

The Austrian Line

by V. O'Donnell

N.B. The numbers in brackets, e.g. (37) refer to names on a genealogical chart.

Calbhach Dubh's (31) third son, Henry (37), born May 1726, joined his Larkfield cousins in Austria in 1742. He served in the army where on account of his courage and military skill he won rapid promotion and many rewards. 1763 found him Colonel of No. 41 Plunequette Infantry Regiment. Four years later he was in command of the O'Donnell No. 5 Cuirassiers. He retired in 1771 with the rank of Major General. Henry was over six feet tall, red haired and reputed to have been the most handsome man in the Austrian Army. He was a great favourite at Court, especially with the Empress, at whose bidding he married Leopoldine, daughter of Prince Jean Rudolf Kantacuzene. Marie Theresa gave the bride a dowry of three estates in Galicia and led her to the altar in Bratislava on her wedding day.

The title of German Count was granted to himself and his heirs by the Hapsburgs (German Emperors of the time) on account of Rory's Earl-patent granted by James I.

Major General Count Henry O'Donnell died in Galicia on 4th August 1789. He had four sons, Joseph (44), John (44a), Charles (44b), Henry (44c) and one daughter, Julie.

John (44a) 1762-1828 entered the army at an early age and achieved the rank of Major by 1804. A great student of history and art, he received an Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. He became Imperial Chamberlain, Commander of the Royal Bavarian Max Joseph Order, and Knight of the Royal Spanish Order of Charles III. He married Caroline Countess Clari-Aldringen but left no issue.

Charles (44b) was killed, as a Major, at the storming of the Bridge of Kehl in 1796. He was unmarried.

Henry (44c) was also in the Austrian Service and died without issue.

Joseph (44), the first son of Major General Count Henry, was born in 1755. He received his early education at the Theresian Academy from which he passed to the Law School of Gottingen University. After graduating he held many important positions. He became a Privy Councillor and was made Governor of Carinthia. While serving as Minister of Finance he saved Austria from bankruptcy during the Napoleonic War. He was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Stephen for this performance.

He died suddenly in May 1810. He was married twice - firstly to Theresa, daughter of General John Count O'Donnell (122a) (Larkfield Branch) and secondly to Josephine Geisruck (sister of Cardinal Archbishop of Milan).

The first son of the first marriage was Maurice (52) born in Vienna in 1780. He had a distinguished military career, participating in many battles and retiring with the rank of Lieutenant General. He was a friend of the fabulous Madame de Stael, whose attention embarrassed him greatly. He married Christine, daughter of the Prince de Linge, a noted beauty of her day. They had two sons and two daughters. Maurice died in Dresden in 1843.

His eldest son, Maxmilian (59) 1812-1895, was the most famous of the Austrian O'Donnells. He was born in Vienna, educated in Dresden and entered the army at a young age. Having participated in engagements all over Europe he gained many awards and promotions. He had the privilege of serving as Aide-de-Camp to the Emperor, Franz Joseph I, in which capacity he saved the Emperor from assassination. In February 1853, while strolling on the bastions of Vienna, the Emperor was attacked by a man wielding a knife. Due to Max's quick action the knife only grazed the Emperor's neck. Max soon overpowered the assassin and help was summoned.

Max was showered with rewards. From the officers of the Austrian Army he received a highly ornamented and inscribed silver shield, now in the Salzburg Museum. He was conferred with the Commander's Cross of the Royal Order of Leopold and granted the status and dignity of an Austrian Count, for up till this, the title 'Count' held by the family was only by virtue of their Irish nobility. The citation continues – 'and as a further proof of Imperial and Royal grace and favour, we augment henceforth his hereditary and family arms by the insertion of our own initials and shield of our most serene ducal House of Austria; and, finally, the double-headed eagle of our Empire, to be

and endured as a visible and imperishable memorial of his proved and devoted services.' This was a distinction received by only one other subject ever - Prince Schwartzenburg.

