Lottery Fund for its generosity throughout this project and in particular in support of this publication.

Roddy Hegarty
2010



A depiction of the battle at the Yellow Ford as drawn by a surviving English soldier. This single item of evidence has been used by historians of various opinions to retell the story of this highly significant battle. From a facsimile in *National Manuscripts of Ireland* published in London in 1882 (CÓFLA).



Portrait of Hugh Ó Néill
taken from C.P. Meehan's *The Fate and Fortunes of Hugh Ó Néill, Earl of Tyrone* published in Dublin in 1870 (CÓFLA)

The Nine Years War

Elizabeth I had demonstrated her ambition to extend the authority of English government to Ireland. She saw this not simply as a means of extending the Protestant reformation but, just as importantly, as a means of curtailing the influence of Spanish imperialism. The Anglo-Norman adventure into Ireland had never fully realised its potential and had largely failed to alter the Gaelic character of much of the island. By the end of the sixteenth century one area more than most proved a thorn in the side of Tudor policy makers—Ulster.

From their power base in Tír Eoghain the Ó Néills had dominated the affairs of Ireland's northern province. They controlled or heavily influenced most of the northern half of the country alongside the neighbouring dynasties, the Ó Domhnaills and Mag Uidhirs. However, the influence of Elizabethan policies such as 'Surrender and Regrant', whereby Irish chieftains could secure the protection of the English crown in exchange for loyalty and the acceptance of English titles, was gradually eroding the formerly solid nature of this Gaelic heartland. The 'Shiring' of Monaghan with its attendant courts and English style seneschal began to unsettle the other Gaelic lordships and in particular the figure of Hugh Ó Neill.

Educated in the English fashion within the Pale and adept in the art of politics Ó Néill was prepared to befriend anyone capable of securing his position as the senior authority in Ulster. At times he appeared to support, and at others, threaten, English interests in Ireland. The Settlement of Monaghan in 1588 had, however, persuaded him that only military action would suffice to snuff out the flame of Elizabethan ambition.

In coalition with his old rivals, Ó Domhnaill and the other Gaelic lords of Ulster, Hugh began the war that would in the fullness of time see him die in exile with his lands in the hands of mercenaries, adventurers and erstwhile allies. Of even greater

significance would be the impact that his leaving would have on Gaelic Ireland. The old order was lost and, in spite of later attempts to re-establish that hegemony, Ireland, and in particular her northern province, would be set on a course that would bring further conflict and loss over the next four centuries. Yet Ó Néill's war was not destined to be the military disaster that it finally became. On the contrary his tactical awareness and ruthlessness might have won for him a greater prize had he only secured the help of the Spanish at a more opportune moment. Fate, however, proved a stubborn foe and the peace that broke out between England and Tyrone's greatest potential ally ultimately undid what had been a remarkable effort to secure the sovereignty of Ireland and the integrity of her ancient guardianship. His defeat at Kinsale and subsequent surrender and journey into exile marked the end of centuries of Gaelic rule.

The Battle at the Yellow Ford

The tenth of August 1598, after four years of war, witnessed Ó Néill's greatest success. An English led army marshalled by the governor of Newry Henry Bagnal suffered a devastating defeat just north of Armagh city. This was a catastrophe for the Elizabethan regime and a victory that Irish nationalism would draw inspiration from for centuries to come.

'The tenth morning of August rose bright and serene upon the towers of Armagh and the silver water of Avonmore. Before day dawned, the English army left the city in three divisions, and at sunrise they were winding through the hills and woods behind the spot where now stands the little church of Grange. The sun was glancing on the corslets and spears of their glittering cavalry, their banners waved proudly, and their bugles rang clear in the morning air, when suddenly from the thickets on both sides of their path, a deadly volley of musketry swept through the foremost ranks.

O'Neill had stationed here five hundred light-armed troops to guard the defiles; and in the shelter of the thick groves of fir-trees, they had silently waited for the enemy. Now they poured in their shot, volley after volley, and killed great numbers of the English; but the first division, led by Bagnal in person, after some hard fighting carried the pass, dislodged the marksmen from their position, and drove them backwards into the plain.

The centre division under Cosby and Wingfield, and the rear-guard led by Cuin and Billing, supported in flank by the cavalry under Brooke, Montacute, and Fleming, now pushed forward, speedily cleared the difficult country, and formed in the open ground in front of the Irish lines... Bagnal, at the head of his first division, and aided by a body of cavalry, charged the Irish light-armed troops up to the very entrenchments, in front of which O'Neill's foresight had prepared some pits, covered over with wattles and grass; and many of the English cavalry, rushing impetuously forward, rolled headlong, both men and horses, into these trenches and perished.

Then the first main body of O'Neill's troops was brought into action; and with bagpipes sounding a charge, they fell upon the English, shouting their fierce battle cries, Lam-deargh! and O'Donnell aboo! O'Neill himself, at the head of a body of horse, pricked forward to seek out Bagnal amidst the throng of battle; but they never met.

The Marshall, who had done his devoir that day like a good soldier, was shot through the brain by some unknown marksman ... a cart of gunpowder exploded amidst the English ranks, and blew many of their men to atoms. And now the cavalry of Tyr-connell and Tyr-owen dashed into the plain, and bore down the remnant of Brooke's and Fleming's horse; the columns of Wingfield and Cosby reeled before their rushing charge, while in front, to the war-cry of Bataillah aboo! The swords and axes of the heavy-armed gallowglasses were raging amongst the Saxon ranks. By this time the cannon were all taken; the cries of 'St. George!' had failed or turned into death shrieks, and once more England's royal standard sunk before the Red Hand of Tyr-owen.'

▲ This account of the battle is drawn from John Mitchel's *'The Life of Hugh Ó Néill'*, published in 1845 (CÓFLA).

'It may please your most honourable lordships, albeit we have now joined with the rest of this council in a letter to you signifying the most woeful and grievous accident of the Marshall's death and the defeat of the army, yet fearing greatly that the blame might be put on to us, which we have not deserved. We are writing to your lordships privately to put our case.

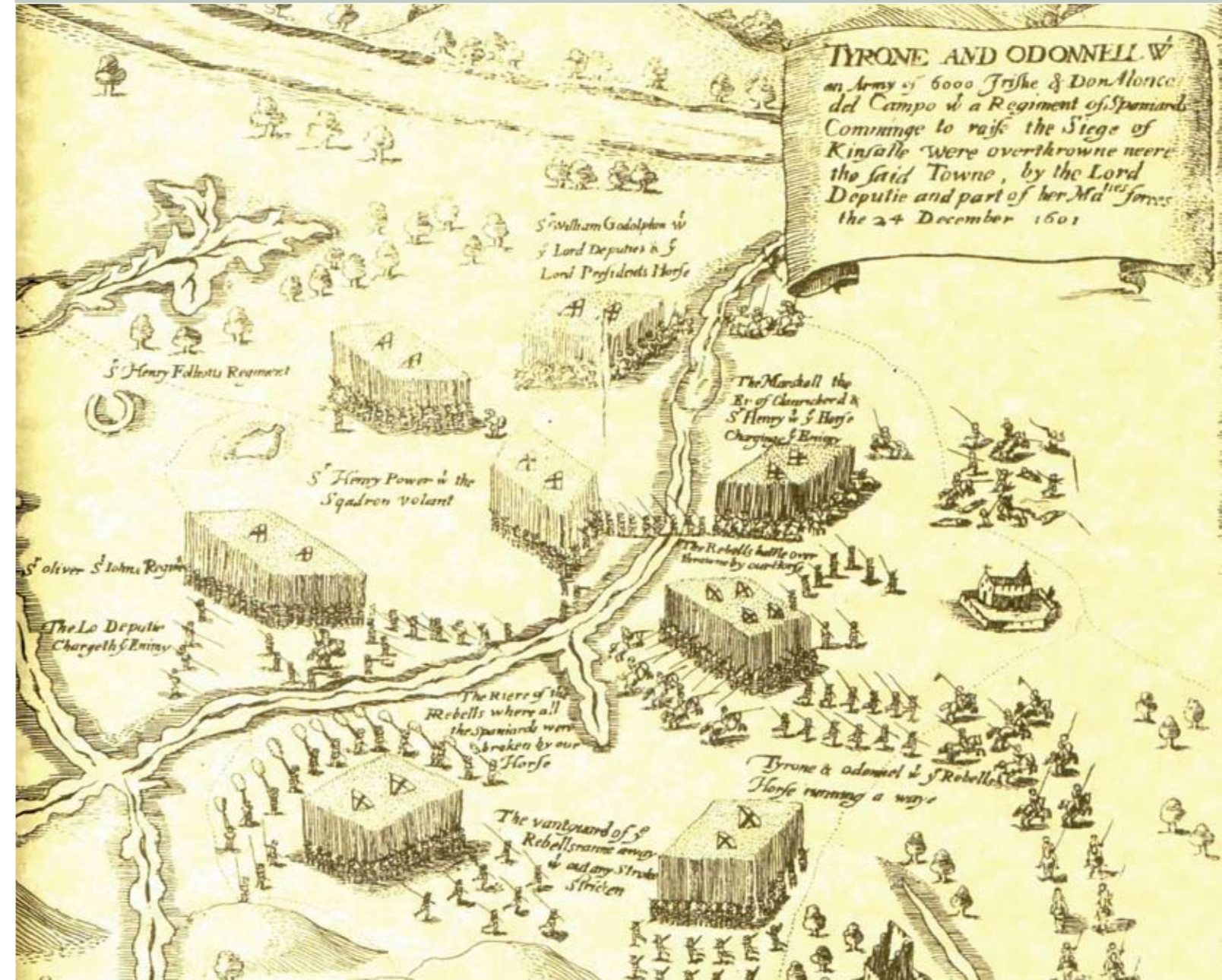
We hope that your lordships remember how absolutely her most excellent majesty had left the managing of the military affairs in this realm to the Earl of Ormond, Lord Lieutenant general, and we limited only to the administration of the civil justice, not having to deal with so much as the distribution of the treasure sent.'

