

Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh and the Gaelic scribal tradition of County Clare

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The late eighteenth- and early decades of the nineteenth-century witnessed a flourishing of the Gaelic scribal tradition in the west of Ireland, notably in the counties of Cork and Clare. This flourishing benefited from the popularity of verse and storytelling among the general population, and the exchange of manuscripts and printed materials in Irish. However, the tradition was entering its final phase and over the course of the nineteenth century it hastened its decline until, by the close of that century, it clung precariously to the remote and westerly fringes of the country. The tradition was inextricably linked to the Irish language, and in Clare it survived into the first half of the twentieth century, dying on the lips of speakers who lived in the north-western parishes of the county.

In the westerly parts of Clare the native tradition survived in the writings and copy-work of local scholars versed in the old traditions. These included men such as Micheál Ó Raghallaigh (*fl.*1828-53) and Tomás Mac Mathghamhna (*fl.*1842-47) of Ennistymon, Micheál Ó hAnracháin (d.1876) of Kiltrush, and Micheál Ó Mongáin of Carrigaholt (*fl.*1825).² It was especially strong in certain families like the Meic Fhlannchadha family of *Oileán Bán* (Illaunbaun) in Kilfarboy parish.³ Elsewhere, a hereditary tradition of genealogy keeping and storytelling continued down to the famine. Antiquarians John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry collected a story from the fenian cycle by Shane Reagh O'Cahaun of Corofin in 1839, whom they dubbed as the 'most illustrious seanchaidh of the Kineal Owen'.⁴ It seems that his ancestor, Seán Ua Catháin, was active in copying Clare genealogies such as RIA Ms 23 G 4 in 1729.⁵ To this list it would be remiss not to add Teige McMahon, who was described in 1886 in his old age at the Kildysert workhouse, as the 'last of the shanachies'.⁶

By the time folklorist, Séamus Ó Duilearga, visited northwest Clare in the 1930s, the scribal tradition had disappeared and the custom of storytelling was limited to a handful of men knowledgeable in oral verse; men such as Seán Mac Mathúna (d.1949) of Luogh⁷, Stiofáin Ó hEalaoire (d.1944) of Donogore, and Tomás Ó hÚir of Fanore.⁸ By the 1960s participants and visitors to the fireside evenings where traditional lore and verse were recited by these men were either dead or had long emigrated.⁹ Many of the stories and tales which formed part of the repertoire of these men had ancient origins and drew from a deep reserve of traditional lore which, in the preceding century, men lettered in Irish had committed to manuscripts.

The scribal tradition flourished elsewhere in western Ireland where, in some parts, it persisted down to the late nineteenth-century. In Co. Cork, generations of the Uí Longáin family were prolific in their scribal activity, contributing much to the preservation of the contents of medieval manuscripts.¹⁰ Their efforts, along with others, helped to preserve much of the existing canon of Irish historical and genealogical manuscripts. Rather fortuitously, scribal efforts during the

nineteenth century preserved manuscripts with a Thomond provenance, including valuable genealogies compiled by Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha in c.1588.¹¹ Likewise there existed in Co. Clare an active circle of copyists and scribes of Gaelic manuscripts. These men helped transmit lore and history, what we may collectively term *seanchas* ('historical lore') and *príomhsceala* ('major tales'), among an array of verse, folklore and placename history.

This group represented the remnants of a cultivated tradition which had its roots in the bardic and literary schools of an earlier period. By the early nineteenth century men literate in Irish engaged in copying manuscripts and producing poetry, although much of their interest was in the folktales and stories of the people. The classical metres and deep training in the native tradition which embraced the cultivation of *seanchas* and *filidheacht* had long fallen out of use. Many were poets of local repute, such as Brian Merryman from Feakle, or schoolmasters like Tomás Ó Miocháin of Quin who presided over a school of mathematics and matriculation in Ennis. Others devoted their activity to writing manuscripts, such as Anthony O'Brien (*fl.*1780), who kept a school at Doonaha near Kiltrush and transcribed, in Irish, the life of Saint Senan, which was translated into English by poet and fellow schoolmaster, John (Seán) Lloyd.¹²

Another fellow amanuensis, little known but of local merit, was Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh (*anglice* Connor McInerheny), and his work forms the chief focus of this paper. His produce included valuable copies of tales of the ancient fenian cycle (*fiannaíocht*) which were especially popular in Co. Clare. He is of singular interest not only due to his contribution to the scribal tradition, but also because he left behind an interesting array of material. This included an unusual genealogical tract identifying his origins, and also marginalia which implicated him in a wider network of local scribes.

Dúchas agus muintir

Little may be gathered about the family background or personal particulars of Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh. It is sufficient to state that he was of Clann an Oirchinnigh ('McInerhenys'), an important family of Dál gCais origin. They traced their descent to a twelfth-century progenitor, described in the genealogies as *Donnchadh an t-oirchinneach Chill da Luadh*. This Donnchadh, the 'erenagh of Killaloe', was from the ruling Meic Conmara lineage. Until the seventeenth century Clann an Oirchinnigh held lands around Kilnasoolagh and Clonloghan, and at Ballykilty near Quin. The earliest recording of them dates from the battle of Kilgorey in 1309 where they appear as followers of the Meic Conmara kin-group, the Clann Chuiléin. They were described as *clann rádglan nach fann fine clann ágmar in Airchine*, as the author of the mid-fourteenth century text, *Caithréim Thoirdhbhealaigh*, eloquently put it.¹³ A papal document from 1411 mentions a cleric of the

family at Kilmaleery where they appeared to have exercised a quasi-hereditary incumbency of a number of churches in the *Tradraige* area.¹⁴ Prior to the mid-seventeenth century, landholding branches of Clann an Oirchinnigh were situated in the barony of Bunratty, with minor branches at Kilfintinan in c.1500.¹⁵ By the nineteenth century family members were recorded throughout Co. Clare under the anglicised forms of McInerney, McInerheny, McNereny, McInertney and, in Co. Tipperary, McKenertney.¹⁶

