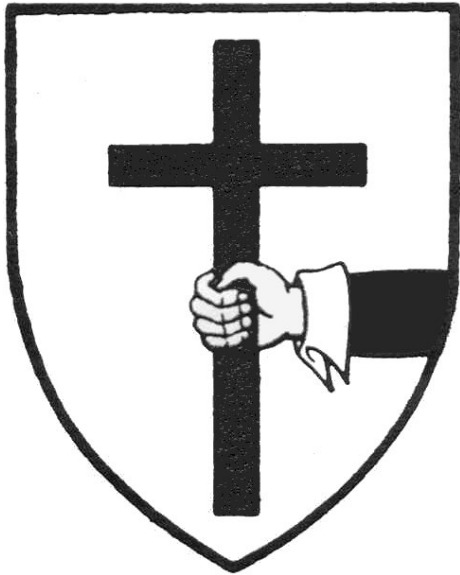


Ó Domhnaill Abá



O'Donnell Clan

Newsletter No. 35

Winter 2007



Aodh Rua Ua Domhnaill looks out at Donegal Bay

400th Anniversary of the Flight of the Earls

As 2007 draws to a close it is time to look back at all that has happened over the year to commemorate the Flight of the Earls. All through 2006 and even before that there was a lot of talk, many meetings and all sorts of preparation taking place. The first major event in my opinion was the launch of two postage stamps depicting Rory O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill as they hurriedly depart Rathmullan's shore along with 97 of their followers on the 14th Sept. 1607. The stamps were designed by a Donegal artist, Seán Ó Brogáin, Cloughan and were launched by Minister, Mary Coughlan in Letterkenny on the 23rd Feb. '07.



l. to r. model used for Rory's image, Vincent O'Donnell author of this newsletter, Seán Ó Brogáin, artist, and model used for Hugh O'Neill's image.

During the Spring and again in September, BBC Northern Ireland broadcast three programmes on the Flight in both the English and Irish languages. These were presented and produced by Antaine Ó Donnaile who works full time with the BBC but has a great love for the Gaelic language and for history. Though working on a small budget the production was very well done, albeit in my opinion he was a bit biased towards O'Neill. I received a complimentary copy in DVD format from Antaine. Unfortunately they are not yet available for sale.

Several history conferences on the theme of the *Flight* took place around the country during the year. There was one in Rathmullan early in the summer, another in Derry at Éigse Cholmcille and the greatest of all in Letterkenny towards the end of the summer. All over Ireland there were lectures and other commemorations and indeed a few are happening as late as November.

As the 14th Sept. approached the momentum

increased until finally many events were happening in neighbouring towns at the same time making it impossible for anyone to attend all.

Count Douglas O'Donnell and Count Rory O'Donnell arrived from Austria on the 11th of Sept. while Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill arrived in Donegal Town on the 12th. in spite of having surgery on her foot a few days earlier.

On Thurs. 13th members of the O'Donnell Clan Association joined the people of Ballyshannon along with politicians and other dignitaries for the renaming of the newly-built bridge across the River Erne. Now officially called the Aodh Ruadh Bridge, it commemorates Red Hugh O'Donnell (died 1602) who successfully defended Tír Chonaill at this point against an English incursion led by the Governor of Connacht, Sir Conyers Clifford in 1597 (see ODA No. 25).

It was then off to Donegal Town post haste for the unveiling of a bronze statue of Aodh Rua Ua Domhnaill (died 1505). This sculpture was first proposed by me (Vincent O'Donnell) at a meeting with the Donegal Town Community Chamber in 2003 with the intention of having it in place for the 500th anniversary of his death which was being commemorated by the O'Donnell Clan Association at the Clan Gathering of that year. Although they accepted the proposal whole heartedly bureaucracy and procedures of local government caused a two year delay. The seven foot bronze statue sculptured by artist, Maurice Harron in his studio at Burt, Co. Donegal, was unveiled by Minister Mary Coughlan. Present were members of our clann association and many other dignitaries. After some speeches by officials etc. Barrister Eunan O'Donnell delivered a wonderful talk about the life and times of 15th cent. chieftain. Refreshment were afterwards available on the nearby waterbus. All in all it was a very pleasant afternoon.

Then it was off to Letterkenny to the Medieval Banquet being held by the Donegal County Council while back in Donegal Town people were gathering for the pageant. The banquet was quite an affair with some 16th cent. music and food such as would have been around then. The Ballytour Company who stage a street theatre in Ballyshannon during the summer months performed scenes from their new production, *The Dark Maiden*.