▲ These lines are drawn from a letter from the Lords Justice of Ireland to their peers in London following the battle of the Yellow Ford. It was written on 17 August 1598, one week after the battle and was clearly an attempt to avoid any responsibility for the defeat. Elizabeth had gained a reputation for being a ruthless monarch who did not suffer fouls or defeat gladly. It is small wonder then that her representatives in Ireland should make such a strident defence of their own actions and attempt to apportion the blame for the defeat elsewhere.

Defeat at Kinsale and Ó Néill's Surrender

Following his victory at the Yellow Ford, it is quite probable that Ó Néill could have capitalised upon the disarray within the English administration in Ireland, proceeded south and taken control of Dublin and even the entire country. However, aware of rumours of an imminent coastal invasion along the north coast and confident of Spanish support he instead decided to consolidate his position within the Gaelic heartland of Ulster and await reinforcements. The untimely death of Philip II of Spain just as word of Bagnal's defeat spread across Europe meant that the Catholic counter reformation cause and as a consequence, Ó Néill, had lost one of its greatest advocates. His son and successor hesitated, in the hope that peace negotiations with England over the wars in Spanish Flanders might succeed, leaving Hugh and his allies isolated. Eventually the Spanish did send an

Map of the battle of Kinsale contained in *Pacta Hibernica* (CÓFLA).



expeditionary force. However, this was not until 1601 by which time the English had had the opportunity to regroup and to infiltrate the Irish coalition with spies.

The Spanish did not land in Donegal or Galway as Ó Néill would have desired but at Kinsale on the southern extremity of the country. As irony would have it, at the height of winter Hugh and his allies had to march the length of the country to come to the assistance of those sent to aid his campaign. Following a protracted siege the Irish were coaxed into a premature assault on the English lines and suffered a heavy defeat. They were forced to retreat and as they did so they were pursued northwards right into the previously impenetrable territories of Ulster. This extract from the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters (CÓFLA)* also records the impact of the Irish defeat in 1601.

‘The Irish forces returned that night, with Ó Néill and O’Donnell, to Inis-Eoghain. Alas! the condition in which they were that night was not as they had expected to return from that expedition, for there prevailed much reproach on reproach, moaning and dejection, melancholy and anguish, in every quarter throughout the camp. They slept not soundly, and scarcely did they take any refreshment. When they met together their counsel was hasty, unsteady and precipitate, so that what they at length resolved upon was, that Ó Néill and Ruairí, the brother of O’Donnell, with sub-chieftains ... should return back to their countries, to defend their territories and lands against foreign tribes; that (Red Hugh) O’Donnell ... should go to Spain to complain of their distresses and difficulties to the King of Spain.’

The disastrous defeat at Kinsale began a series of events that would end the possibility of Ó Néill mounting any significant counter offensive. As he retreated from Kinsale he was pursued northwards right into his heartland of Tír Eoghain. The English general Mountjoy (Charles Blount) adopted a ‘scorched earth’ policy throughout Ó Néill’s lands, reducing the country to famine. He compounded Tyrone’s difficulties by stationing garrisons across his territory and gradually weakening Gaelic authority throughout Ulster. However, with Elizabeth I ailing Mountjoy was pressed to make surrender terms with Ó Néill and this he did at Mellifont in 1603.

▼ The following extract from Meehan’s *The Fate and Fortunes of Hugh Ó Néill, Earl of Tyrone*, illustrates the confusion and disarray that followed defeat.

‘On the following evening, Tyrone, and the commissioners having charged him, reached Mellifont, when, being admitted to the lord deputy’s presence, he knelt, as was usual on such occasions, and made penitent submission to her majesty.

Then being invited to come nearer the deputy, he repeated the ceremony, if we may credit Fynes Moryson, in the same humiliating attitude, thus: ‘I, Hugh Ó Néill, earl of Tyrone, do absolutely submit myself to the queen’s mercy, imploring her gracious commiseration, imploring her majesty to mitigate her just indignation against me. I do avow that the first motives of my rebellion were neither malice nor ambition; but that I was induced by fear of my life to stand upon my guard. I do, therefore most humbly sue her majesty that she will vouchsafe to restore to me my former dignity and living.

In which state of a subject I vow to continue for ever hereafter loyal, in all true obedience to her royal person, crown, and prerogatives, and to be in all things as dutifully conformable thereunto as I or any other nobleman of this realm is bound by duty of a subject to his sovereign, utterly renouncing the name and title of Ó Néill, or any other claim which hath not been granted to me by her majesty.

I abjure all foreign power, and all dependency upon any other potentate but her majesty. I renounce all manner of dependency upon the king of Spain, or treaty with him or any of his confederates. I do renounce all challenge or inter-meddling with the uriahts (vassals), or fostering with them or other neighbour lords or gentlemen outside my country, or exacting black-rents of any uriahts or bordering lords. I resign all claim to any lands but such as shall e granted to me her majesty’s letters patent.

Lastly I will be content to be advised by her majesty’s magistrates here, and will assist them in anything that may tend the advancement of her service and the peaceable government of this kingdom, the abolishing of barbarous customs, the clearing of difficult passes, wherein I will employ the labours of the people

of my country in such places as I shall be directed by her majesty, or the lord deputy in her name; and I will endeavour for myself and the people of my country to erect civil habitations, and such as shall be of greater effect to preserve us against thieves and any force but the power of the state.’

Mountjoy received word from England of Elizabeth’s death just prior to his receiving Ó Néill’s surrender. This news was kept secret in case Ó Néill would either refuse to carry through his promised submission - given that Mountjoy would not have had the authority to receive it for the new king, or that Ó Néill would attempt to make contact with the king himself and offer to submit directly to the crown thus benefiting from even more favourable terms.

The terms Ó Néill received reflected the desperate state of the English administration following the war. Elizabeth had spent about £2million trying to secure an Irish defeat and many of those who had helped bring this about were now seeking their own settlements. The pacification of the Irish lords was a key priority but one that did not satisfy many within the English administration in Ireland. They would have preferred to have seen the end of Gaelic Ulster and the redistribution of the lands of their former foes among those who had fought the war. Chief among this school of thought was the governor of Carrickfergus, Arthur Chichester.

The Consequences of Defeat

Although Ó Néill may have received favourable surrender terms and was allowed to maintain substantial portions of his estates much of his erstwhile authority was gone. His position became increasingly difficult as those who had previously fought against him went to great lengths to convince the crown of both Ó Néill’s untrustworthiness and of the need to adequately punish his continuing treachery. A very good illustration of Ó Néill’s lost of authority came with the following grant of the lands in and around Armagh made to Sir Toby Caulfield in June 1607. In an

earlier era the Ó Néill had exercised his authority by selecting his own candidate for the position of Archbishop of Armagh. By the early seventeenth century the cathedral, and the church lands associated with it were in the hands of the new Protestant church.

‘Grant from the King to Sir Tobias Caulfield, Knt. - ARMAGH Co’. The site & c. of the abbey of St. Peter and Paul with all the buildings, gardens, orchards, and ceratin small parcels of land in or near the town of Armagh, known by the following names, viz. Dromcoite, Fyerunnargell, Tullaloist, Ganoughboy, Aghanoyre, Tullyelmaine, Downeuallaghe, and parcel of Knockdrenie; parcel of the estate of the said abbey – certain little gardens in Ardmagh, the tithes great and small of the following lands, viz. Tyrnassagard, Dromearge, Doonecavan and Tullaghastney, in or near Ardmagh town.’