Clann an Oirchinnigh, like other Gaelic families, feature in the corpus of Co. Clare folklore, or *béaloidéas*. In a tale from 1820 they are recalled by scribe Connor Ryan in relation to a story about saint Caitlín, the supposed patroness of *Coradh Chailtín* (Newmarket-on-Fergus).¹⁷ The folktale is of interest to the study of folklore as it contained, in Irish verse, archaic features which seemingly denote an ancient source. The fact that it was collected prior to the popular collection of folklore, lends credence to it being genuine and with historical antecedence. Other folktales about Clann an Oirchinnigh include a reference to a warrior called Meihan MacEnerheny and his fort at Mooghaun that was recorded in 1890,¹⁸ and an obscure manuscript called ‘Traditions of Clann an Oirchinneagh’, collected among the papers of Prof. Brian O’Looney.¹⁹

In this *milieu* of folklore and scribal activity Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh collected and copied a number of traditional tales. These tales may be classified as forming part of the *fiannaíocht* cycle. This rich body of prose and verse centred on the exploits of the legendary hero, Fionn mac Cumhaill, and his warrior-band, the *fianna*. The cycle is one of the four major cycles of Irish mythology, along with the Mythological Cycle, the Ulster Cycle, and the Historical Cycle. It is reckoned by scholars to have been first committed to paper in the seventh century, but continued to spawn prose and poetry into the medieval period. In Co. Clare a long tradition was already established about copying such tales, and we find members of the learned Uí Mhaoilchonaire family at Ardkyle copying mythical tales such as the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in 1587.²⁰

Scríobhneoireacht na Gaeilge

The scribal *milieu* in Irish in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century was largely animated by the circulation of handwritten manuscripts, along with the reciting of tales among rural people. So called ‘courts of poetry’²¹ were also held, known in Irish as *cuirt filidheachta*, or *cuirt éigse*²² and acted as a forum for accomplished poets to gather and ensure that fellow poets competed and maintained their linguistic and metrical skills. In some ways the courts and their arrangements – which were formalised and followed statutes or codes – imitated classical bardic ‘contentions’ (*Iomarbhágh na bhFileadh*)²³ of the seventeenth century, but without the *cachet* and devoid of the formulaic classical Irish employed by the bardic poets.

The scribal tradition in Irish was often sustained by schoolmasters who were lettered in Irish. In some circumstances they received encouragement or sponsorship from the gentry class. For example, Conchubhar Ó Maoilriain (Connor Ryan) of Sixmilebridge, was involved in collecting tales and folklore for Sir Lucius O’Brien of Dromoland (1800-72) in the 1820s.²⁴ Others were not so fortunate and pursued

their activity in the absence of patronage or sponsorship. In the oral tradition they were known as *scoláirí bochta*, or poor scholars, and the memory of them lingered down to modern times.²⁵ What underpinned the literary exchange between scribes was a network of manuscript circulation and the vigour of local tradition. These factors were usually attested with the strength of the Irish language. With the retreat of Irish from east Clare in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the concentration of scribal activity also shifted, and from the second half of the century it was generally confined to the northerly and westerly parts of the county.

This represented a turnaround of the literary tradition which only a century and half earlier was cultivated to a professional level by a class of hereditary poets. One source informs us that schools of bardic learning where the literary dialect, or *Bearla Fileadh* (‘poet’s dialect’)²⁶ was taught, operated down to the 1640s.²⁷ After the closure of the bardic schools the native tradition became scattered and no longer the preserve of the professional families who specialised in panegyric poetry. What emerged was a looser, more free-form of poetic metre, as expressed in the *oglachas* or *bruilingeacht* verse-forms, and the popular *amhrán* (‘folksong’) metres.

While the schools of literary Irish overseen by an appointed *ollamh* no longer existed, a new class of part-time *seanchaidh*, or historian-storyteller, with greater focus on the *locale*, emerged. These *seanchaidhe* combined an interest in history, genealogy and poetry with folk-tales, and some were also involved in copying manuscripts. In Co. Clare during the eighteenth century, four prolific *seanchaidh*-scribes did much to preserve the native tradition. Aindrias Mac Cruitín of Moyglass in Ibrickan,²⁸ Peadar Ó Conaill of Carn near Kilrush,²⁹ Seághan Ó Fionnúcain of Corofin,³⁰ and Mathghamhain Ó Flannagáin³¹ of east Clare made important contributions, including transcribing Keating’s *Foras Feasa ar Éirín*, saints lives and genealogies. Others, such as Micheál Coimín and Seán Ó hUaithnín,³² rendered a lasting influence on the poetry of the county, while the writings of Tulla native, Theophilus O’Flanagan, provided a new impetus for Irish antiquaries and the Gaelic Society of Dublin. Among those antiquaries was the Clare-born Chevalier O’Gorman, who turned to local scholars for pedigrees and other information in his procuring of certificates of *noblesse* for émigré Irish in French service.³³ The foregoing represented but a handful of the sixty or so known scribes who helped preserve the native tradition over the period 1700-1870.³⁴ The last of these tradition-bearers was Séamus Mac Cruitín, a schoolmaster from west Clare. His self-titled appellation, ‘the last relic of the hereditary bards of Thomond’³⁵ was not a mere allegorical quip, but a fact announcing the *terminus* of the native tradition in Clare.

