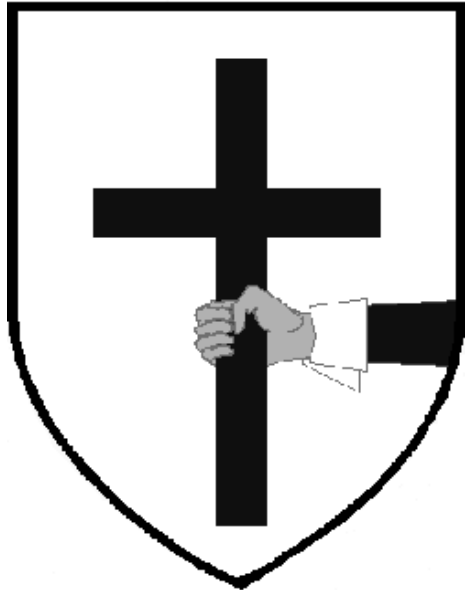


Ó Dombnail Abá



O'Donnell Clan

Newsletter No. 28

Winter 1999



O'Donnells on the March - Re-enactment of the Battle of the Curlews 15th Aug. 1999

NEWS

Ben O'Donnell R.I.P.



Once again as I begin to write the News section of an O'DA I am the bearer of sad news. Ben O'Donnell passed away on the 19th April '99 after a two month illness. Once again our committee suffered a severe blow. Ben had been a committee member since the present Clan Association was formed. He worked tirelessly at on all projects we took in hand and indeed went beyond that and on several occasions worked at projects of his own. It is thanks to him that there is so much O'Donnell presence in the Lifford Centre.

Ben, from Kincasslagh, Co. Donegal, worked in the Donegal County Council offices at Lifford. He had many interests and was involved with many groups and clubs, Gaelic Athletic Association, Greyhound Racing to mention but a few.

Sometime after Christmas he felt unwell and went to his doctor. A brain tumour was diagnosed and removed. Ben didn't regain consciousness and six weeks later died.

His remains were buried in Beal Cruit cemetery, Kincasslagh, a short distance from his native home. We sympathise with his wife, sons, daughter, mother, sister and brothers. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

Henry O'Donnell.....Again.

It's just not possible to produce a newsletter without mentioning Henry. I am not going to dwell on his lecture delivered at our Gathering, or the entertainment provided by him afterwards. No! I just wish to announce that he was married six days before the Gathering.

Henry and Sinéad had chosen the 13th June '99 as their wedding day but on hearing that a Clan Gathering was planned for that date, changed their plans. Henry was not going to miss an O'Donnell Clan Gathering if at all possible and we are grateful to Sinéad and all who agreed to the change.

Indeed, the sun shone as the couple were married in Elmo, Co. Laios and enjoyed a great day afterwards in the Curragh of Kildare. May the sun always shine on their marriage.



Valladolid 2002

At the Gathering, much interest was expressed in commemorating the 400th anniversary of the death and burial, in Spain, of Red Hugh O'Donnell Sept. 1602. What to do and how to do it has not yet been decided. Have you any ideas? Are you interested?

Membership

Membership fee to the O'Donnell Clan Association has recently been increased to £20. This includes clan badge.....£8
And coloured A3 scroll.....£12
Either can be bought separately. Prices include postage. Available from V. O'Donnell.

Merchandise

We have the following items for sale, some left over from the Gathering.