▲ From the *Calendar of Patent Rolls, James I (CÓFLA)*.

Imeacht na nIarlaí | The Flight of the Earls

General Description of Ulster, Map
drawn c. 1609 and reproduced by the Stationery Office in 1860 (CÓFLA).



Two fine examples of the work of
Lucas de Heere depicting Irish
Travellers on the continent in the
years just before the Flight of
the Earls.
According to Ó Cianáin, far from
being regarded as gypsies, the
earls and their entourage were
actually accorded a welcome
normally reserved for dignitaries
all along their journey from
France to Flanders. These
images are taken from H.F.
McClintock Old Irish Dress
published in Dundalk in 1950
(CÓFLA)



Between Ó Néill's surrender in 1603 and the summer of 1607 his position within Ulster became increasingly difficult. The lack of justice felt by those who had brought about his defeat continued to cause resentment whilst the parallel problems of adequately compensating those who had loyally served Elizabeth remained to be addressed. A campaign of harassment and the constant accusations about Ó Néill treasonous contacts with the Spanish were circulated – not entirely without foundation. Eventually, Ó Néill determined to leave for Spain in the hope that a personal conference with Phillip II would bring about a fresh attempt to rid Ireland of English governance and restore his own influence. He continued to play a dual role until the very last moment sending Cúconnacht Mag Uidhir to negotiate with the Spanish and at the same time working alongside the English regime at home. By September 1607 Mag Uidhir had returned to Ireland and the time for a decision from Ó Néill had arrived.

▼ Tadhg Ó Cianáin's account of the Flight of the Earls was written in 1609 and translated by Paul Walsh in 1916 (CÓFLA). Ó Cianáin travelled with the Earls at least from Rathmullan to Rome but here details the first stage of Hugh Ó Néill's journey from Slane to Dundalk and then across Ulster.

'In the name of God. Here are some of the adventures and proceedings of Ó Néill from the time that he left Ireland. First, he was with the Lord Justice of Ireland, Sir Arthur Chichester, at Slane. He received a letter from John Bath on Thursday the seventh of September, the year of the Lord at that time being one thousand six hundred and seven. It was stated in the letter that Maguire, Donnachadh O'Briain, Mathew Tullie and John Rath came with a French ship for Ó Néill and the Earl of Tirconnell to Lough Swilly opposite Rathmullan in Fanad.

Ó Néill took his leave of the Lord Justice on the following Saturday. He went that night to Mellifont where Sir Garret Moore

was. On the following day he went to Dundalk. He proceeded on Monday from there by the high road of the Fews to Silverbridge across Slieve Fuaid to Armagh, over the Blackwater to Dungannon and on to Crieve, one of his island habitations. He made a stop and rested at Crieve on Tuesday. He proceeded in the name of God from Crieve on Wednesday over Slieve Sios. He was that night in Muintir Luinigh in the vicinity of Lough Beighfine. On the following day he reached Burn Denet. He rested from midday until nightfall. After that he passed over the great shallow on Lough Foyle and straight forward to Ballindrait. The son of O'Donnell was awaiting them at that time.

They went to Rathmелton the daylight shining on them at that time. They proceeded to Rathmullan where the ship we have mentioned was at anchor. They found Ruairí O'Donnell, Earl of Tirconnell, with the earlier mentioned men together with many of the tribe and followers of the Earl, putting stores of food and drink into the ship.'

▼ If Ó Néill thought that his imminent departure from Ireland was a secret then a contradictory view emerges from the following account from Sir John Davies taken from 'the Calendar of State Papers Ireland' September 1607 (CÓFLA).

'... he wept abundantly when he took his leave (from Mellifont), giving a solemn farewell to every child and every servant in the house, which them marvel, because in general it was not his manner to use such compliments. On Monday he went to Dungannon, where he rested two whole days, and on Wednesday night they say he travelled all night. It is reported that the countess, his wife, being exceedingly weary, slipped down from her horse, and weeping said 'she could go no further.' Whereupon the Earl drew his sword, and swore a great oath the 'he would kill her on the spot if she would not pass on with him, and put on a more cheerful countenance withal.'

Yet the next day, when he came near Lough Foyle, his passage that way was no so secret but the Governor there had notice thereof, and invited Tyrone and his son to dinner; but their haste, however, was such that they accepted not his courtesy, but they went on, and came that Thursday night to Rathmullan, a town on the west side of Lough Swilly, where the Earl of Tyrconnell and his company met with them. There they took some beeves from one Francis Whyte, an Englishman, and killed them for their provision. ... Lastly, he has carried with him a train of barbarous men, women and children to the number of 50 or 60 persons. If he means to make them appear like persons of good quality, they will presently spend all his Allhollwtide rent, which he has taken up by way of anticipation; but if he shall carry them through the country in the fashion and habit wherein now they are, doubtless they will be taken for a company of gipsies, and exceedingly scorned and despised by that proud nation (Spain)... As for them that are here, they are glad to see the day wherein the countenance and majesty of the law and civil government hath banished Tyrone out of Ireland, which the best army in Europe, and the expense of two millions of sterling pounds, had not been able to bring to pass.'

The Voyage

'On the festival of the Holy Cross, they embarked in a vessel that had lately carried Cuchonnaught Mac Guire and Donagh O'Brien to Ireland, and was then lying in lough Swilly. With O'Neill went his wife, the Lady Catherina, and her three sons, Hugh, whom they called the Baron of Dungannon, John, and Brian; Art Oge, son of Cormac Mac Baron; Ferdoragh, son of Conn, Hugh Oge, and others of his family and fiends. Roderick O'Donnell was attended by his brother Cathbar and his sister Nuala; Hugh the Earl's child, wanting three weeks of being a year old; Rose, daughter of O'Dogherty and wife of Cathbar, with her son Hugh aged two years and three months; Roderick's brother's son Donnell Oge, son of Donnell; Naghtan, son of Calvagh, who was

son of Donnell Cairbreach O'Donnell, and other friends – surely a distinguished company and 'it is certain,' say the reverend chroniclers of Tyrconnell, 'that the sea has not borne, and the wind has not wafted in modern times a number of persons in one ship more eminent, illustrious, or noble in point of genealogy, heroic deeds, valour, feats of arms, and brave achievements than they. Would that God had but permitted them', continued the Four Masters, 'to remain in their patrimonial inheritances until the children should arrive at the age of manhood! Woe to the heart that meditated – woe to the mind that conceived – woe to the council that recommended the project of this expedition, without knowing whether they should to the end of their lives be able to return to their ancient principalities and patrimonies.' With gloomy looks and sad forebodings the clansmen of Tyrconnell gazed upon that fatal ship 'built in the eclipse and rigged with curses dark,' as she dropped down Lough Swilly, and was hidden behind the cliffs of Fanad Head. They never saw their chieftains more.'

▲ An extract from John Mitchel's '*Life of Hugh Ó Néill*' drew on the earlier account of the Flight contained in the '*Annals of the Four Masters*' (CÓFLA).

▼ Tadhg Ó Cianáin's account of the voyage is much more matter of fact. The journey should have lasted less that a week but due to adverse weather conditions and the swiftness of their departure the protracted journey and food shortages made this a potentially disastrous adventure. The reference to the attack on the Earl's crew by the Mac Sweenys of Fanad is indicative of the manner in which the English government had been persuading the one time subjects of the Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill to reject their authority for the promise of English patronage.

'They went on board ship about mid day on Friday. Then they hoisted their sails. They moved close to the harbour side. They sent two boats' crews to get water and to search for fire wood. The son of Mac Sweeny of Fanad and a party of people from the district came upon them and pursued them. They fought with one another. With difficulty the party from the boats brought water

and fire wood with them. About the middle of the same night they hoisted their sails a second time. They went out a great distance into the sea.

The night was bright, quiet and calm, with a breeze from the south-west. They proposed putting in to Aranmore because the needed to get food and drink. An exceedingly strong storm and bad weather arose against them, together with fog and rain so that they were driven away from shore. They crossed the sea far and wide. The storm lasted until the middle of the following night. After they left Donegal they set a course straight past Sligo and straight ahead until they could see Croagh Patrick in Connacht. They feared that the king's fleet at Galway might intercept them they turned and sailed further out to sea to make directly towards Spain.

When they had been at sea for thirteen days, in strong storms and dangerously bad weather, the decided to place relics in the sea, trailing them behind the ship. These included a gold cross belonging to Ó Néill which contained part of the cross of the crucifixion. This, they thought brought them great relief from the storms.

Since they found it impossible to make it to Spain as the wind came straight against them, on Sunday the thirteenth of September they decide to head for the port of Criosc in Brittany. It was the Earls, who because of the shortage of food and water and because of the sickness onboard, who advised that they should try to land in France.'

