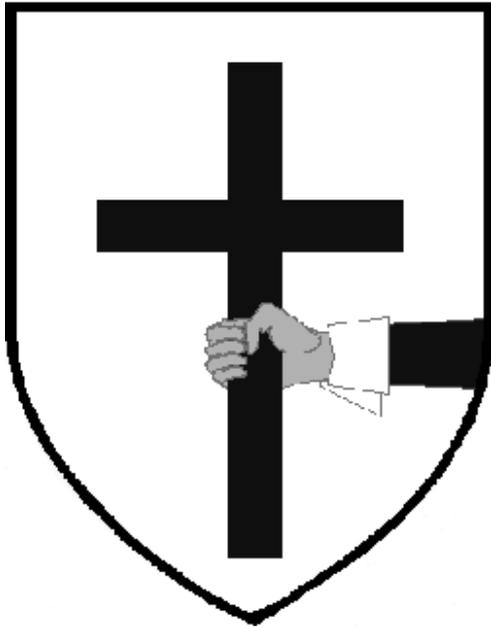


Ó Domhnaill Abá



O'Donnell Clan

Newsletter No. 31

Winter 2002



The Irish O'Donnells in Valladolid – 6th Sept. 2002

400th Anniversary of Red Hugh's Death

Many historians consider the Battle of Kinsale 1602 as marking the end of the old Irish Order but I disagree. The Irish spirit was not yet dead – it may have received a demoralising blow but it definitely wasn't dead. The northern clans retreated gracefully and continued to defend their territories. Rory O'Donnell fought one last battle against the English at the Curlew mountains in the autumn of 1602. Shortly after he received the sad news of his brother's (Red Hugh) death in Spain. With this news came the realisation that Spanish aid would not be coming and so the northern chieftains, including Hugh O'Neill and Rory O'Donnell, made peace with the English. Therefore I say that the death of Red Hugh was the turning point. The Irish spirit was definitely dead and the English Crown had finally conquered Ireland.

The O'Donnell Clan Association had commemorated the 400th anniversary of several events of the Nine Years War – most notable being the Battle of the Curlews in 1999.

As 2002 approached we felt that the 400 anniversary of the death of Red Hugh should not pass un-noticed or un-remembered. All agreed it should take place in Spain but that presented huge problems. How could we organise the event in another country in another language? Then wonderful things began to happen. Maria Angelines O'Donnell of the Spanish O'Donnells but living in California came across my website and made contact with me. Patricio O'Donnell of the Spanish O'Donnells did exactly the same thing. Both agreed to help in whatever way they could. Around Christmas 2001 Maria Angelines visited Spain for a short holiday during which she called on some of her cousins to form a committee to organise the Spanish end of things. And there in January of 2002 the seed was sown for what was to be the greatest O'Donnell Clan Gathering ever.

While Maria Angelines was the catalyst, Patricio was the person who did most of the ground work; Count Hugo was instrumental in gaining access for us to many institutions otherwise out of bounds to the general public and Mariana was the other member of that group. A travel agency in Madrid was appointed to look after accommodation, buses, guides etc. The only person at that agency with a knowledge of the English language was Puri Lopez a young beautiful energetic girl and so she was put in charge of everything both before and during the week. She played such a part in the entire event that she seemed to be one of us.



Patricio O'Donnell who did much of the ground work.

We had, about 60 people from Ireland, a dozen or so from the U.S., a few from England and Belgium and a good 40 turned up from Spain. Now it has to be understood that all the O'Donnells of Spain are descendent from Joseph O'Donnell who emigrated from Co. Mayo about 250 years ago, and Joseph descended from Manus 21st Chieftain (Manus was Red Hugh's grandfather). We, Irish, were so delighted to meet with members of the Spanish branch who turned out to be a handsome and jolly lot. Very encouraging it was to see so many

of their young people present. Nationalities were no longer important as we realised we had a stronger bond – we were O'Donnells!

Day 1, 3rd Sept.:

There was a bit of a delay getting out of the airport but when we did Puri Lopez was there with a coach waiting for us. A 20 minute drive to us to our hotel, Hotel Convencion, a 4 star hotel on O'Donnell Street. As we were already late for the Cocktail Reception we wasted no time getting to the Reception room where many of the Spaniards had been waiting for us for about an hour. We were warmly welcomed and the rest of the evening was spent in getting to know one another, making introductions, speeches, enjoying drinks and hors d'oeuvres and enjoying being together.