In the nineteenth century the work of local scholars and copyists was augmented by a number of particularly active scribes. One of which, a peripatetic scholar named Seán Mac Mathghamhna, wrote six manuscripts penned at alternate locations, from Kilrush to Horse Island in the Fergus.³⁶ Other scribes such as Micheál Ó Raghallaigh (d.1857), and Donnchadh and Tomás Mac Mathghamhna, were busy penning manuscripts at Ennistymon in the 1840s. The latter received sponsorship from Protestant societies then involved in setting up schools and proselytising through the Irish

language.³⁷ For schoolmasters like Tomás, lettered as he was in Irish, the agents of the ‘Second Reformation’ took a particular interest in distributing scriptures and primers in Irish so that he and others like him would read these materials in Irish in the hope of gaining converts. Ennistymon, then, emerged as a centre of scribal activity in the mid-late nineteenth century. We may also submit as further proof of its contribution to Irish literature that Ennistymon was the birthplace and early education of Brian Ó Luanaigh (alias Brian O’Looney, d.1901), who later went on to hold the chair of Irish Language and Literature at the Catholic University in Dublin.³⁸

Scribes during this period from Co. Clare were particularly proficient in rehearsing the tales of *Fionn* and the *fianna*. Other major tales also received attention by the copyists. For example, *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach* and *Tóraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* were popular tales among the people. They are frequently found in manuscript collections from the nineteenth-century and some remained on the lips of storytellers into the first half of the twentieth century. Even by that late date remnants of the tradition survived, albeit precariously, beside the hearths of the cottages around Liscannor and Doolin, and recited during evening gatherings. As the great folklorist, Séamus Ó Duilearga, said after collecting a large corpus of tales and songs from northwest Clare in the 1930s, it was the storytelling tradition and its mnemonic craft which provided the ultimate font from whence the old tales flowed:

Oral tradition is the corner-stone, the basic element in all written literature, sacred and profane, and memory is the handmaid of tradition.³⁹

In this context, the writings of our comparatively obscure scribe, Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh, take on greater importance because they cast light on the Gaelic scribal tradition just prior to the famine and its severe decline thereafter; it also provides insight into the activity and intellectual interests of an otherwise little known scribe.

An scríbhneoir ó An Bhaile Bán

That the native tradition in Co. Clare in the early nineteenth century was no meagre harvest by way of tales and songs is true enough. But it also abounded in glosses and literary jottings, genealogies, puzzles and witticisms that were often penned in the marginalia of manuscripts. Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh did not come from a literary family as such. By the nineteenth century his family, Clann an Oirchinnigh, were to be found all over the county. No particular member of the family was prominent, save only a few clerics of the name and a number of landed individuals in and around Kilnasoolagh.⁴⁰

It is clear that Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh received a thorough education in Irish and in the native tradition. An inspection of his passages in English shows that he also possessed a good cursive hand in English. It is not known to whom, or to where, he owed his education in Irish, but his polished hand in *cló gaelach* reveals a confident and versatile style, well versed in scribal lettering. He routinely employed abbreviations that were the stock and trade of the copyist (called *muireadhchas*, *aradhas*, and *eilgeadhas*).⁴¹ His main period of literary activity dated from 1816 to 1823, although

a note from 1831 shows that he was still active at that time.

He is credited with copying the early-modern prose tale *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach* (‘The violent death of the children of Uisneach’).⁴² This was a popular tale and a number of versions exist in manuscript form, the oldest with a Clare provenance being Aindrias Mac Cruitín’s version from 1727.⁴³ Another version was written by Seón Llyod in 1773-4⁴⁴ and it may have been the exemplar used by Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh.⁴⁵ This tale, along with a miscellany of other works, was copied into the manuscript now known as RIA Ms 24 M 40. This manuscript consisted of 216 foliated pages in the hand of Conchubhar, but the number of signatories which appear attests to numerous owners. His scribal work was copied in other manuscripts such as the tale, *Sgealuighiocht Oisín do Phattruig air Laigne mor* (‘The storytelling of Oisín to Patrick concerning Laigne Mór’) and the poem *La dá ramhamuir a nDun Bhaoi* (‘The day we were in Dunboy’), which was copied into a manuscript compilation by another well-known Clare scribe, Seaghán Mac Mathghamhna, in 1829.⁴⁶

Conchubhar’s rendition of *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach* is notable because it shares similarities with another version of the same tale written by Tomás Ó Iceadha. Both versions retain quatrains that are omitted in some of the other ninety versions in existence.⁴⁷ The links between these two manuscripts may owe something to the fact that Ó Iceadha was almost certainly from Co. Clare, his family being, in former times, hereditary physicians involved in the translation of medieval manuscripts.⁴⁸ In all likelihood, Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh and Tomás Ó Iceadha’s versions of the tale drew from the same exemplar, or from each other.