They travelled for two days and two nights under full sail. They reached no land at all in that time. They did not even know what coast the might be close to.

At about mid-day on the Tuesday they saw three very large ships approaching as if from the direction of Spain. At first they thought that these might belong to the king of England. But so desperate were they that they decided to risk their own safety and attempted to approach the other ships. They found it impossible for some time to get close enough to communicate with the other vessels because of the weather but eventually learnt that they were Scandinavians on their way back from Spain and that

they were at that time in the Flemish Sea close to the coast with England.

They had no pilot who knew this part of the sea so followed the other ships until they lost track of them in the darkness. A Frenchman on board told them not to fear that he could direct them to land in Normandy before the next day. They had originally intended to travel to La Coruña in Spain but because of the hardships they had suffered and their weariness they were glad to land in France.

Tadhg Ó Cianáin came from a distinguished family linked to the Maguires of Fermanagh. He travelled with the earls and subsequently recorded the story whilst living in Rome. His account ends abruptly in November 1608 and it is possible that he, like many of those who left, died prematurely and before he had time to complete his account.



A page from the Ó Cianáin manuscript written in Rome in 1609

The journey to Louvain

The Countess Catariona, Ó Domhnaill's daughter and the children along with some of the other passengers and their attendants were sent with their luggage the short distance along the river to Rouen. The main group including the Earl of Tír Chonaill and Ó Néill went with 17 men on horseback to La Bouille, about twenty miles away to the south west of Rouen. Quilleboeuf was thirty miles from La Havre. The following day the main group were detained and taken a further fifty miles to Lisieux where they were received by the Marshal. The separation of the two groups caused some confusion for a time. The Marshal at Lisieux wrote to the King of France to inquire what was to be done with the group. The English king's ambassador was in the city, and having learned that the French king had granted the Irish group free passage dispatched a messenger to England informing James I of their arrival in France.

From France the group travelled not south to Spain but north-east to Flanders. Ó Néill's son Enri, who had been sent to Spain in 1600, aged 15, and was at this time Colonel of the Irish in Flanders. They needed Enri to obtain a warrant like that issued by the King of France to allow them to travel to Spain. On Monday 15 October the whole group left from Rouen - 31 on horseback, two coaches, three wagons and about 40 of them travelled on foot. For the warrant the group paid the local governor about 40 tons of salt which had been on the ship that brought them. Rouen impressed the travellers because it was strongly Catholic with 33 parish churches and it also was well situated in fertile land with good links along the river to Paris and a strong harbour. There were also 14 monasteries of religious orders and a splendid town hall. One of the younger members of the party was lost for a while having got separated from the rest. They travelled on to a little town called La Boissière about fifteen miles away, where the lodgings were poor. The following day, 16 October, they reached the town of Neufchatel where they heard Mass and had dinner. Leaving there they travelled to Aumale and on to Poix, about 25 miles south-west of Amiens, The next day they arrived in the

city of Amiens on the river Somme. There they went to see the church of St. Mary and the head of John the Baptist contained in crystal. From there they went to the small village of Contay and made the short journey to Arras the day after.

On 21 October the Earls made it to Douai where an Irish college had been established in 1594. The following Friday, 26 October, they set out for Tournai stopping over night at a small village. There they saw the tomb of an Irish Saint, St Linard. The next day they continued on to Tourai on the river Schelde. On Sunday 28 they came to Ath twenty miles from Tourai and the following day they arrived in Notre Dame de Hal passing through Enghein. In Hal on 30 October they met with Ó Néill's son Col. Enri Ó Néill. On Saturday 4 November they are met by the Marquis Spinola (an Italian in the service of the Spanish king). He had come to Hal from Brussels with a large group to meet with them and invited them to dinner in the city. On Sunday they went to Mass and then set out in coaches accompanied by others on horseback to Nyvel about 19 miles south of Brussels where they were entertained with music and dance that evening.

On Monday they continued on to Binche to meet the Archduke Albert of Flanders. It was a very wet day and when they arrived they had to spend some time drying off. They were met by Don Rodrigo de Laiso who had served in the Spanish Armada and had been ship wrecked off the Belgian coast. He went on to become the Archduke's chamberlain. At the palace of the Archduke they were met by the Albert and the Infanta, the King of Spain's daughter. There they held a long conversation before dining and returning to Nyvel.

The next day they went to Hal and spending the night there travelled on to Brussels where they were met by Col. Francisco and a party of Irish, Spanish, Italian and Flemish captains. They went to the Marquis's palace where they were welcomed by the Marquis, The Papal nuncio and the Spanish ambassador. They spent some time in conversation before the Marquis himself seated them for dinner. It was a lavish affair fit for a king and Ó Néill was given the place of honour at the head of the table. The



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1. A map of the Earls' Journey from Quilleboeuf to Louvain from Walsh's edition of Ó Cianáin's account of the Flight, (CÓFLA).

2. The Marquis Spinola (CÓFLA).

3. The gravestone of Rose O'Doherty, wife of Cathbarr Ó Domhnaill, who like many of those who left died without returning to Ireland. She is buried in the chapel of what was the Irish college in Louvain (CÓFLA).

4. An engraving showing the river Schelde frozen over. This is similar to a scene described by Ó Cianáin from around the time that the earls crossed the river in 1608. This was discovered among Cardinal Ó Fiach's papers (CÓFLA).

Earl of Tír Chonaill on one side and the Papal nuncio on the other. Ó Néill's children and Maguire were seated beyond Ó Domhnaill with the Spanish ambassador and the Duke of Aumale beyond the nuncio. The Marquis and other nobles were seated opposite Ó Néill. There was nothing inferior about the banquet with gold and silver plate. That night they returned to Hal.

On Friday 9 November they travelled to Louvain where they stayed for 10 days. Ó Néill stayed in a hostel called 'The Emperor's House' and Ó Domhnaill in another. On Sunday 25 November leaving the women and some attendants behind the Earls set out intending to travel for Spain. They went to Iodoigne about 10 miles south of Louvain where they were met by a troupe of the Archduke's cavalry who escorted them to Perwez along an ugly road. The following day in the midst of great sleet they reached Namur. Here they received a communication from the Archduke telling them to return to Louvain again and await his instructions. They returned to the small town of Warve overnight and then back to Louvain where they remained until 28 February 1608.

That winter was very harsh with lakes and rivers freezing over. News reached them of how in Antwerp the townspeople were amusing themselves on the ice over the river when the sheet cracked and broke off carrying a large number towards the sea. Luckily all but five were rescued. News also reached them that Ó Néill's brother Cormac had been imprisoned in the Tower of London.

On February 18 the Earls went to Mechlin and from there the following day to Antwerp crossing the Schelde on the way, which although very wide was still partly frozen. They were able to cross the ice on horseback before being put into boat at a quay of ice and disembarked on the opposite side at a similar quay. Having visited the Irish college in Antwerp and seen many of the city's attractions they left and travelled to Willebroek between Antwerp and Ghent and the following day on to Vilvorde and Louvain.



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1. A map showing the route followed by the Earls on the Journey from Louvain to Rome in 1608 taken from Walsh's edition of the *Flight of the Earls*, 1916 (CÓFLA).

2. A depiction of the Devil's Bridges close to which Ó Néill lost a considerable part of his money on St. Patrick's day 1608.

3. A contemporary bird's-eye view of Milan where the Earls spent some time on their journey to Rome.

Across the Alps to Rome

Having failed to get the permission of the Archduke to travel to Spain, on 28 February the Earls and some of their entourage set off for Rome. Thirty-two travelled on horseback and their ladies in a coach. Behind them, in the care of Ó Néill's son Enri, they left Seán, aged 7 and Brian his younger brother, Cathbarr Ó Domhnaill's son Aodh, aged 2, the Earl of Tír Chonaill's son also called Aodh, aged 1 and another young boy called Ó Coinne along with Ó Néill's rent gatherer, Seán Ó hAgáin, and other of their nobles and followers.



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4. Portrait of Pope Paul V from the *Ó Fiaich Papers* (CÓFLA).



5.

5. The fountain and statue of Neptune in Bologna, *O Fiaich papers* (CÓFLA).

They travelled along a bad road to Namur and because of the poor state of the road ahead the women continued on horseback leaving the coach behind. On Tuesday 4 March they continued on to Longwy and Fillieres and the following day to Malatur and on to Conflans, two of the party almost drowning in a deep river they had to cross. Onwards they group went to Pont-a-Mousson where they stayed for two nights and then crossing the Moselle they proceeded to Nancy.