O'Donnells of Tír Chonall, 100 page A5 book full of bits 'n pieces of O'Donnell history.
Book.....£5.50 p&p.....£4

White Baseball caps with logo "O'Donnell Clan Association - Millennium Gathering"£3

Pens, ball point, with above inscription..... £1

White t-shirts (size 36" chest) with the Clan arms, motto and the above inscription.....£6

Pair of Lead crystal whiskey glasses with O'Donnell arms, motto and "O'Donnell Clan Gathering '99..... £35

Video of Gathering

2 videos of Gathering...£10 each.
Tape 1.....1st night only(Launch of book, opening in castle, flag-raising, Henry's talk, entertainment.....3 hours un-edited.)
Tape 2..... trip to Lifford and other O'Donnell places, trip to Curlews, banquet.
3 hours with some editing.

post..... Air.....Economy
U.S.A....£13.....£5
U.K..... £4.....£3
Irl.....£3

As far as I understand, the same video system operates in Australia and Britain as does in Ireland, I think it's called PAL. The U.S. and Canada have a different system. Has anyone access to a converter?

Red Hugh Launch



Just an hour before the official opening of our Clan Gathering Deborah Lisson's book, *Red Hugh*, was launched by O'Brien Press. The launching was done, appropriately enough, by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, sister of our Chief. Red Hugh can be best described as an historical novel aimed at the teenage market but quite enjoyable for any age. This publication is well researched and although meant to be an enjoyable read, is very close to fact throughout. Sales, I am told, are doing very well. We wish Deborah and her book all the best.

Bill O'Donnell

Bill O'Donnell, Nashville, Tennessee, a subscriber to this newsletter since its beginning, had planned to attend the recent Clan Gathering but Fate took a hand. He was diagnosed as having a rare form of bone marrow disease which necessitated regular visits to hospital for treatment.

Bill, with a great interest in everything to do with the O'Donnells and Ireland, visited Donegal on several occasions; see his website - <http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/2658>
We wish Bill all the best and ask you all to remember him in your prayers. At the time my wife was diagnosed as having cancer, Bill requested prayers from all he was in contact with on the Internet at the time. Five years have passed, Annette is fine and has had visits from several of those 'strangers' who prayed for her.



Photos from the '99 Clan Gathering

1. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill raising the O'Donnell standard in Donegal Town during the opening ceremony. 2. At Godfrey O'Donnell's grave. 3. A photo with the 'Gaelic Chieftain' on the way to the Curlews. 4. Nuala reads Red Hugh's address his troops before the battle. 5. Frankie Pa O'Donnell addressing the assemblage on the Rock of Doon. 6. Mr. Justice Dermot O'Donnell Kinlen who made the opening speech on Friday nihjt.

Photos 1,2,3, & 5 by Conor Sinclair

O'Donnell Clan Gathering '99

by Lorraine O'Donnell Williams

August 11 - My husband drives me out to the airport to meet my second cousin, Ambrose. He and I are setting out on a week's adventure - a 5-day reunion of the O'Donnell Clan in Donegal county, Ireland. It's Ambrose's first time off the North American continent, and at 77 years of age, even though handicapped from a recent back operation, nothing's going to stop him from realizing the dream of a lifetime - making contact with his Irish roots. I've been to Ireland twice before, but never on a concentrated quest like this. We plan to pick up a rental car at Shannon airport and drive the 185 miles up to Donegal town the next day. I'm worried about driving on the left hand side of the road!

August 12 - Arrive at London's Heathrow Airport, then after a two hour wait transfer to Aer Lingus to Shannon. Didn't sleep on the trip over, but Ambrose managed a few winks. Thank heavens my travel agent at Flight Centre arranged for a wheel chair ahead of time - otherwise neither of us could have survived the seemingly endless walk at Heathrow from one terminal to another. Our pre-booked (cheaper that way) Ford Fiesta rental car is waiting for us at Murray's Europcar. My joy at being given a Ford product to drive (I have one at home) is quickly dashed when I see it is a manual stick-shift. To top it off, the floor shift stick is on my left side instead of the right. With a prayer to my faithful guardian angel, we take off - jerkily at first, get lost and finally are on our way up the first of three Irish west -coastal highways. Originally, I intend driving as far as the pilgrimage town of Knock, but I'm dead tired, somewhat tense and the reunion doesn't start until tomorrow night. We settle in one of the numerous bed-and-breakfasts which dot this north-west highway, Carraig Mhuire, near Ennis in County Clare. Our hosts, Val and John Morris treat us with loving concern. Our rooms with breakfast are 19 Irish pounds each (about \$47 CDN) and I sleep like a lamb. We've only come 25 miles!