Day 2, 4th Sept.:

After breakfast we enjoyed a guided tour of Madrid, a beautiful city. Lunch was back in our hotel and then we were off again to visit among other places, the Prado Museum which houses so many wonderful paintings by the worlds greatest artists – El Greco, Goya, Marilo, Van Gogh and Picasso. We visited the Army Museum where our guide was an army general. There we saw a large collection of weapons and armaments, some dating back centuries. Among the exhibits were the sword of El Cid and swords and pistols of Leopoldo O'Donnell, 1st Duke of Tetuan and one of Spain's greatest heroes. Our last visit was to the a reception in the City Hall where we were received by the Lord Mayor's representative. Again we enjoyed drinks and finger food, heard the history of the building and its significance in Spanish history. A Donegal Parian China harp was presented to our host in thanksgiving.

Later, back in the hotel, many of our group sat around drinking, chatting, singing and

just having a nice time until well past 2.00am.



Five young Spanish O'Donnells

Day 3, 5th Sept.:

After an early breakfast it was off to Toledo where we enjoyed a guided tour of this ancient city. The cathedral is fascinating but the highlight of the day was our visit to El Alcázar, that huge fort on top of the hill which has seen some of the bravest and saddest scenes in Spanish history especially during the Civil War. Once again our guide through the Alcázar was a general from the Spanish army. Here also we saw some artefacts belonging to General Leopoldo O'Donnell. After presentations were made we went for lunch and then to a sword factory. During the 14th and 15th centuries Spanish ships often called to Donegal bringing goods from the Continent – silk, wine, etc. but always weapons. Toledo swords were always in high demand. We were back in the hotel by 9.00pm where the 'áirneal' went on, like the previous night, till long after the bar was closed.

Day 4, 6th Sept.:

Another early start for the 2 hour drive to Valladolid. On arrival we met the Spaniards who had travelled by another coach and had a different guide. We toured the city in two groups, our paths often crossing, which led to all sorts of good-natured banter every time we met. From previous experience we realised that for fifty people to keep together

through busy streets there was a need for some sort of 'guiding star'. Our O'Donnell flag fulfilled this purpose wonderfully. For the rest of the day various members of our group carried our standard with pride.



The Irish group march through Valladolid following our flag carried here by Denis O'Donnell, Dungloe.

We eventually entered the Plaza Mayor and though our guide went on about the Plaza and the magnificent buildings surrounding it, most of us just thought and whispered about the bones of our beloved Red Hugh being buried somewhere close to where we were standing (outside the Cafe del Notre).



3 O'Donnell brothers from Malaga, Rafael, Juan Antonio & Felix with their cousin Agustin from Madrid.

Somewhere here 400 years earlier the Prince of Tír Chonaill was buried inside the church of the the Franciscan Monastery. About 200 years ago the monastery was destroyed and a 100 years later the ruins removed. No trace remains today. Around a corner in a side street is a ceramic representation of the

facade of the monastery and it is there the Lord Mayor has granted us permission to place a commemorative plaque.

We then proceeded to the City Hall for a reception. Again, there was food and drink, speeches, presentations and off we went to lunch. At lunch we were joined by the Spaniards, about 30 of them. It was a casual get together where we mixed, enjoyed lovely food and drink, toasted Ireland, Spain and the O'Donnells.

The two coaches brought us the short distance to Simancas Castle. It was here Red Hugh died on the 10th Sept. 1602 at the age of 29. The castle is not open to the public. It houses many of Spain's archives, among them correspondence from Red Hugh and from Hugh O'Neill to the Kings of Spain requesting assistance. On our arrival we were taken on a tour of the castle. On a table in one of the rooms the letters were on display. There we could see Red Hugh's signature and seal.

Finally we assembled in the courtyard for our remembrance ceremony. It began with a decade of the Rosary being recited in the Gaelic language. Then Red Hugh's will was read in both Spanish and in English. Eunan O'Donnell recited a wonderful eulogy to Red Hugh. Inside the main gate is a bronze plaque giving an account in Spanish and Gaelic of Red Hugh's death. Under this plaque a laurel wreath was laid by Count Hugh, Pádraig McCosker on behalf of the Irish Ambassador, and Vincent O'Donnell of the O'Donnell Clan Association.

Caitlín O'Donnell sang 'Róisín Dubh' supposedly composed by Red Hugh's poet and expressing Red Hugh's last wish for Ireland as he lay dying in Spain. And lastly, we all sang 'O'Donnell Abu'.

It was a moving ceremony and, of course, the reason we were there.

That night back in the hotel we once again enjoyed a few hours of our own nightly entertainment.



A laurel wreath was laid under the commemorative plaque.