On 8 March they left Nancy and although the weather had improved they had to cross the Mountain of St Martin along roads that were difficult and covered with snow and ice. Eventually they arrived in Bonhomme before continuing on to Kaysersberg and Colmar. They journeyed on through a town called Hotmers, possibly Ottmarsheim on the Rhine and Bâle (Basel). By Sunday 16 March they had reached Lucerne and crossed over a great lake (Vierwaldstätter-See) reaching Flüelen Pourlac at midnight. Monday was St. Patrick's Day and they went through the Alps passing over a deep gorge by way of a bridge known as the Devil's Bridge and one of their horses was almost lost. They stayed that night in a little town called Piedimonte.

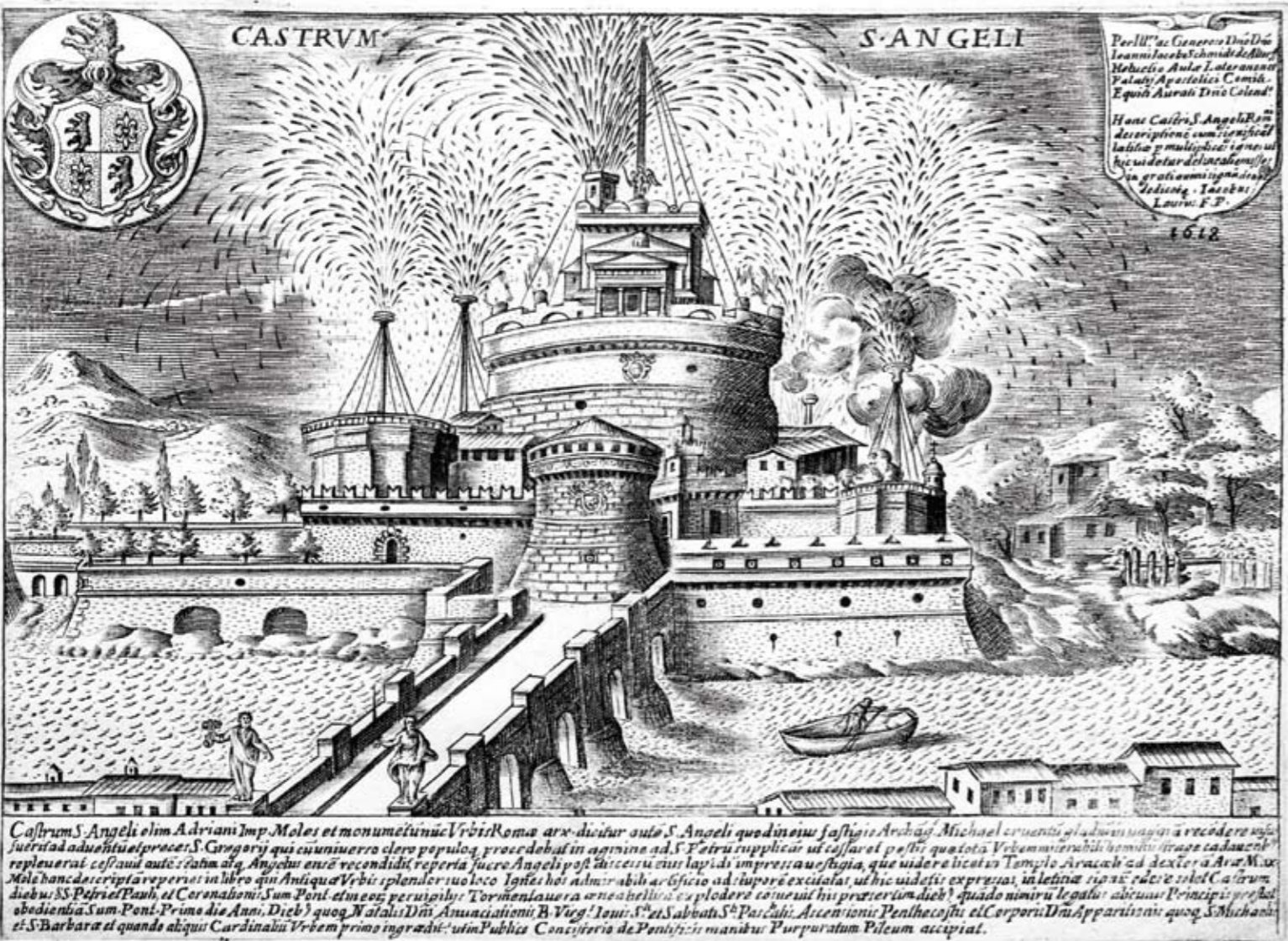
Ó Néill remained there for a day to try to recover money (about £120) that been lost when the ill-fated horse had fallen the previous day whilst the Earl of Tyrconnell proceeded over the Alps. They had to cross the mountain using sleighs drawn by oxen and had great difficulty descending the icy and rugged roads on the other side. There they made their way to Faido meeting up again with O Domhnaill. In the days that followed they continued their journey through the Lugano valley to Capo di Lago (Laguno) crossing the lake separating Italy from Switzerland. They landed at a small town called Capolago and although the weather was wet and stormy, reached Como before travelling to Milan along good roads where they remained for three weeks.

In mid April they reached Parma where they were shown a number of exotic beasts, lions, leopards and camels, and made their way to Modena and Bologna. The following day Ó Néill met with the cardinal there. From Bologna they travelled to Saint Nicholas and Castel San Pietro before arriving in Imola and then Loreto. On Wednesday 23 April they set out from Loreto for Rome and en route some of the group, but not Ó Néill, made a pilgrimage to Assisi.

As they journeyed closer to Rome they sent some people ahead of them to the city and were met by the Archbishop of Armagh Peter Lombard at Ponte Molle. They then proceeded in coaches into Rome on 29 April.

Destruction by Peace

A contemporary image of Rome showing the bridge and castle of St. Angelo.



(On 28 April 1608) ‘they went to Prima Porta, a distance of three leagues. They stopped there that night. They sent on some persons before them to Rome. After that they went two leagues to Ponte Molle. Peter Lombard, the archbishop of Armagh and primate of Ireland, came with a noble young man in his company, having a large number of coaches sent by cardinals, to meet them to that place. The steward of each of a certain number of cardinals came to them to welcome them and to receive them with honour in the cardinals’ name. Then they proceeded in coaches. They went until they came to Rome. Porta del Popolo was the name of the gate by which they entered the city. They went after that through the principal streets of Rome in great splendour. They did not rest until they reached the great church of San Pietro in Vaticano. They put up their horses there and entered the church.’

▲ An extract from Tadhg Ó Cianáin’s account of the Earls’ arrival in Rome.

Unable to gain the permission of Phillip III to travel to Spain and equally unable to convince him of the merits of assisting a return to Ireland at the head of a new force, the Earl of Tyrone consistently lobbied the Spanish monarch for support. Ó Néill continued his protracted discussions through the Spanish ambassador to Rome, the Conde de Castro. Having made it safely out of Ireland and then endured what must have been a treacherous voyage to Normandy the Earls and their extensive entourage had divided at Louvain. The Earls and Mag Uidhir had arrived in Rome in the spring of 1608. However, by the autumn Ó Néill had been left virtually alone. The Earl of Tyrconnell, his brother Cathbharr, Mag Uidhir and Ó Néill’s own son Hugh, Baron of Dungannon, had all died. Nevertheless Ó Néill remained resolute in his determination to return to Ireland and reclaim his estates.

‘The Earl of Tirconnell (Rury, son of Hugh, son of Manus, son of Hugh Duv, son of Hugh Roe O’Donnell) died at Rome, on the 28th of July, and was interred in the Franciscan monastery situate on the hill on which St. Peter the Apostle was crucified, after lamenting his faults and crimes, after confession, exemplary penance for his sins and transgressions, and after receiving the body and blood of Christ from the hands of psalm-singing clergy of the Church of Rome. Sorrowful the short life and early eclipse of him who was there deceased, for he was a brave, protecting, valiant, puissant, and warlike man, and had often been in the gap of danger along with his brother, Hugh Roe, in defence of his religion and patrimony. He was a generous, bounteous, munificent and truly hospitable lord, to whom the patrimony of his ancestors did not seem anything for his spending and feasting parties; and a man who did not place his mind or affections upon worldly wealth and jewels, but distributed and circulated them among all those who stood in need of them whether mighty or feeble.’

▲ From *The Annals of the Four Masters* concerning the death of Ruairí Ó Domhnaill in Rome.

‘At Rome, since Tyrconnell’s death, his page is also dead, and two or three more (whereof Tyrone’s son is one) are very dangerously sick, and the death is now laid upon a riotous journey which they took to Ostia. The Spaniards here have news this week from London that the rebels of Ireland are for the most part killed, and the rest dispersed, which he hopes is true, and this will make more of them sick in Rome.’