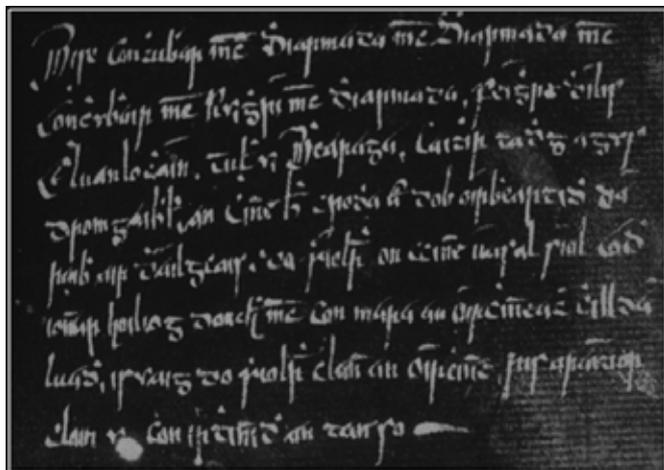
Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach occupies nineteen pages in RIA Ms 24 M 40 by Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh. The rest of the manuscript comprises other material such as the poetry of Seaghan Lloyd (*Air Ghraime Mhaol*), Donnchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh (*Is fada fársing pobuil Dé*) and Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín (*A Bhanbadh, is feasach dham do sgéala*). These poems were popular in Co. Clare, probably because each poet had Clare roots, including Ó Dálaigh who is credited in folk tradition to have convened a bardic school at Finavarra in the thirteenth century.⁴⁹ An interesting passage that occurs after Donnchadh Mór’s poem on page 96 is a genealogical tract, the presence and detail of which is fairly unusual. Furthermore, a truncated version of it also appears in Cambridge Library, Add Ms 6565. 94r, another manuscript penned by Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh. The tract is of interest here because of its historical claims:

Mise Conchubhar mac Dhiarmada mic Dhiarmada mic Chonchubhair mic Ruighrí mic Dhiarmada féighre dhílis Chluan Locháin, Tulach Uí Mhearaga, Caithir Tadhg agus Drom Gaibhle, an cinne ba crodha et dob oirbheartidh dá raibh air Dháil gCais do shíolraigh on ceinne úasal Siol Aodh ionnar hoiliog Donnchadh Mac Con Mara an óirchinneach Chill Dá Luadh, is uaig do shíolraigh Clann an Óirchinne ris a ráitior Clann Uí Chonirthinnidh an tan so.⁵⁰

[I am Conchubhar son of Diarmaid son of Diarmaid son of Conchubhar son of Ruaidhrí son of Diarmaid

proper heir to Clonloghan, Tullyvarraga, Cahirteige and Dromgeely. The people who were the bravest and most powerful of the Dál gCais descended from the noble race of Síol Aodha among whom Donnchadh Mac Con Mara was educated. The *oirchinneach* of Killaloe, it is from him that Clann an Oirchinne, now called Clann Ui Chonirthinnidh, sprang].⁵¹

RIA 24 M 40, p. 96: Genealogical tract of Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh



The claims made in the tract possibly have historical validity due to the recorded presence of Meic an Oirchinnigh kinsmen at Clonloghan and Caherteige in 1641.⁵² The generations listed in the tract support a mid-seventeenth century flourish for Diarmaid, the ancestor of scribe Conchubhar. The tract is noteworthy because it did not exist in a vacuum, unconnected to other genealogical tracts or treatises. A genealogy in NLI Ms G 193, written by Domhnall O’Higgin at ‘Corra Each’ in Drumcliff, espouses similar claims.

In this case O’Higgin does not appear to have any connection to Clann an Oirchinnigh. His rendition incorporated a genealogy of the Meic Fhlannchadha, and this was possibly done to broaden its appeal as a tract containing Dál gCais descendants. It was not submitted as a personal epitaph to the author’s ancestors, as was the case for Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh. But the similarity between the genealogies in RIA Ms 24 M 40 and NLI Ms G 193, and the fact that O’Higgin was from Co. Clare and penned his manuscript in c.1825, suggests that he was known to Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh. The similarity suggests either collusion between the scribes, or copying:

Ó Chaisinn tanngadar Siol Aodha agus Clann Mic Conmara agus is uatha soin Mac Flannchada agus Mac an Oirchinnigh is uime goirthear Mac an Oirchinnigh de .i. Donuchadh Mac Conmara do bhi dá oilúint ag oirchinneach Chille Dha Lua agus is uime sin do lean Mac an Oirchinnigh dé óir téid an forainim tar ainim buan tre ghnathughadh an fhorainim.⁵³

[From Caisín came Síol Aodha and the family of Mac Conmara and it is from them that Mac Flannchadha [McClancy] and Mac an Oirchinnigh [McInerney] derive. It is for this that he is called Mac an Oirchinnigh, namely Donuchadh Mac Conmara was being educated by the *oirchinneach* of Killaloe and it is for this that Mac an Oirchinnigh became attached to him, as

the cognomen replaces the permanent name by the continued use of it].⁵⁴

There are other interesting miscellanea worth relating about RIA Ms 24 M 40. The manuscript contains a number of tales copied together and presented consecutively. Following the ending of each tale, Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh’s signature and the date of compilation is given. The dates of the following tales are known from this schema: *Laoidh Chab an Dasáin* (10th day of the middle month of winter, 1831); *Tóruighiocht Dhiarmada Uí Dhuibhne 7 Ghraine inghion Chormuic* (18th day of March, 1816); *Comhrac Fear Diaigh Agus Chonnculghlais* (middle month of winter, 1831); *Achtra an Mhadara Mhaoil* (no date but a note remarking: *foircean le Conchubar Mc in Oircinig*, ‘ending by Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh’); *Oighidh Chonlaoich Mac Conguloin* (autumn 1816); *Oigheadh Chloinne Huisneach* (no date or signature). On page 101 at the end of the text titled *Atáid éigse 7 úghdair go trúpach ag pleiriocht*, is a note stating: *sgríobnor a Conchubar Mc In Oircinnig* (‘the writer is Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh’). And at the end of *Tóruighiocht an Ghiolla Dheacuir* is a note which implies that the tale was written in 1811:

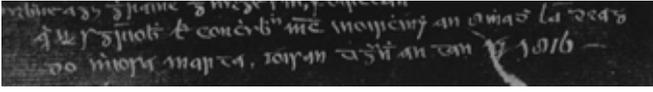
Foircheann le Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh an naoimhadh la fithchiod do miosa meodhan Samhra in san mBliaghain d’aois Criost, míle, ocht gcead agus barr ceann deich agus iarraim ag gach leightheoir ionmhanach, sgríbe chum Dia uile-chomhachtach, trocaire iarr do’m anam bocht peacamhal, gibe beo no marbh dhom.⁵⁵