Day 5, 7th Sept.:

After breakfast we joined up with a group of the Spaniards to visit the Thyssen Museum to see more interesting Picasso, Dali, Miro, German Renaissance and Dutch 17th cent. paintings. By 7.00pm we assembled at the residence of the Irish Ambassador, Declan O'Donovan. This was the event that brought out the glitter and glam – both men and women were dressed in their finery. Here we were wined and dined with pomp and honor. Speeches were made by Dermot Kinlen O'Donnell, Count Hugo, the Ambassador and a presentation to the Ambassador by Vincent O'Donnell.

It was then back to the Hotel Convencion for the banquet. The largest crowd of Spaniards we had met so far turned up for this event. They had come from many parts of the country and a fine bunch they were.

Also joining us were some friends of O'Donnells among them Ultano Kindalen, Chief of the Name, and his wife. After the meal there were presentations to those who had worked to make the Gathering such a success – Hugh O'Donnell, Count de Lucena, Maria Angelines O'Donnell, Patricio O'Donnell and Maraina O'Donnell. And a special presentation to that wonderful girl – Puri Lopez.

After dinner the Irish challenged the Spaniards to a competition in entertaining the crowd - this was because we the Irish didn't feel we received justice against Spain in the World Cup. What followed was truly amazing. People who had behaved themselves and were quiet all week suddenly showed another side of their personality.



They danced their dance, we danced 'Shoe the Donkey'.

There was dancing and singing, poetry and instrumental music, juggling and all sorts of entertainment. Groups could be seen here and there throughout the hotel whispering or practising or trying to remember words of songs etc. It was a wonderful bit of fun and I must say the Spaniards were great.

Sometime in the middle of the night Juan O'Donnell from Malaga said, "There can be no losers because we are all one family." What a nice thought and how right he was? By 4.00am. we were all in bed except the young ones who had been invited to a night club by the young Spaniards. Some came back at 7.00pm. and some later.

Day 6, 8th Sept.:

It was difficult to rise next morning but we had one more duty to fulfill. A fleet of taxis was called and off we went to Santa Barbara church for Mass. It is here the remains of General Leopoldo lie in a beautifully wrought marble tomb to the left of the high altar. Queen Barbara's remains are on the right. No one else is buried there.



General Leopoldo, 1st Duke of Tetuan's tomb.

Count Hugo and his family attended as did some others of the Spanish contingent. After Mass all Spaniards took their leave as many had a long journey to their homes.



The rest of us passed the day sightseeing through old Madrid. Again we gathered in the bar area of the hotel for our last chance to drink, sing, chat etc.

Day 7, 9th Sept.:

No hurry this morning. We are free till 4.00pm. when the coach takes us to the airport. It was a lazy day, some shopped, some walked about, some just sat about until it was time to go. Gradually we were parting and saying 'Good Byes'. Some were going off for another holiday in Spain, others were travelling home earlier, etc.

Finally our turn came, we departed Madrid, the plane was on time, at Dublin Airport we said 'Good Bye' to more and my wife and I along with 10 more got on our bus to Donegal.

It was all over and as always it was nice to be coming back home. We had and have many fond memories and hopefully another Gathering will be organised here in Donegal within the next few years - the Spaniards all promised they would come.

But the greatest thought of all running through our heads was that the 400th anniversary of Red Hugh O'Donnell's death had been commemorated and commemorated well. Thanks to all who organised, all who contributed in any way and especially to everyone who came along.

The Spanish group in Valladolid. We came round a corner and there on the steps of an old church were the Spanish O'Donnells posing for a photo. The immediately confiscated our flag.

As you can see from the outdoor photos we enjoyed glorious weather at all times. That might not mean a lot to them but to us who had suffered a terrible summer it was to be savoured.

I am thankful to everyone who sent me photos. V. O'D.

The Story of Our Captain ...

by S. F. O'Donnell

What good is it to know that you are one of the remnants of the Barbary Coast without having a couple of sea captains in your lineage? Well, for my purposes, I'd say little if none. For the sea captain was the loric hero who brought the immigrants around the Cape Horn to San Francisco. Filled with courage and perhaps just a touch of barbarism, these captains were the blood and guts that guided the ships through the dark depths of the night into the dawn; from the mysteries of the sea towards a new land filled with hope and promise.

For Captain Hugh O'Donnell, the sea was just another feat to be conquered in his life. He had left the shores of a ravished Ireland, leaving behind his family and friends, many in County Donegal, one of the more severely stricken counties in Ireland during the Great Famine. The people were living on what grasses could be found to eat; starving to death from famine and disease. Hugh vowed that he would one day return and guide his relations back to prosperity and wealth, for they were O'Donnells, the Kings of Ireland, and were worthy of far more than a life of sadness and suffering.