A communication from Sir Henry Wotton in Rome recorded in the *Calendar of State Papers Ireland* for 22 August 1608, (CÓFLA). The Irish rebels he mentions are those who took part in Sir Cahir O Dochartaigh’s rebellion that year.

‘Señor

The Earl of Tiron has heard that, by act of Parliament, there has been a further confiscation of his estates and of those of the Earl of Tirconel. In view of this he begs Your Majesty to take a decision in the matter concerning which he has submitted a petition so that he may attend to the recovery of his estates. He says that, rather than live in Rome, he would prefer to go to his land with a hundred soldiers and die there in defence of the catholic faith and of his fatherland. In the meantime he wishes to have permission to go to the territory of the Princes of Lieja (Liège) if this Prince will receive him. The Earl is now very old, his health is failing and, in this country, he has no hope of consolation. I humbly beg Your Majesty to orde that a decision be taken concerning his affairs and that this decision be in accordance with their nature, for this is such a worthy cause and so deserving of Your Majesty’s generosity. May God keep the catholic person of Your Majesty for the benefit of Christendom.

El Conde de Castro’

▲ A letter to the King of Spain from the Spanish ambassador to Rome 15 March 1615, *Micheline Kerney Walsh papers (CÓFLA)*.



1. Portrait of Peter Lombard Archbishop of Armagh from Meehan’s *Fate and Fortunes of Hugh Ó Néill Earl of Tyrone (CÓFLA)*.

2. Reputedly the last portrait of Hugh Ó Néill made as he lived out his last years in Rome (courtesy of Ben Fearon).

Confiscation and Plantation

With the departure of the Earls in 1607 the opportunity arose for the British crown to declare their lands forfeit and to seize these for their own benefit. This did not lead directly to a policy of plantation. The determination to develop a more fully-fledged strategy of plantation came about in the aftermath of the rebellion in 1608 by Sir Cahir Ó Dochartaigh. A plantation in Ulster, it was believed, would provide not only security but also the opportunity to compensate those who had not been recompensed for their efforts in bringing Ó Néill and his allies to book. These included Sir Arthur Chichester who was granted much of the land around O Néill former headquarters at Dungannon. In addition a plantation could create a new cash based economy that could assist in addressing the poor state of the government’s finances.

In 1609 a survey of the confiscated or ‘escheated’ lands was begun. For a number of reasons this was to prove more complex than first envisaged and the wish to begin the plantation properly that year had to be deferred. Not least among these reasons were the extent of the lands themselves, the distances that those taking up their new grants would have to travel and the continuing presence of the native Irish. By the following spring, however the first detailed maps of the plantation era had been forwarded to England. A letter from Sir Josias Bodley to Salisbury 24 February 1610 describes how this process was undertaken.

‘Having been employed the last six months in the cronographical descriptions of the Northern parts of Ireland as preparations to the intended plantations, thinks it his duty to give him an account thereof. It was required that those escheated countries should be so plotted that the known bounds of every country might be discerned by the eye. The church land distinguished from the temporal, and land already granted from that which is yet to be disposed of; the shares for the undertakers to be laid out with their apparent limits according to certain conceived proportions of different quantities, the goodness or badness of the soil; the woods, rivers, or mountains, bogs and lochs, to be specified in

their several places. It was late in the year when this service was put on foot, and the shortest course for dispatch that might be was to e taken. They thought it their readiest course that, while the Deputy and commissioners in their inquisition concerning the bishops’ claim occupied their time in those counties, they should call such persons unto them out of every barony, as by their experience could give them the name and quantity of every ballibo, quarter tathe, or any other common measure in any precincts of the same, with special notices how they butted or meared the one on the other; by which means they contrived those maps which are now sent to him.’

▲ An extract form *Calendar of State Papers Ireland 1608-10 (CÓFLA)*.

Just ten years after Ó Néill’s extraordinary victory at the Yellow Ford the area over which the battle was fought was subject to a grant made by James I to Sir Toby Caulfield. He was granted the lands pertaining to the abbey of St. Peter and Paul at Armagh as well as other areas including Charlemont, Blackwater and Grange. As the new plantation scheme was develop, however more and more of what had previously been under the control of the Gaelic lordships was transferred into English and Scottish hands.

‘Grant from the King to John Brownlowe, esq.- ARMAGH Co’. In O’Nealan Bar. The middle proportion of Doughcoron – Taberhany, 1 bal. the moiety of the balliboe of Aghenecloghy, Keilmarigie, 2 bal. Tirnurye, Doughcoron, Taunaghvore, Knockneseggan, Lurgyvalyvackkan, Balliblagh, 1 bal. each, Derry, 1 bal. and ¼ of another, Dromonavahir, Taunagnoreinkellymory, Drommonicolla, Kanagow, Clonrolla, 1 bal. each, Lisocorran, 1 bal. and ¼ of another, Lorigine-Itarry, Clan-Igollavorist, Dunnagreh, Corainegeir, Killaghy, Tollidegon, Tollyconally, and Dromonikeherny, 1 bar. Each; in all 1500 a (acres) – the balliboe of Shankill, and half the balliboe of Aghnecloghie, containing 90a, are excepted from this grant. – The premises are erected into the manor of Doughcoron, with 450a in demesnes, and a court baron. –Total rent 8l Eng. – To hold for ever, as of the castle of Dublin, in common soccage. – 29 May 8th. (1610)

Grant from the King to Robert Maxwell (27 February 1612), dean of the cathedral church of st. Patrick of Armagh, and his successors - ARMAGH Co’. in Armagh Bar. All that parcel of land called the Dean’s demesnes in Armagh, and all buildings thereon; Tullyadegany and Tull-Irrin, containing ½ balliboe near Armagh, and within the manor or lordship of Armagh.’

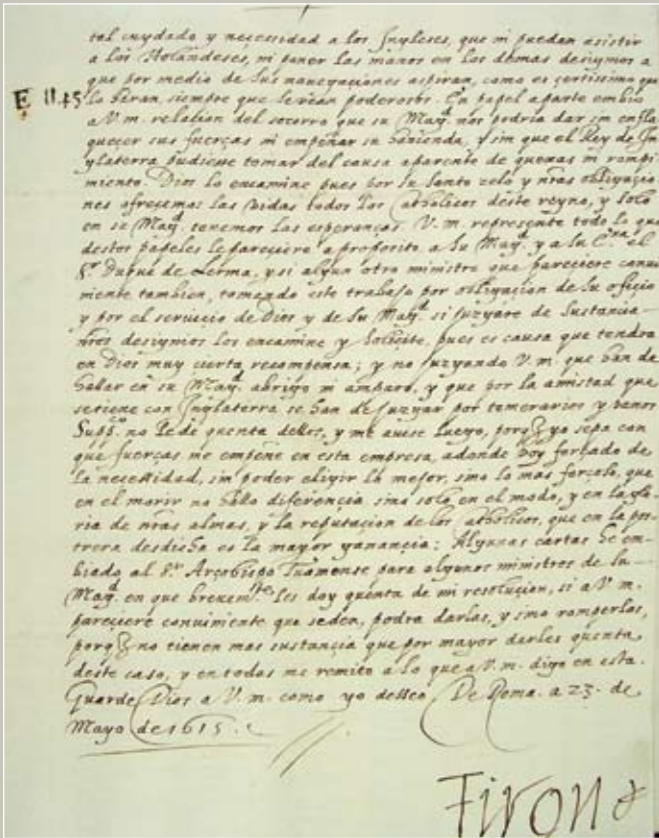
Extracts from the *Calendar of Patent Rolls James I (CÓFLA)*.



3. Part of the Barony of Dungannon as depicted on a map by Josias Bodley c. 1609 (CÓFLA).

4. Sir Arthur Chichester.

Richard Bartlett’s drawing of the ruined city and cathedral of Armagh 5. c.1601 from G.A. Hayes-McCoy *Ulster and Other Irish Maps (CÓFLA)*.



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1. Letter from Ó Néill to the Duke of Lerma, May 1615.

Micheline Kerney Walsh paper (CÓFLA).

2. An illustration depicting the grave slab over the tombs of the Earl of Tyrconnell and his brother and that of Hugh Baron of Dungannon taken from the Ulster Journal of Archaeology vol. v no.3 1899 (CÓFLA).



3.

3. The church of San Pietro in Montorio, Rome, the last resting place of the Great Ó Néill. Ó Fiaich papers (CÓFLA).



4.