August 13. We set out for Donegal on N18, after a full Irish breakfast and great chats with fellow guests from Italy and Holland. I'm getting the feel of the car, although the road signs are sometimes confusing - not for directions but regarding numbers. The speed limits are posted

in miles per hour, whereas the distances are posted in kilometres. Because the highway passes through every little village and town from here to the northern tip of Ireland, we alternate continually from slow to fast to medium speed. I'm grateful for this single lane highway that has a curb lane to pull over to if someone wants to pass you - on your right side. Ambrose comments, "I can't get over all the Irish names on the stores". The 100 shades of green in the fields and endless lines of stone fences entrance us. Reach Donegal Town in the early afternoon and head for our Guest House. Big disappointment. But it's close to the Reunion's central meeting spot and that means I don't have to drive the car. With assistance, Ambrose can make it on foot.

Tonight we assemble at the Highland Central Hotel on beautiful Donegal Bay - over 100 O'Donnells from United States, Scotland, Australia, Austria, Spain, South America, England and Ireland. We discover four more bodies from Canada - from near Terrace, BC, Thunder Bay and St. Thomas. We know we're all ultimately related, but at this point we don't know how close our kinship may be. The Mayor greets us in Gaelic. In this remote part of Ireland, Gaelic is spoken everyday interchangeably with English. We learn that the Irish invented surnames, the first being O'Cleary. Vincent O'Donnell, inspiration and chief organizer of this reunion, welcomes us all with a "Hundred Thousand Welcomes". He reminds us, "This is the millennium in which the O'Donnells came to power; held sway over Tir Chonaill for four hundred years; and finally lost their power, lands and were dispersed". We then participate in the launch of Australia's Deborah Lisson's new book for young adults, "Red Hugh". We bask in the pride of being descendants of this great Irish O'Donnell hero who ruled Ireland until his tragic flight and death in Spain in 1602. Justice O'Donnell, a prestigious member of the clan, expresses his hope that "their shadows may never grow less" (referring to the O'Donnell's brave battles with the English.

Then the first highlight - a few minutes walk over to the O'Donnell castle. How I wish my dear dead father, Neil O'Donnell, was here to see this. An old Irish poem talks of "Full

tonight is Donegal Castle. Brightly lit is each window from the ground to the roof” when young Red Hugh escaped from imprisonment in Dublin and fled back to his castle. We’re taking his place tonight in the Castle’s Great Hall with music, laughter, getting acquainted, speeches, presentations. Ambrose eats some delicious shrimp, telling me “I’ve never had shrimp before”. I indulge myself in the bountiful smoked Irish salmon.

Back to the Hotel to hear a precis of O’Donnell history by young O’Donnell celebrity, Henry O’Donnell, who after becoming paralysed from a broken neck after a freak accident in a triathlon in 1992, went on to relearn how to walk, speak and eventually do the Tory Island Channel swim in the record time of 6 hours, 11 minutes and 29 seconds. He was to get married tomorrow, but did it last weekend instead, so that he could participate in the Reunion. His young bride is an accomplished singer. More goodies - sandwiches and sweets, a singing of our ancestor’s battle hymn “O’Donnell Abu” and home to bed.

August 14. Our chartered bus (the O’Donnell motor coach line, as it turns out), takes us to the one time stronghold of the O’Donnell’s at Lifford., administrative centre of Donegal County. It’s also the site of the original stronghold of Manus O’Donnell, grandfather of Red Hugh. It’s on the Fenn River, with a twin city of Strabane, belonging to Northern Ireland, on the west side. The salmon don’t care - they’re plentiful on both sides. The Visitors Centre in Lifford, housed in the former Court House, serves as a genealogical centre and museum. There are dramatic re-enactments of sample court cases - where Irishmen were banished to Australia for stealing a cow - and cell areas. There’s an entire room devoted to an O’Donnell genealogical display and documents. A fabulous Irish lunch with old fashioned vegetables like turnip and brussel sprouts. Is consumed. (Mayonnaise eggs are a favourite starter item).