[Ending by Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh, the 29th day of the month of June in the age of Christ, one thousand, eight hundred and one over ten, and I ask every honest reader to write to almighty God, imploring him for mercy for my poor, sinful soul, whether I be living or dead].⁵⁶

The gap in years between some of the tales shows that the work of manuscript writing took years and was not carried out as a full-time activity. The manuscript also contains Conchubhar’s name, in anglicised form, and the names of other possessors prior to its purchase by the Royal Irish Academy in 1869. These names include: ‘Thomas Brew’ of Kilrush,⁵⁷ ‘James Brew’,⁵⁸ ‘Patt O’Connor’,⁵⁹ ‘Seaghan Ó Briain’,⁶⁰ ‘Séamus Ó Glíosáin’ of Michael St., Limerick,⁶¹ ‘Míocael Mac Cunsaidin’ of the Bóithrín near Ennis,⁶² and ‘Micheál Ó Mongain’ of Kilrush.⁶³ One well-known scribe and poet who possessed the manuscript and scribbled a poetic quatrain was Micheál Ó Raghallaigh (fl.1828-53), whose initials adorn page six: *M. O’R. cc. o Inis Tighe Meodhan*.⁶⁴ One note that stands out as an example of Mac an Oirchinnigh’s method of dating which used a mix of numbers and words (*8mhad* for *ochtú* or ‘eighth’), occurs at the end of the tale *Tóruighiocht Dhiarmada Uí Dhuibhne 7 Ghraine inghion Chormuic*:

Ar sgríob le Conchub’ Mc In Oircinig an 8mhad lá déag do míosa marta...an t-an 1816⁶⁵

[Written by Conchubhar Mac in Oirchinnigh, the 18 day of the month of March, in the age of the Lord, 1816].⁶⁶



The manuscript text also contains a number of interesting miscellanea. On page six underneath an Irish couplet beginning, *Nídh d'athanta na haghailse an fial más lag*, is a translation of the versus which reads:

The poor tho generous clergymen disown
 And wit in want, quite dull & fat is grown
 If they want pelf⁶⁷ they'er neither lik^d nor lov^d
 Welthey clowns true oricals have prov^d. Finis.⁶⁸

The pithy stanza appears to have been in the hand of the manuscript's principal scribe, Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh. For what purpose it served, or who, if anyone, it was intended, is unknown. However, it stands of interest as an example of the type of marginalia contained in such manuscripts. A note throws light on the place of writing of the author when it states on the last page of the manuscript: *Conchubhar Mac In Oirchine an mBealach Bán* appearing below the author's signature in English, giving his anglicised name as 'Cornelius McNerheny'.⁶⁹ Above the note, in faded ink, is another reference to the author's residence. This note reads, rather vaguely, *An Baile Bán lamh le hInis i gCondae an Chlair*⁷⁰ ('Ballybaun near Ennis in the County of Clare') for which, presumably, *Bealach Bán* was an alternative name-form. This placename cannot be positively identified. It could be a variant for Ballaghboy (*Bealach Buí*) in Doora parish where, in 1825, much of the townland was occupied by the McNerney family.⁷¹ Another possibility could be the sub-townland denomination noted in a sixteenth century deed as *Baile Bán* in Bunratty parish.⁷² It did not survive as a townland into modern times. The surname McNerney (or McNerheny)⁷³ is well-attested in the parish down to modern times. Alternatively, *An Baile Bán* could have been the townland of Ballybaun in Kilfenora, but its distance from Ennis hardly makes it a strong contender.

It is not known why Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh wrote RIA Ms 24 M 40. There is no indication that the work was sponsored by a benefactor, and the marginalia does not betray any other purpose or reason why this collection of tales and poetry was committed to ink. It is likely that it was written by Mac an Oirchinnigh for his own use, only later circulating among scribes. If this was the case then it suggests that Mac an Oirchinnigh was an active participant in the trade of writing and exchanging manuscripts. The fact that both Thomas Brew of Kilrush, and scribe Micheál Mac Considín of the Bóithrín near Ennis, possessed RIA Ms 24 M 40, suggests that its author was connected to important circles of native learning. Nothing else is known about Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh. Particulars about his life, including his age, marriage and death, or if he produced other scribal works, is not known.

Scríobhneoirí Chlann an Oirchinnigh

There were other members of Clann an Oirchinnigh who participated in the manuscript tradition of Co. Clare. These men were connected to wider networks of 'manuscript men', a phrase sometimes used to describe the copyists and scribes of

the nineteenth century.⁷⁴

One of the earliest mentions of Meic an Oirchinnigh involvement in the manuscript tradition is contained in Sylvester O'Halloran's, *A General History of Ireland* (1778). O'Halloran's work listed a number of deeds that were written by the Meic Fhlannchadha (McClancy) brehon-jurists. One of which purported to date from 1251 and concerned lands at Tullyvarraga near Bunratty and was re-reprinted, uncritically, by James Frost in 1893.⁷⁵ According to antiquarian R. W. Twigge, the dating of the deed is incorrect and it likely dated from 1481.⁷⁶ O'Halloran writes that it was in the possession of the family of a merchant named Nicholas McNerhiny.⁷⁷ No further detail can be evinced as to how or under what circumstances O'Halloran obtained the deed. However, the fact that it was in the hands of McNerhiny who lived near to the place where the deed was written, suggests that other brehon deeds were preserved locally, perhaps passing to other families through marriage or property transfers.