4. Florence Conroy, Archbishop of Tuam, of who Ó Néill makes mention in his correspondence from Rome. Portrait from C.F. Meehan's *The Fate and Fortune of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone* (CÓFLA).

that most of the principal people and some of the most important cities of the kingdom have determined to perish in defence of our holy faith, which our enemies are now making greater efforts than ever to destroy, and I am resolved to go and die with them

However, in order to satisfy my conscience, and because present circumstances are such that with very little help much more could be achieved now than ever before, I make this final effort for sake of the cause which I profess and which is no other than the defence of our holy faith. I beg Your Excellency to represent this case favourably to His Majesty. Unless we avail of the present opportunity, all will be lost irrevocably.

The archbishop of Tuam and Don Andres Velazquez, to whom I have written at length of the present state of that afflicted kingdom, will give detailed account of everything to Your Excellency. May God keep Your Excellency for many fortunate years, that you may add to your glorious deeds the liberation of Ireland and its happy union with the Crown of Spain, a deed which will undoubtedly surpass all others. Rome, 23 May 1615.'

▼ Hugh Ó Néill in a letter to Andrés Velázquez, a member of the Spanish Council of State, 23 May 1615:

'We beg His Majesty to be moved to help us, remembering what the English have done many time despite their peace treaties with Spain: since their first rebellions in Flanders until today they have fomented these rebellions against His majesty and continue to do so. They have given to these rebels of Spain the power they now hold. The English themselves, using the name of peace as a deception teach us this manner of feigned friendship and of destruction by peace.'

A little over a year from his writing to Lerma Hugh himself had died on 20 July 1616. He was buried in the church of San Pietro in Montorio in Rome close to the graves of his son the Baron of Dungannon and that of the Earl of Tyrconnell.

Exile and Death

▼ Even in exile in Rome Ó Néill continued to lobby the Spanish for support to return to Ireland at the head of new fighting force. Obviously concerned by developments at home and increasingly unsettled by the solidifying peace between Spain and England he wrote to The Duke of Lerma, leader of the Spanish government in May 1615.

'Señor

The peace with England, though prejudicial to our holy faith, is so well established that I have begun to lose hope of His Catholic Majesty's protection upon which I had counted up to the present. The state of Ireland, my afflicted country, is now so desperate

Those who left Ireland in 1607

On 4 October the Earls landed at Quilleboeuf a small town on the river Seine. There were at least one hundred people on board the ship. When they arrived they had less than one barrel of water remaining. Those who travelled who are listed in Tadhg Ó Cianáin's account are:

Hugh Ó Néill Earl of Tyrone
The Countess Catriona
Hugh Baron of Dungannon
Seán, Son of Hugh and Catriona
Brian, another son.
Art Óg Ó Néill and his wife
Brian Ó Néill, nephew of Hugh
Feardorcha, Ó Néill's grandson
Aodh Óg, Ó Néill's grand-nephew
Henry Hovendon, Ó Néill's secretary
Enrí Ó hAgáin
Seán na bpunta Ó hÁgáin,
Ó Néill's rent collector and his wife
Richard Weston a Dundalk merchant
John Bath, a Drogheda merchant
Christopher Plunkett, Ó Néill's master of horse
Muircheartach Ó Cionne,
Hugh's marshall
Séamus Mac Éimhir Mac Connell,
son of the Lord of Fermanagh and

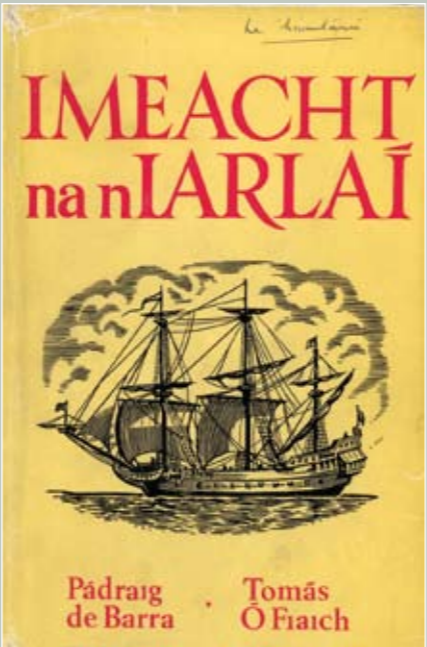
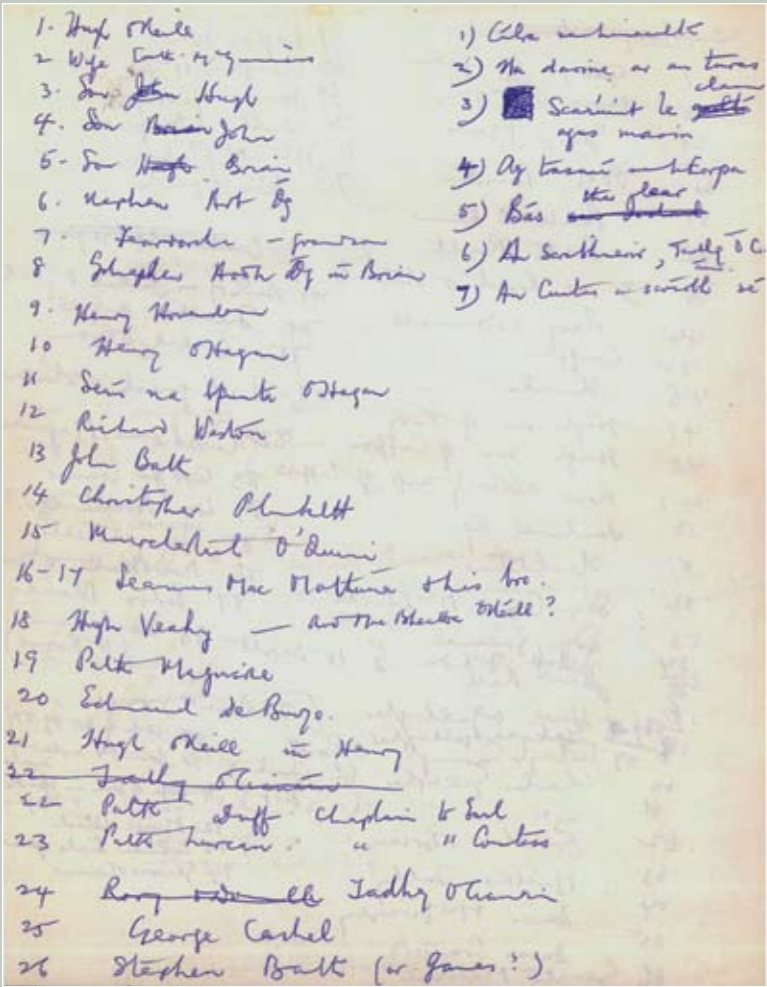
his brother
Ruairí Ó Domhnaill, Earl of Tyrconnell
Cathbharr, Ruairí's brother
Nuala, Ruairí's sister
Aodh, Ruairí's son
Róis, Cathbharr's wife
Aodh, Cathbharr's son
Domhnall Óg, son of Ruairí's half brother Domhnall
Nechtain Ó Domhnaill, second cousin of Ruairí
Seán Crón Mac Daibhid, Ruairí's steward
Eamonn gruamdha Mac Daibhid and his wife
Muiris Ultach, a Franciscan friar
Colmán, Hugh's priest
John Rath, the ship's pilot
Aodh Mac Domhnaill
Ó Gallchobhair
Tirlagh Carragh Ó Gallchobhair
Captain John Connor
Edmund Breatnach
Henry O'Kelly
George Cashell
Tadhg Ó Cianáin
Cúchonnacht Maguidhir
Donnchadh Ó Briain
Mathew Tullie, Ruairí's secretary
Hugh Ó Néill's page
2 lackies of Ó Néill
Muiris, Ruairí Ó Domhnaill's page

4 servants of Ó Domhnaill's
3 lackies of Ó Domhnaill's
3 waiting women
Maigbheathadh Ó Néill
James Bath
A Spaniard who had lived with Ó Néill since the Armada*
Donnachadh Mac Suibhne
Gearóid Ó Conchubhair
Cyer Mac Tamalin
David Craffort
* Tomás Ó Fiaich later identified this man as Pedro Blanco.

Tomás Ó Fiaich spent many years exploring the continental archives and in his publication Imeacht na nIarlaí with Pádraig de Barra in 1972 added the following names to Ó Cianáin's list.