This is a day devoted to O’Donnell sites. We visit Conwal Graveyard (resting place of Godfry O’Donnell), Gartan (birthplace of St. Columba, whom the O’Donnell’s claim as their saint, and grave of Manus), Rock of Doon (climbing to the wild windy hilltop to see and touch the Rock where the O’Donnell’s were inaugurated as kings (chieftains) of Ireland), ruins of Killmacrennan Abbey, and the village of Ramelton where the vestiges of another

ancient O’Donnell castle are to be seen. We’re continually exposed to the Irish humour which never stops. Example: An O’Donnell went up to visit St. Columba’s grave and saw an old man bent over, sitting on a rock there. He said to him, How old are you? The old man replied, 93. Well, then, it’s hardly worth while you’re going home, is it?, said the O’Donnell

We end the day with another beautiful meal at Glen Eany House in Letterkenny, which Vincent tells us is the fastest growing town in Europe, due to the increasing number of computer and technology companies starting up.

That’s one theme we are to hear a lot of on this trip - the “Celtic Tiger” phenomenon (Vincent uses the term coined by the European Union of which Ireland is now a burgeoning member). What it means to present day Irish families is that their young people no longer have to leave the country to look for jobs. There’s plenty for everybody.

That night, I take a long time to fall asleep. The streets of Donegal have an echo effect and sounds of laughter from young folks ambling down Main Street rise to my room till the wee small hours.

August 15: Of course, the day starts with Mass at St. Patrick’s church up the street. Then on to the big excitement of the day - recreation of the Battle of the Curlew Mountains, where on this exact date in 1599, Red Hugh and his allies defeated the English. It’s the first re-enactment ever, and we’re all feeling privileged to be witnessing it. Of course, the Clan McDermott claim the victory as theirs, but we know that Red Hugh was the mastermind behind the battle strategy. We pass the grave of revered Irish poet W.B. Yeats then the city of Sligo which was twice burned down by Red Hugh because the O’Connors of Sligo sided with the British. We see Silver Swans on the River Garavogue, past the grave of Queen Maeve at Knocknarea. We’re all the way south to Boyle now, to Lough Key Forest Park where the re-enactment will take place. On route, make a long hilly ascent to a vantage point which overlooks the sight of the Battle. Local history teacher Frank Tivnan pinpoints the major areas of sorties and scuffling. Then past the impressive new metal sculpture in North Roscommon, whose artist was paid a handsome commission by the Irish Government for his work. It depicts an Irish warrior, intended to be Red Hugh, astride his horse. However, Irish clan politics dictated that it was to be named The Irish Warrior (no clan

identification). We conclude that the McDermotts are at it again! I notice I don't have to spend as much time with Ambrose now. Two young American O'Donnell sisters have taken him under the wings. He is endearing himself to them with his stories.

The Curlew battle re-enactment has brought out hundreds of people. It is the culmination of a four day program that included Recall of the Wild Geese Dance, lectures, a football match, a medieval living history village and a monster Ceili (music and dance). We stand defiantly near the McDermotts, raising our heraldic coat of arms - an extended arm with hand grasping the cross and the words IN HOC SIGNO VINCES (In this Sign you will conquer). The battle begins. The boom of cannons, hoof beats of horses, clashing sounds of hand battles with pickaxes and swords. The English Sir Conyers Clifford is decapitated (what have the re-enactors used as a head, we wonder? Is it a cabbage?) and his head is taken by the O'Donnells to the treacherous O'Connors at Sligo who immediately surrender their castle to Red Hugh. For at least another three years Red Hugh will reign supreme ruler over the English invaders.