Next morning, the 14th Sept. was the big day. A special Mass celebrated by Philip Boyce, Bishop of Raphoe in Rathmullan with many other church leaders, Ambassadors including the Papal Nuncio and people of note present. Afterwards there was the unveiling ceremony of John Behan's Sculpture, *The Flight of the Earls*, by The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese.



Sculpture depicts- left those left behind; right those who boarded the ship.

After the unveiling we all made our way to Portnamurry the actual departure spot (about half a mile upstream from Rathmullan).

Here on the shore followed the main ceremony. There were readings from the Bardic Poems of 400 years ago read, songs and music from that era, a wreath laid at the water's edge. While the ceremony was taking place a group of people attired in period costume made their way to the water's edge and boarded two boats and rowed out to the *Jeanie Johnston* which was moored in the middle of the Lough; a very moving scene indeed.



Following the ceremony all clans marched back into Rathmullan led by a pipe band with the O'Donnells to the fore and Charlie O'Donnell carrying our flag.

For the next three hours the O'Donnell Clan Association had a hospitality tent with Irish music and dance free for all to enjoy. There was also food and drink provided by an O'Donnell caterer from Derry



Charlie O'Donnell with the O'Donnell flag during the ceremony at Portnamurry. In the misty distance can barely be seen the *Jeanie Johnston* (a replica of a mid 19th cent. sailing ship that carried many Irish immigrants to America).

Here we sold O'Donnell merchandise and promoted our Clan Association. As it was a cold misty evening many availed of our hospitality until dark when the day ended with a magnificent carnival parade and fireworks display.

Saturday the 15th was to be our day of commemoration. We had requested a vessel from the Irish Navy and they agreed. The L.E. Emer arrived the previous evening and established contact with us. But as the embarkation time approached the wind freshened and the sea became choppy. We were to travel from shore to the ship in ribs but now it became apparent that such a manoeuvre would be dangerous. Finally the ship contacted us and let us know that they had to leave immediately to seek shelter and were sorry they couldn't accommodate us. As we were all assembled on the pier at the time we decided to make our way out to Portnamurry and have our ceremony there. Portnamurry was a far quieter than it was the previous day. Standing there, about thirty of us, we felt like those left behind 400 years ago after the ship had departed and for a while we dwelt on the plight of those left behind then.



Members of the O'Donnell Clan Association and friends at Portnamurry on the 15th September.

The names of the O'Donnell participants on that trip were read out, a piper played a lament, prayers were said for those who left then and since, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill laid a wreath on the shore, we all sang *O'Donnell Abu* and then several people spoke what thoughts were in their minds. We then made our way back to Rathmullan where the Chief Herald of Ireland, Clan Chieftains or representatives of the various Clans were to speak. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill spoke next after the Chief Herald and Cahir Tierny (Chairperson of the Clans of Ireland Ltd.) and among other things praised the O'Donnell Clan Association for all they do. Nuala travelled to Dublin next day along with Counts Douxi and Rory, all exhausted after three grueling days and late nights.

During those days about sixty people walked from Donegal Town to Rathmullan, sleeping out at night. They were re-enacting the O'Donnells march to Rathmullan. And these like 400 years ago met up with those walking from Tyrone along the way and together walked into Rathmullan on Sunday afternoon. Rory O'Donnell of Meenaneery carried an O'Donnell flag (belonging to the Clan Association) during the walk.



Walkers in Donegal Town before departure.

Clearance at Lough Eske Castle

The ruins of the old O'Donnell Castle at Lough Eske has for long lain derelict and ivy covered with daylight blocked by the forest around it. Now the ivy has been removed, the trees cut back and for the first time in centuries it is possible to walk around and appreciate it. The clearance is due to landscaping of the entire area for the new 5 star hotel being built there. Counts Douxi and Rory O'Donnell from Austria visited it during their brief stay in September.



Counts Douxi and Rory at the old O'Donnell Castle at Loch Eske

Obituaries

We lament the passing from this life of two gentlemen who were an important part of our Association. They were Dr. Seamus O'Donnell, Castletroy, Limerick and Judge Dermot O'Donnell Kinlen of Kerry and Dublin.



Seamus O'Donnell, who was with us to Madrid in 2002 and entertained us with his unusual songs and harmonica playing died tragically in autumn of 2006. He arrived here in Co. Donegal the day after the 2005 Clan

Gathering ended and, again, we had a wonderful time with him.

Judge Dermot O'Donnell Kinlen, right, was a special guest at the 1999 Clan Gathering and was with us to Madrid. Dermot died on the 18th July 2007. Both were members of our Clan Association and in receipt of our newsletter for many years. We sympathise with their families and friends. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamnacha.