In the same citation, the surname was erroneously spelt as O'Donell. This form has been adopted by the family ever since. Friendly monarchs decorated him with orders of chivalry and the cities of Vienna, Prague, Pest, Laibach and others made him a Freeman. A magnificent Gothic Church, the Votivkirche, subscribed to by the nobility of Europe, was erected in Vienna as a mark of thanksgiving. Max was granted a site of a house on the beautiful Mirabel Platz in Salzburg. The mansion, No. 2, still stands today, the only private dwelling on this beautiful square. Alas, it is no longer in O'Donnell hands. Above the door can be seen the shield bearing the hand-held cross of the O'Donnells and the double-headed eagle of the Hapsburgs.

Max married Franziska Wagner, a marriage that was frowned upon as she was not of nobility.

Max's brother, Maurice (60) 1815-1890 served briefly in the army and was Chamberlain to the Emperor. He and his heirs were elevated to the Austrian Peerage in 1886 - which document is now the family's title of nobility. The Hapsburgs were no longer German but Austrian at this time. Maurice corresponded with Charles Joseph (57), Castlebar, and received a copy of 'The Annals of the Four Masters' when first published.

Maurice married twice, firstly to Helene, Princess Kantacuzene and secondly to Clotilde Countess Hardegg. Henry (68a) 1871-1907 was the only child from the first marriage. He entered the army and distinguished himself in the war against the Prussians in 1866. He settled in Hungary having married a Hungarian, Malwina Antonia Josepha Tornoczy-Tarnow and had two of a family, Eveline (351) and Rory (352).

Rory (352) 1871-1946, married Joanna Bauer and had one son, Henry born 1908, died s.p. in 1932 having visited Ireland once.

Eveline (351) married Nikolaus Elder von Farkas and had a son, Jenö (354) who married a Dabis Rosa. The latter had a son, Charles (355) who with his wife Edith, live in New York. They have a son, Miklos (356) and three daughters, Maria (357), Elizabeth (358) and Evelyn (359). Charles with his wife and family visited Ireland in the summer of 2004.

We now return to Maurice (60). With his second wife he had a son, Hugo (68) 1858-1904, who also served in the Austrian Army where he received several military crosses and other honours. He married Gabrille, daughter of Count von Thurn-Vallesassina-Como-Vercelli. They lived in Schloss Aigen bei Salzburg.

They had a son, Douglas (71) 1890-1970, who entered the army, fought on the Eastern Front during WW1, was taken prisoner and escaped twice. He was a fine horseman and was reputed to have been the strongest man in the Austrian Cavalry at the time.

He married Elizabeth, daughter of Count Überacker, and had four sons, all of whom served in the army during WWII. They were Mario (75a) born 1920 and died 1972; Douglas (75b) born 1921, Lieutenant with Iron Cross 1st Class, wounded and missing on the Russian Front since 1944; Johannes (76) 1926-1999, farmed on the banks of the Danube near Linz, was married to Berta Zoitel and had two children - Rory (362) living in Vienna and Maria (363) living in Steyregg near Linz. Both are unmarried.

Gabriel (75) 1922-2005, a frequent visitor to Ireland, was present at the Clan Gatherings of 1954 and '89, with his son Douglas was present in Donegal Town at a special function held to honour Rupert Coughlan in 1983. Gabriel was a farmer and business man. Being fond of animals he began, after the war, collecting and breeding animals that were on the verge extinction. Gradually the collection grew and eventually became a wild-life park and museum. Gabriel was married to Ulrike Leeb and had a son, Douglas (360) and a daughter, Elizabeth (361). Douglas Count O'Donell von Tyrconnell (360) is now the most senior of the Austrian Line. In Sept. 1996 he married Countess Aimeé Csáky of Hungarian descent and they have two sons, Kilian (364) and Douglas (365). The family home, which is within the Wildpark, houses many artifacts and heirlooms, among them Maxmilian's (59) blood-stained glove, many portraits of ancestors, patents granting titles and above all Rory's (13) patent of 1604 (sealed with the great seal of Queen Elizabeth 1 as one hadn't yet been made for King James 1) granting him the title, 'Earl of Tyrconnell,' and Maurice's (60) copy of the 'Annals' mentioned above. Douglas runs the family business today. His sister, Countess Elizabeth (361), married Andreas Hecht and they have a son, Constantine (366).