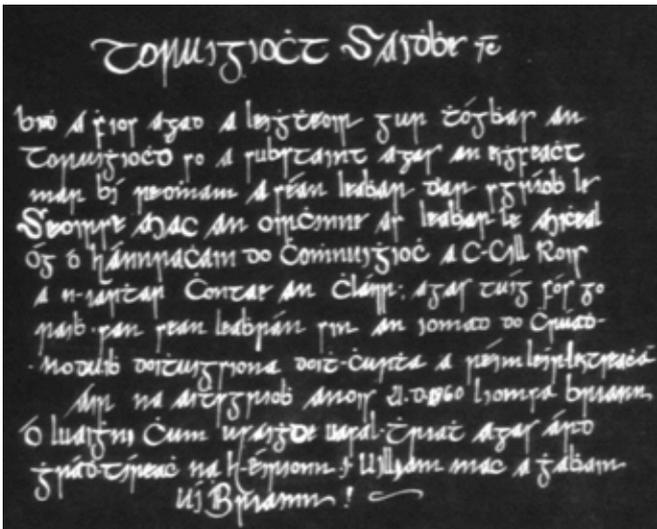
Another manuscript, RIA Ms 12 E 10, was in the possession Thomas McNerheny in 1800. This manuscript was a composite work, containing over 600 pages, and was originally written in 1758 by Seaghan Ó Cinéide. The signature of Thomas McNerheny, dated 5 November 1800, appears in the margin of the first page of the section written by Ó Cinéide, and probably indicates ownership of the manuscript.⁷⁸ While McNerheny's place of writing is not recorded, according to the colophon, part of the manuscript was written by Pádraig Ó Cunchubhair of *Cceallrus* ('Kilrush') in 1832. This could be indirect evidence that McNerheny was from a circle of scribes from southwest Clare. Pádraig Ó Cunchubhair given here was quite possibly 'Patt O'Connor', whose name appears in Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh's manuscript, RIA Ms 24 M 40.⁷⁹

In RIA Ms 23 H 12 the name Seoirse Mac an Oirchinne appears in connection with its original exemplar.⁸⁰ The manuscript was compiled by 'Brian O Luaighni' (Brian O'Looney) for 'Uilliam mac a Ghabhain Uí Bhriainn' (William Smith O'Brien), in 1859-60, at Monreel near Ennistymon. We are told in the colophon that the manuscript's original exemplar was written by Seoirse Mac an Oirchinne and that it was presented to Brian O'Looney in a copied version by Micheál Óg Ó hAnnrachain of Kilrush.⁸¹ Nothing else is known about Seoirse Mac an Oirchinne, but it is clear from the colophon that he must have lived sometime prior to the mid-nineteenth century. This scribe's composition of the original manuscript work, which included the tale *Toruighiocht Saidhbe* ('Sadhbh's Pursuit'), is noted in a colophon on page 201 of RIA Ms 23 H 12:

Biadh a fhios agad a leightheoir gur thógbhas an Toruighiochd so a substaint agus an eighfeacht mar bí reomham a séan leabhar d'ar sgríobh le Seoirse Mac an Oirchinne ar leabhar le Micheal Óg Ó Annrachain do chomhnuighioch a C-Cill Rois a n-iarthar Chontae an Chláir; agus tuíg fós go raibh san sean leabhrán sin an iomad do Chruadhoduibh doithuigsona doith-churtha a réim leirleiteacha air na aitscriobh anois A.D. 1860 liomsa Briann Ó Luaighni chum usaighde uasal thriath agus árd ghrádh-tíreach na h-Eirionn .i. Uilliam mac a Ghabhain Uí Bhriainn.⁸²

[Let it be known to you, the reader, that I took this *Toruighiochd*,⁸³ its substance and its elements, presented to me in an old book, written by Seoirse Mac an Oirchinne, from a book of Michael Óg Ó Ánnrachain, who lived in Kilrush, in the west of County Clare; and understand in addition that there were in that old notebook a surfeit of incomprehensible, badly composed tracts, whose letters are not now in use, AD 1860. [Written] by me, Brian Ó Luaighni, for the use of that noble lord and great patriot of Ireland, namely William Smith O'Brien].⁸⁴

Scribal note showing the provenance of RIA Ms 23 H 12



Another Mac an Oirchinnigh appears in connection to the manuscript tradition of west Clare. As we have seen, west Clare was a bastion of local tradition and lore, some of which persisted in the mouths of local people into modern times. In a collection of eight manuscripts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries held at the Sweeney Memorial Library in Kilkee, exists a colophon note in *Lámhscríbhinn* 4. The note makes mention of scribe ‘Michael McInerny’ of Kilfearagh who, in 1847, finished writing a section.⁸⁵ Elsewhere, the name ‘Míthcháll Ó Coneirthinidh’ appears, possibly being an Irish form of Michael McInerny. This form shows similarity with the version found in RIA Ms 24 M 40 where it is written as ‘Clann Ui Chonirthinidh’.⁸⁶ A form of Ó Coneirthinidh (pronounced ‘O Konerhiny’) is recorded in the schools’ folklore collection of the 1930s. Among that corpus of notes is a reference to Mac Coinneirtinne,⁸⁷ a spelling that reflected the spoken rather than literary form of the name in Irish.