Radio Programmes

While every radio and television network in Ireland tried to find a fresh or different angle on the *Flight of the Earls* story Mary Hagan, a freelance reporter, decided to do a programme on the O'Donnell Diaspora in Spain and Austria. Early in the year she applied for funding to interview the Spanish O'Donnells and was successful. She and I spent Easter in Madrid where we met up with Hugo O'Donnell now Duque de Tetuan; Marie Ana and, her daughter Mariana, and niece Patricia. They gave wonderful interviews and all were very hospitable to Mary and me.

A pleasant surprise happened as I was walking from the plane to the airport at Madrid. Behind me I heard a female voice calling my name. On looking around I saw the beautiful face of Susie O'Donnell from Australia who attended the 2005 Clan Gathering. (she appeared, horizontal, in a picture of Aussie O'Donnells taken at that event in ODA No. 34). She hasn't been home since but works in Ireland and here she was meeting her parents in Madrid. They had travelled to Spain to do a tour of Europe. By co-incidence she and her parents were staying in a hotel next to ours so we met in the evenings for a drink.

Mary now has been promised funding to go to Austria to do the same. So far no plans have been put in place.

Flight of the Earls Commemorations 2008

The following events will be taking place on the Continent next year to commemorate the *Earls'* journey through Europe. The first will be a three-day festival in Switzerland 15th – 17th March. We will spend two nights in Lugano and two in Lucerne. There will be a few lectures, maybe a music workshop, some touring – we will cross bridges and lakes crossed by the *Earls* and evenings will be spent enjoying concerts, dinners etc. These are being planned at present. We would like to have people from everywhere come and join us. For people travelling from Ireland it would be appropriate you fly from Dublin to Zurich on the 14th. There will be a bus at the airport to transport us to our hotel.

Catherine Rhatigan, who played harp at a few of our Clan Gatherings, now lives in Switzerland and is helping with the planning over there. Until now no definite plans could be made as we awaited a response to a funding request. We have now learned that our request has been successful. It was in the days before St. Patrick's Day that the *Earls* travelled through that country. If you're interested keep in touch with me or keep an eye on the website.

The second event has already been publicised on our website. It is a trip from Louvain to Rome following the path taken by the *Earls* and ending up in Rome on the 400th anniversary of Cathbharr O'Donnell's death. Sometime in the past I posted a notice on that web page stating that this trip was booked out. So it seemed until I began requesting deposits and then I discovered different. As I write 41 deposits have been paid. So if you are really interested contact me a.s.a.p.

Clan Events beyond 2008

Just now there are no plans for events beyond 2008 but it is very likely that we will have a Clan Gathering in 2010 to celebrate the surname *O'Donnell* which first appeared on record in 1010. Should we let such an opportunity pass? It is also very likely we will have a Clan Gathering in Austria in 2012 – 3 days in Salzburg and 3 days in Vienna. The details are already planned by Counts Douxi and Rory O'Donell.

Rock of Doon

The Rock of Doon which has stood there for millennia undisturbed and was for centuries the inauguration site of the O'Donnell Chieftains and indeed a few other clans has been in the opinion of many, vandalised by a local committee. Many of you have made your way precariously up and down a rocky pathway which had been trod by chieftains, clerics, both noble and common people, bards etc. but now that pathway has been removed and replaced with a tarmac one edged with kerbs. On the summit about one third of the surface has been treated likewise. To us, walking on those ancient stones was important; we felt in touch with those who walked there in ancient times. One can walk on tarmac footpaths anywhere.

It was an illegal act. It is now being investigated by the National Monuments Services. A letter from you, or from a concerned group expressing anger and concern could greatly help in having the damage partially undone. It can never be totally undone.



above: 2005 Clan Gathering, below: now



Jahrgang O'Donnell (see ODA No. 34) on top of Doon Rock Sept. 2005. The sockets for the flag poles are now covered over with tarmacadam



Many feel that steps or stairs could have been put in place that would not interfere with the Rock physically. If you feel like writing the address is –

Pauline Gleeson, Senior Archaeologist
National Monuments Service of the Dept. of
Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Dún Scéine
Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2

BOOKS

About a year ago, Oct. '06 Malachy Sweeney launched *The Sands of Time*, a history of Donegal Town and its environs. Needless to say it includes quite a lot about the O'Donnells of Donegal, the Four Masters and their work, Donegal Abbey and the Franciscans and life in Gaelic Ireland. Available from local shops and from the author, Malachy Sweeney, Ballhill, Donegal. ISBN 0-9553155-0-6 386 pages price €25.

As this year was the 400th anniversary of the Flight of the Earls, several books on the subject appeared.