After the Battle, we head to the new Landmark hotel at Carrick-on-Shannon and celebrate our victory with Irish salmon and pavlova dessert.

August 16: Today is a sight-seeing day. The Reunion Committee has arranged a motor coach trip through The Rosses, that wonderful wild part of Northern Donegal that curves along the Atlantic Coast. We pass peat bogs and clusters of mauve heather, ancient farmers herding their sheep, old houses with few or no windows - a reminder of the old days when you were taxed on the number of windows you had in a house. We drive through the breathtaking Blue Stack Mountains wondering at the area's distinctive flora and fauna including a grass that turns red in the fall. We pass a holy well whose waters have the power to cure toothaches. We admire a turquoise replica of the Statue of Liberty incongruously perched on someone's front lawn. We see rows and rows of Roundberry bushes, whose colour give credence to the Irish phrase, "She has cheeks that are roundberry red". This is the part of Donegal that Vincent, our organizer and his wife Annette, grew up in and they know every nook and cranny intimately. We stop at Danny Minnie's O'Donnell Restaurant in Annagry and enjoy

morning raisin scones, tea and coffee in its cheery dining and tea rooms. Some of our group have become Irishinized enough by now to order a pint of Guinness instead.

We admire the beautiful new homes in the capital of The Rosses, Dungloe. The signs are all in Gaelic now and we feel more and more united, driving into our ancestral heartland. We see the hotel belonging to Irish folk singer, Daniel O'Donnell, whose tribute to his home country, "My Donegal Shore" is included in his platinum award winning album, and the home of another famous Irish balladeer, Anya. We envy people having the time to climb Mount Errigal on this fine day. Now we're into the Derryveagh Mountains, approaching Glenveagh National Park and its herd of red deer, largest herd in Ireland. The late owner of Glenveagh Castle, millionaire art collector Henry McIlhenny, turned over his castle and sold his lands to the National Trust to be turned into Ireland's third national park. We spend the afternoon touring the castle and the luxury of its exquisite grounds, situated beside the lake. Then we ride back to Donegal town, to prepare for an evening of entertainment by The Bards, a well-known Irish folk group.

I'm pretty tired by now, but resolving not to miss a thing, get over to the Hyland in time to welcome the trio of middle-aged musicians who have more energy than I'll ever have. The room is crowded, with an audience of all ages, who have a thoroughly good time listening to the jokes, suggestive (but not offensive) humour of The Bards as they explore every emotion known to mankind through song. We love it when they give special mention to the O'Donnell clan gathering and some of us get on the stage to sing "O'Donnell Abu" with The Bards.

August 17: I spend the morning getting my gear assembled for a 5 a.m. departure to the Shannon airport tomorrow. Don't want to take the risk of missing our plane. In the afternoon, Ambrose and I attend the session on researching Irish ancestors and I get a sheet telling me about such resources as the Griffiths Valuation which I had never heard of before this. But I'm starting to wonder, Does it really matter which "stream" of the O'Donnells I come from. If it was one of Red Hugh's brothers, that's OK with me. We're all O'Donnells and proud of it.

The final event takes place tonight. The banquet and dance are "a grand affair", as they say here. I finally put on my best dress and once

again indulge in a delicious Irish meal, conversation, song and dance. Vincent and Annette, many of the native Irish O'Donnells and a few brave souls from other parts of the world get up to do Irish dancing. Our Square Dancing is very similar to Irish folk dancing, except one selection of music doesn't go on for fifteen minutes! How they don't drop dead with exhaustion, I'll never figure out.