There were a number of McInerneys recorded living in Kilfearagh parish in the *Tithe Applotment Books* of the 1820s, and also in the *Griffith Valuation* of 1855. For example, a Michael McInerney held land at Ballyonan/Donnaghboy in 1855⁸⁸ and he possibly was the Michael who wrote parts of *Lámhscríbhinn* 4. We also read that schoolmaster James McInerney operated a hedge school at ‘Tarryhy’ in Kilfearagh in 1824.⁸⁹ Schoolmasters were often patrons of native learning and they made no small contribution to the scribal tradition.⁹⁰ Several McInerney schoolmasters operated hedge schools in west Clare in the 1820s, including at Carrurdotty in Killimer, and at Quilty West in Kilmurry Ibrickan.⁹¹

Concluding remarks

By the opening decades of the eighteenth century, Irish speaking among the old aristocracy had begun its precipitous decline. No one was more conscious of this state of affairs than Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín, a *file* of the classical tradition, who used the printing press to produce a work on Irish grammar in 1728. Its preface contains the following, written in a rather lugubrious tone:

It is certain, most of our Nobility and Gentry have abandoned it; and disdain to learn or speak the same these 200 years past. And I could heartily wish, such persons would look back and reflect on this matter; that they might see through the Glass of their reason, how strange it seems to the world, that any people should scorn the Language, wherein the whole treasure of their own Antiquity and profound science lie in obscurity.⁹²

The scribal tradition of copying and circulating manuscripts helped preserve the Irish literary tradition which poets and tradition-bearers (i.e. *filí le seanchas*) such as Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín embodied. It was part and parcel of the learning, literacy and manuscript writing in Irish throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. It also contributed to the efforts of language rival that took place from the late nineteenth century. Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh’s copying of great tales and Irish verse came at a time when that tradition was beginning to recede. Thanks to his efforts, and the efforts of many others, a considerable volume of lore and tradition has survived.

While the death of such personages as Séamus Mac Cruitín in 1870, and Teige McMahon of Kildysart in the 1880s, marked the end of the scribal tradition, the cultivation of lore in Irish continued for another generation. It was not until Séamus Ó Duilearga’s visit to northwest Clare in the 1930s that the rich oral tradition of Clare faded with the passing of the last native Irish speakers a decade or so later. In scribes like Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh who have left us finely wrought metres and handwritten texts in *cló gaelach*, we find a sense of purpose in their work and a consciousness of the task of recording the native tradition. Thanks to their labour, remnants of the great Gaelic literary tradition, with its ancient and colourful stories, remain as poignant today as they did when these scribes set about plying their trade in the twilight of a tradition which had flourished for over a millennium.

Endnotes

1. The author thanks Brian Ó Dálaigh for his assistance and helpful comments in the preparation of this paper.
2. See Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, ‘The Irish Tradition of Clare’, in Martin McNamara (ed.), *Mount Saint Joseph, Ennistymon* (Leinster Leader, Co. Kildare, 1974), pp. 49–60.
3. Some families claimed generations of scholarship. Séan Mac Fhlannchadha of *Oileán Bán* in Kilfarboy, who was active in writing between the years 1838 and 1860, claimed descent from the brehon-jurist, Boetius Clancy (d.1598). See Eilís Ní Dheá, ‘Scríobhaithe Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge i gContae an Chláir 1700-1900’, in Lynch, & Nugent (eds.), *Clare: History and Society* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 139–55, p. 151.