John McCavitt produced *The Flight of the Earls* an illustrated history. ISBN978 0 9555091 3 1 see www.theflightoftheearls.net

Marcas Ó Murchú produced *Imirce na nIarlaí* which contains a lecture by Cardinal Tomas Ó Fiaich on the Flight of the Earls (the text is in both English and Gaelic) along with many notes, photographs and illustrations by Marcas. It is published by Coiscéim and costs €10.

Bernadette Cunningham produced *O'Donnell histories: Donegal and the Annals of the Four Masters*. It is a scholarly work dealing with the Annals, the Annalists and the O'Donnell connection. Published by Rathmullan and District History Society, ISBN 978-0-9540888-4-2

On the 3rd of March this year about 900 gathered in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin to honour the 29th Donegal Person of the Year, Margo O'Donnell.



Margo who has gained fame and popularity as the Queen of Country & Irish singing comes from Kincasslagh, Co. Donegal and is a sister of Daniel O'Donnell. Both featured on the cover of ODA No. 16. 1991.

O'DONNELLS OF TYRCONNELL

A new edition of '*O'Donnells of Tyrconnell*' was published in May '07. Although this is a revamped edition of a book of the same title that has been around since 1989 yet it contains some new material and the rest has been updated.

100 pages, B5 size, ISBN 978-0955562501, available from me, Vincent O'Donnell, Inver, Co. Donegal, Ireland @ €12 + postage €2 in Ireland and € outside of Ireland.

The Gallagher Clan

A few years ago Adrian Gallagher, Letterkenny, contacted me with a view to picking my brain to form a Gallagher Clan Association. I was delighted as the Gallagher Clan is one of the ancient clans of Donegal, the others being O'Boyle, O'Doherty, O'Cannon and O'Donnell. Adrian and his committee worked hard and finally had their first Clan Gathering in mid-September. One of the main events was the assembling in one place of over 1,400 people with the surname, thus breaking the record in the Guinness Book of Records previously held by the Jones's in Wales. We wish the Gallagher Clan all the best in the future and maybe some year we will have a joint event.

Donegal Historical Society

The Donegal Historical Society, formed in 1946, has at present about 800 members and growing. They produce an excellent journal every year dealing with all facets of Donegal History and indeed often articles related to O'Donnell history. I suggest that anyone who isn't a member should consider becoming one. Membership, at present, costs €20 per annum. See www.donegalhistory.com

Ó Dombhail Aba ISSN 0790-7389, has been published by Vincent O'Donnell, Inver, Co. Donegal since 1985. Next issue, No. 36, will be the final issue. From then on news items etc. will appear on www.odonnellclan.com e-mail: vodonnell@eircom.net Tel.: +353 74 9736059

DNA

“A recent study conducted at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, found that a striking percentage of men in Ireland (and quite a few in Scotland) share the same Y chromosome, suggesting that the 5th-century warlord known as "Niall of the Nine Hostages" may be the ancestor of one in 12 Irishmen.”

And of course we, O'Donnells, claim descent from this Niall. The above is a quote from <http://www.familytreedna.com/matchnialltest.html>

which I suggest you visit. Many Clan Associations in Ireland have a DNA project in place; most operating through Familytreedna. Perhaps it's time we did likewise. If you do get your DNA analyzed we would like a copy. Below is what is considered to be King Niall's DNA and below that again is mine.

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MERCHANDISE

The following items are available for sale - Clan ties (green or black) €12 ; Clan pennants €10; Clan cap (navy or black) €10; (1)DVD video of highlights of '05 Clan Gathering (1 hour approx.) €15; (2)DVD video of speeches, talks etc. (2 hours approx.) €10 (1+ 2 for €20); (3)CD of photos of '05 Clan Gathering (over 250) by official photographer and others €10; CD of mainline O'Donnell Genealogy (Family Tree Maker) €10 ; The 'Life of Red Hugh O'Donnell' by Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh, translated by Fr. Paul Walsh. A lovely and rare book. €50 Postage extra.

With Aodh Rua Ua Domhnaill



After the unveiling ceremony of the Aodh Rua Ua Domhnaill sculpture members of the O'Donnell Clan Association, in spite of it being a breezy day, posed for a photo.

Back row l. to r. Count Rory from Austria, Vincent, Eunan, Paddy from Rosses Point and Count Douxi from Austria.

Middle row l. to r. Mary O'Donnell, Ardara, Annette, Margaret Phibbs.

Front row i. to r. Sean, Sarah, Charlie, Kathleen, Nual Ní Dhomhnaill and Nancy

Brigid O'Donnell 102

Brigid O'Donnell, Annagry, Co. Donegal mentioned in ODA No. 34 has recently celebrated her 102nd birthday still hale, hearty and as fit as a fiddle. We wish her many more years like so.