Hugh came to San Francisco during the Gold Rush days. He was an educated man, being rather complicated. He was both a real-estate sleuth and a sea captain. Hugh settled on Dupont Street in San Francisco, not too far from the docks of the City. He was a Captain after all, and he liked the idea of having his ship not too far from away from where he lived.

Hugh became wealthy enough to claim the block on which he lived at 1314 Dupont in San Francisco. It became known as "O'Donnells Block" and Hugh was the ruler of it. He lived with his nephew, Roger O'Donnell, whom he entrusted with many of his financial affairs. Hugh was known well to many in the City of San Francisco and caught the eye of many due to his apparent wealth. One of these persons was "Mary Dugan", a woman of whom perhaps only a few knew about. After his untimely death in 1868, she made her presence known.

We find, in 1868 the following record for the San Francisco Bulletin:

O'DONNELL, H. In San Francisco, Feb. 6, 1868, Captain R. O'DONNELL, a native of County Donegal, Ireland, aged 54 years. Paper (San Francisco Bulletin); Feb. 6, 1868.

This left a lonely "O'Donnells Block" located at the northeast corner of Dupont and Vallejo. Today this area is still Vallejo Street, but Dupont fell by the wayside during the 1906 earthquake and is now known as Grant. It took more than 27 years after Hugh's death to reach a decision on his estate. We find the following record in the San Francisco Chronicle, July 3, 1895:

O'Donnell, Hugh--Decision is near in U.S. Circuit Court on long litigated case of Mary Dugan and others against Roger O'Donnell. Litigation grew out of the probate proceedings on estate of Hugh O'Donnell, who died inestate (sic) in 1868 (correct). At time of O'Donnell's death, his nephew, Roger O'Donnell, who resided with him in San Francisco, secured letters of administration on the estate. Roger held property under a trust for himself and other heirs in Ireland. Roger had virtual control of his uncle's affairs prior to Hugh's death. One week after death of Hugh, the nephew wrote a letter to his aunts in Ireland informing them of the death of Hugh and indicated that Hugh O'Donnell was worth \$200,000. (SF Chronicle, July 3, 1895, page 4, column 5).

After all this time passed, it was apparent that none of Hugh's money was returned to Ireland to help his family after his death. Most likely, the greedy lawyers got most it. As for Roger O'Donnell and Mary Dugan, we find the following records:

O'Donnell, Roger ... died in 1884 ... age 64

Dugan, Mary... died in 1885 ... age 75

It seems neither of the above lived long enough to get a red cent out of Hugh's estate, including his heirs in Ireland. Interestingly enough however, Hugh's legacy lived on for a number of years after his death due to the length of time that his case was in litigation. This would explain

why, in the 1882 San Francisco Langley Directory, we find "O'Donnells Block", located at the NE corner of Vallejo & Dupont listed 15 years after Hugh's death.

I think my father knew of Hugh O'Donnell and O'Donnells Block. He used to take my brother and me there when we were children. My father knew this area very well; almost too well I'd say.

So goes the story of Captain Hugh O'Donnell and O'Donnells Block in San Francisco. As far as I am concerned, the northeast corner of Vallejo and what is now Grant, will always be "O'Donnells Block" to me.

Next time you happen to be in San Francisco, check out Hugh's haunt!

Better yet ... visit

http://www.geocities.com/sfodonnell_2000/sfod.html
which has lots of links for one and for all!

Battle of Kinsale Commemoration

The commemorations were in three phases. Phase 1 took place during the summer of 2001 because of weather, day light and tourists. A symbolic march from Donegal to Kinsale was the main feature. But really only the O'Donnell flag did the 300 mile trip. Various groups from the Irish army carried the flag in relay beginning at Donegal Castle and arriving three weeks later in



Handing over the flag in Donegal

Kinsale.



Departing Ballymote Castle. It was from here Red Hugh Realy began his march to Kinsale Nov. 1601.



Arrival in Kinsale.

Phase 2 was in September and commemorated the arrival in Kinsale of the Spanish under Don Juan del Aquila. Count Hugo was there representing Spain. The English Crown was also represented. I was not there as I was meeting with Patricio O'Donnell in Dublin to discuss plans for the forth coming event in Spain.

Phase 3 took place on 3rd Jan. 2002, the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Kinsale. The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, unveiled an empty stone chair at the battle site. The empty chair symbolises the absence of Irish Chieftains and their authority, in other words the absence of Gaelic Ireland.

Ó Dombnall Abú

is published by

V. O'Donnell, Inver, Co. Donegal, Ireland.

Tel.: + 353 (0)73 36059

e-mail: vodonnell@eircom.net

Web: <http://homepage.eircom.net/~vod>

Copyright ISSN 0790 - 7389