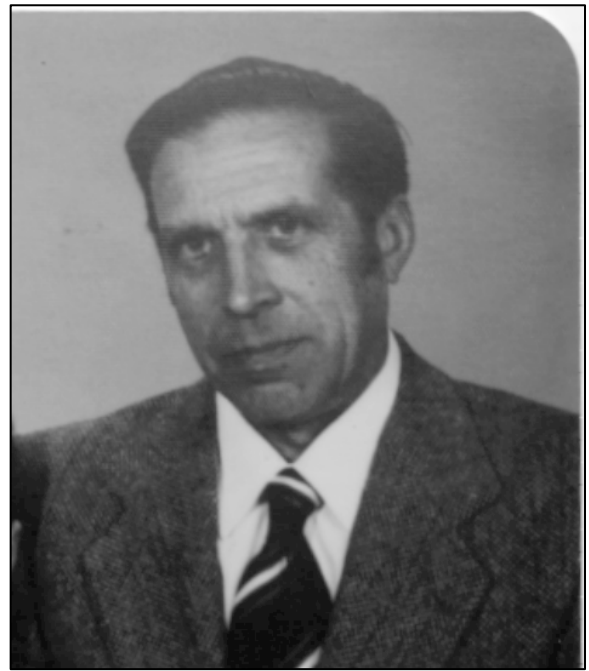
Reluctantly, Ambrose and I leave near midnight. We later learn the party went on till four in the morning. Ah well, we have to conserve our energy for the next reunion which they hope to hold in Spain in 2002. We'll find the grave of Red Hugh, buried there after his premature death at the age of 31 in the year 1602, after an unsuccessful attempt to convince the Spanish King to bring ships and troops to invade Ireland and rid it of the English. The O'Donnell clan will erect a suitable plaque there to honour their hero, and we'll do some on-the-spot research about the rumoured origins of the Black Irish.

Johannes O'Donell R.I.P.

I've just received the sad news (8th Oct. '99) that Johannes Columban Graf O'Donell von Tyrconnell died on Sept. 28th last at the age of seventy-four. The Austrian branch spell their surname with one 'n' as a result of a spelling error in the patent granting them the title Graf (Count).

Johannes was the youngest of four sons born to Douglas O'Donell Count von Tyrconnell and Elizabeth Countess von Uberacker. All four were conscripted into the army and fought during WW II. Douxi went missing on the Russian front, Mario returned but died shortly after as a result of the war, Gabriel and Johannes survived.

In the years after the war Gabriel and Johannes worked very hard to rebuild their home and farm which had been destroyed by bombing. Gabriel was first to marry and, leaving the farm in a flat valley on the banks of the Danube to Johannes, he and his wife Ulrike went to live on the summit of a mountain in a hunting lodge they inherited from the Uberackers. Here, Gabriel began a wild-life park which proved to be a great success and today Wildpark Hochkreut is a major tourist attraction in Upper



Johannes O'Donnell Graf von Tyrconnell

Austria. Johannes continued farming and supplied most of the food required for the park. Every winter some animals are taken down to the farm where they are housed and fed as they wouldn't survive the freezing temperatures of the snow-covered mountain.

Johannes once visited Donegal when he accompanied Gabriel on one of the latter's many trips.

Johannes was the son of Douglas, son of Hugo, son of Maurice, son of Maurice, son of Joseph, son of Henry who immigrated from Co. Mayo 1742, son of Calbhach Dubh, son of Aodh, son of Calbhach Rua, son of Manus, son of Conn Óg (Castlebar Branch), son of Conn first cousin of Red Hugh O'Donnell.

We sympathise with his wife Berta, son Rory, daughter Maria, brother Gabriel, Gabriel's wife, Ulrike and their family, Douglas and Elizabeth, and all other relatives and friends.

Go ndeana Dia trócaire ar a anam.

Ó Domhnaill Abú is published by V. O'Donnell, Inver, Co. Donegal, Ireland.
Tel.: + 353 73-36059
E-mail: vodonnell@eircom.net
Web: <http://homepage.eircom.net/~vod>
4 issues to Ireland & Britain.....£7
to all other countries.....£8