Aodh Mac Éinrí Ó Néill
George Ichingham
Donncha Ó hÁgáin
Pádraig Ó Coinne
George Moore
Peter Preston
Patrick Rath
Pádraig Mag Uidhir
Edmund de Burgo
Fr. Roibeard Mac Artúir (or Chamberlain)
Fr. Tomás Strong

Fr. Pádraig Ó Duibh
Fr. Pádraig Ó Lorcáin
Fr. Pádraig Ó Luchráin
Fr. Niallán Mac Thiarnáin
Fr. Toirealach Ó Sléibhín
Fr. Brian Ó Gormlaigh
Pádraig Mac Éinrí Ó hÁgáin, student
Pádraig Mac Cormaic Ó hÁgáin, student
Éamann Ó Maolchraoibhe, student
Matha Mac Thréanfhir, student
Walter Rath, student
Cathaoir Mac Airt Ó Gallchóir
Tuathal Ó Gallchóir
Aodh Óg Ó Gallchóir
Eoghan Rua Mac an Bhaird
Seán Mac Philib
Aonghus Mac Dhuifithe
Uilliam Ó Loingsigh
Cathal Ó Broin
Fr. Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire
Fr Diarmaid Ó Duláin
Bernard Morris
Niallan Mac Davitt
Conchbhar Óg Ó Dubheannaigh
Donnchadh Coughlan
Dermot Dolan
Brian O'Hegarty
Doighre Ó Duígeannáin.



Cover of Imeacht na nIarlaí.

Page from Ó Fiaich Manuscripts (CÓFLA)

Lament for Lost Leaders

Originally written by Eoghan Rua Mac an Bhaird (the Ó Domhnaill's bard) for Nuala, Ruairí Ó Domhnaill's sister following his untimely death in Rome in 1608, this translation is the work of James Clarence Mangan. This is an elegy on the death of the princes of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, who having fled with others from Ireland in the year 1607, and afterwards dying at Rome, were interred on St. Peter's Hill, in one grave. Mac an Bhaird had accompanied the family into exile. This version has been taken from the Poems of James Clarence Mangan in CÓFLA.

O Woman of the piercing wail,
Who mournest o'er yon mound of clay
With sigh and groan,
Would God thou wert among the Gael!
Thou wouldst not then from day to day
Weep thus alone.
'Twere long before, around a grave
In green Tírconnell, one could find
This loneliness;
Near where Beann-Boirche's banners wave
Such grief as thine could ne'er have pined
Companionless.

Beside the wave, in Donegal,
In Antrim's glen or far Dromore,
Or Killillee,
Or where the sunny waters fall,
At Assaroe, near Erna's shore,
This could not be.
On Derry's plains – in rich Drumclieff –
Throughout Armagh the Great, renowned
In olden years,
No day could pass but woman's grief
Would rain upon the burial-ground
Fresh floods of tears.

O, no! – from Shannon, Boyne, and Suir,
From high Dunluce's castle-walls,
From Lissadill,
Would flock alike both rich and poor.
One wail would rise from Cruachan's halls
To Tara's hill;
And some would come from Barrow-side,
And many a maid would leave her home
On Leitrim's plains,
And by melodious Banna's tide,
And by the Mourne and Erne to come
And swell thy strains!

O, horse's hoofs would trample down
The mount whereon the martyr-saint
Was crucified.
From glen and hill, from plain and town,
One loud lament, one thrilling plaint,
Would echo wide.
There would not soon be found, I ween,
One foot of ground among those bands
For museful thought,
So many shriekers of the keen
Would cry aloud, and clap their hands,
All woe-distraught!

Two princes of the line of Conn
Sleep in their cells of clay beside
O'Donnell Roe:
Three royal youths, alas! Are gone,
Who lived for Erin's weal, but died
For Erin's woe!
Ah! Could the men of Ireland read
The names these noteless burial stones
Display to view,
Their wounded hearts afresh would bleed,
Their tears gush forth again, their groans
Resound anew!

The youths whose relics moulder here
Were sprung from Hugh, high Prince and Lord
Of Aileach's lands;
Thy noble brothers, justly dear,
Thy nephew long to be deplored
By Ulster's bands.
Theirs were not souls wherein dull Time
Could domicile Decay or house
Decrepitude!
They passed from Earth ere Manhood's prime,
Ere years had power to dim their brows
Or chill their blood.

And who can marvel o'er thy grief,
Or who can blame thy flowing tears,
That knows their source?
O'Donnell, Dunnasava's chief,
Cut off amid his vernal years,
Lies he a corse
Beside his brother Cathbar, whom
Tírconnell of the Helmets mourns
In deep despair –
For valour, truth, and comely bloom,
For all that greatens and adorns,
A peerless pair.

O, had these twain, and he, the third,
The Lord of Mourne, O'Niall's son,
Their mate in death –
A prince in look, in deed and word –
Had these three heroes yielded on
The field their breath,
O, had they fallen on Criffan's plain,
There would not be a town or clan
From shore to sea,
But would with shrieks bewail the Slain,
Or chant aloud the exulting rann
Of jubilee!

When high the shout of battle rose,
On fields where Freedom's torch still burned
Through Erin's gloom,
If one, if barely one of those
Were slain, all Ulster would have mourned
The hero's doom!
If at Athboy, where hosts of brave
Ulidian horsemen sank beneath
The shock of spear,
Young Hugh Ó Néill had found a grave,
Long must the north have wept his death
With heart-wrung tears!

If on the day of Ballachmyre
The Lord of Mourne had met, thus young,
A warrior's fate,
In vain would such as thou desire
To mourn, alone, the champion sprung
From Niall the Great!
No marvel this – for all the Dead,
Heaped on the field, pile over pile,
At Mullach-brack,
Were scarce an eric for his head,
If Death had stayed his footsteps while
On victory's track!

If on the Day of Hostages
The fruit had from the parent bough
Been rudely torn
In sight of Munster's bands – Mac-Nee's –
Such blow the blood of Conn, I trow,
Could ill have borne.
If on the day of Balloch-boy,
Some arm had laid, by foul surprise,
The chieftain low,
Even our victorious shout of joy
Would soon give place to rueful cries
And groans of woe!

If on the day the Saxon host
Were forced to fly – a day so great
For Ashanee –
The Chief had been untimely lost,
Our conquering troops should moderate
Their mirthful glee.

There would not lack on Lifford's day,
From Galway, from the glens of Boyle,
From Limerick's towers,
A marshalled file, a long array,
Of mourners to bedew the soil
With tears in showers!

If on the day a sterner fate
Compelled his flight from Athenree,
His blood had flowed,
What numbers all disconsolate
Would come unasked, and share with thee
Affliction's load!
If Derry's crimson field had seen
His life-blood offered up, Though 'twere
On Victory's shrine,
A thousand cries would swell the keen,
A thousand voices of despair
Would echo thine!

O, had the fierce Dalcassian swarm
That bloody night on Fergus' banks
But slain our Chief,
When rose his camp in wild alarm –
How would the triumph of his ranks
Be dashed with grief!
How would the troops of Murbach mourn
If on the Curlew Mountain's day,
Which England rued,
Some Saxon hand had left them lorn,
By shedding there, amid the fray,
Their prince's blood!

Red would have been our warrior's eyes
Had Roderick found on Sligo's field
A gory grave,
No Northern Chief would soon arise
So sage to guide, so strong to shield,
So swift to save.
Long would Leith-Cuinn have wept if Hugh
Had met the death he oft had dealt
Among the foe
But, had our Roderick fallen too,
All Erin must, alas! have felt
The deadly blow!

What do I say? Ah, woe is me!
Already we bewail in vain
Their fatal fall!
And Erin, once the Great and Free
Now vainly mourns her breakless chain,
And iron thrall!
Then, daughter of O'Donnell, dry
Thine overflowing eyes, and turn
Thy heart aside,
For Adam's race is born to die,
And sternly the sepulchral urn
Mocks human pride!

Look not, nor sigh, for earthly throne,
Nor place thy trust in arm of clay,
But on thy knees
Uplift thy soul to God alone,
For all things go their destined way
As he decrees.
Embrace the faithful Crucifix,
And seek the path of pain and prayer
Thy Saviour trod;
Nor let thy spirit intermix
With earthly hope and worldly care
Its groans to God!

And Thou, O mighty Lord! Whose ways
Are far above our feeble minds
To understand,
Sustain us in these doleful days,
And render light the chain that binds
Our fallen land!
Look down upon our dreary state,
And through the ages that may still
Roll sadly on,
Watch thou o'er hapless Erin's fate,
And shield at least from darker ill
The blood of Conn!



In 1612 a volume of maps was published under the title of *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*. It is possible that as James I was by this time not only king of England and Scotland but also regarded as conqueror of Ireland that their cartographer, John Speed, decided to include the latter in his atlas as a gesture of recognition.

As with many of the previous maps of the country there is little evidence to suggest that Speed spent much if any time in Ireland and on the western seaboard he repeats an error common on Tudor maps of Ireland in that neither Galway nor Mayo are given their true westernly extent. The north western coast, however, is much more accurate than previous surveys probably due to the post war surveys in Donegal and the fact that the coastline had recently been charted from the sea. This is probably the first map to show to any great extent the interior of the province of Ulster which Speed took to include ten counties including Louth.



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