4. John O'Donovan & Eugene Curry, *Ordnance Survey Letters: The Antiquities of County Clare* (Ennis, 2003), pp. 23–4. On his pedigree see p. 11.
 5. R.W. Twigge, *Materials for a History of Clann Cuilein*, British Library Add Ms 39266, [Twigge Collection] p. 350.
 6. Morgan John O'Connell, 'The Last of the Shanachies', *The Irish Monthly*, 14:151 (Jan. 1886), pp. 27–32.
 7. See Pádraig Ó Héalaí, 'Seán Mac Mathúna: Diarist and Dedicated Recorder of Clare Tradition', *The Other Clare*, 40 (2016), pp. 26–36.
 8. On these and other storytellers see Séamus Ó Duilearga, 'Notes on the Oral Tradition of Thomond', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 95:1/2 (1965), pp. 133–47. Also see Michael MacMahon, 'James Delargy and the Storymen of North Clare', *The Other Clare*, 33 (2009), pp. 63–70.
 9. Ó Duilearga, 'Oral Tradition', p. 137.
 10. See Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland* (Münster, 2000).
 11. R.W. Twigge, *Materials for a History of Clann Cuilein*, British Library Add Ms 39266, [Twigge Collection] pp 317, 356. Twigge records that RIA Ms 23.H.22, p.11 was 'transcribed in 1803 by Peter O'Connell from the roll written by Maolin Óg Mac Bruaideadha in the year A.D. 1588'.
 12. Kathleen Mulchrone & Elizabeth FitzPatrick (eds.), *Catalogue of the Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1943), no. 553, pp. 1714–16.
 13. Translated as: 'a clan of definite pronouncement, strong in families: warlike clan-inerheny'. See Sean Mac Ruaidhri Mac Craith, *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh: The Triumphs of Turlough*, Standish Hayes O'Grady (ed.), (London, 1929), ii, p.38. For the Irish text see vol. i, p. 38. It can also be translated: 'clear routed, not-weak in families, valiant Clan-inerheny'. Katherine Simms, Trinity College, personal correspondence, 12 September 2007.
 14. T. A. Twemlow, *Papal Letters Vol. VI AD.1404-1415* (London, 1904), pp. 256–7. Also see a supplication dated 1419 from the same cleric to hold Tymorloggy and Drumline rectories, and Kilnasoolagh vicarage. *ASV Regestum Supplicationum* 129 f. 63.
 15. Two unpublished brehon charters from c.1520 refer to 'Maelsechlainn son of Tomás Mac an Oirchinneadh' as a witness to land deeds concerning Kilfintinan. According to R.W. Twigge, one deed is in TCD Ms I.6.13 [translated by Eugene O'Curry]; and the other in Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris at Ms Celtique I (fol. 21.v.). See R.W. Twigge, *Materials for a History of Clann Cuilein*, British Library Add Ms 39262, [Twigge Collection] pp. 38–9.
 16. See the *Tithe Applotment Books* for Laghtea in Castletownarra in 1826 for McKenertney. The McKenertneys of Castletownarra are ancestors of the author of this paper. A form of the name still survives in the local nickname, 'Kinertney', which is still used colloquially for 'McInerney' in Killoran near Portroe.
 17. Luke McInerney, 'Curses on the McInerney family of Co Clare: A folktale from Sixmilebridge', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 50 (2010), pp. 89–107.
 18. Thomas J. Westropp, *Folklore of Clare: a folklore survey of County Clare and County Clare folk-tales and myths*, Gearóid Ó Cruaíoch (ed.), (Ennis, 2000), p. 119.
 19. The existence of which, to date, has not been confirmed.
- See the note to the poem, 'Warrior Exiles: A Legend of the Clan MacInnerney', in Michael Hogan, *Lays and Legends of Thomond* (reprint, Limerick, 1999) p. 290.
 20. Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, *Clár Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge Choláiste Phádraig Má Nuad* (Má Nuad, 1968), Fascúl, v, 1, C 1.
 21. On the courts of poetry in eighteenth century Co. Clare see Brain Ó Dálaigh, 'Tomás Ó Míocháin and the Munster Courts of Gaelic Poetry c.1730 – 1804', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, 27 (2012), pp. 142–61.
 22. From *Cúirt Éigse Cois Máighe* which operated near Croome in Co. Limerick during the 1730s. See J.E. Caerwyn Williams & Patrick K. Ford, *The Irish Literary Tradition* (Cardiff, 1992), pp. 221, 225.
 23. Lambert McKenna (ed.), *The Contention of the Bards* 2 vols (Dublin, 1918–20).
 24. There remain a number of manuscripts written by Ó Maoilriain for Sir Lucius O'Brien in the National Library. Much of his writing concerns Ossianic poetry in Irish, and English translations of poetry. Manuscripts attributed to him include: Ms G985; Ms G987; Ms G988; Ms G989, Ms G990.
 25. Ó Duilearga, 'Oral Tradition', p. 143.
 26. John O'Donovan, *A Grammar of the Irish Language* (Dublin, 1845), p. lxxii.
 27. Thomas O'Sullivan, *Dissertation in Memoirs of the Right Honourable The Marquis of Clanricarde, Lord Deputy General of Ireland, ...* (London, 1722), p. cxxxii.
 28. Liam Ó Luaighnigh, (ed.), *Dánta Aindréis Mhic Cruitín* (Ennis, 1935).
 29. See Eilís Ní Dheá, 'Peadar Ó Conaill, Scoláire agus Scríobhaí (1755-1826)', *County Clare Studies: Essays in Memory of Gerald O'Connell, Seán Ó Murchadha, Thomas Coffey and Pat Flynn*, in Ciarán Ó Murchadha, (ed) (Ennis, 2000), pp. 137–149.
 30. Ní Dheá, 'Scríobhaithe Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge', p. 151. The daughter of Ó Fionnúcain married into another scribal family, the Meic Fhlannchadha of *Oileán Bán*, in Kiltarboy. See *Ibid.*
 31. Eilís Ní Dheá, 'Lucht Scríofa Lámhscríbhinní i gContae an Chláir san 18ú haois', *Dal gCais*, 10 (1991), pp. 51–7.
 32. On west Clare poets see Seosamh Mac Mathúna, *Kiltarboy: A history of a west Clare parish* (Lucan [Dublin], c.1976), pp. 108–15.
 33. Richard Hayes, 'A forgotten Irish antiquary: Chevalier Thomas O'Gorman 1732–1809', *Studies*, 30 (1941), pp. 587–96.
 34. On these and others see Thomas F. O'Rahilly, 'Notes on the Poets of Clare' in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (July 28 to 22 September, 1917). For those post-1850, see Seán Ó Ceallaigh, 'Scríbhneoirí Gaeilge an Chláir ó 1850 Anall', *The Other Clare*, 15 (1991), pp. 35–8.
 35. On his life and work see Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'The last of the hereditary bards of Thomond: Séamus Mac Cruitín 1815-1870', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 47 (2007), pp. 77–90, p. 88.
 36. Seaghán Mac Mathghamhna was living on Horse Island in the Fergus estuary in c.1819 and is described as of 'no certain dwelling place'. Pádraig de Brún & Máire Herbert, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in Cambridge Libraries* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 95.
 37. Pádraig Ó Riain, 'The MacMahons: Scribes of Ennistymon', in Martin McNamara (ed.), *Mount Saint*

- Joseph, *Ennistymon* (Leinster Leader, Co. Kildare, 1974), pp. 64–66, p. 65.
38. On the O’Looney family of Ennistymon see Máirín Ní Mhuiríosa, ‘Muintir Luanaigh o Inise Diomain’ in Martin McNamara (ed.), *Mount Saint Joseph, Ennistymon* (Leinster Leader, Co. Kildare, 1974), pp. 68–70.
 39. Ó Duilearga, ‘Oral Tradition’, p. 133.
 40. Thomas McNerheny of Dromoland conformed to the Church of Ireland in 1782, and Andrew and Patrick McNerney held land in Kilnasoolagh parish in 1855. See James Frost, *The History and Topography of the County of Clare from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the 18th Century* (Dublin, 1893), p. 634; and see *Griffith Valuation* (1855), Kilnasoolagh parish. On clerics of the name see Ignatius Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe: 1800-1850* (Dublin, 1992), pp. 95, 398, 428.
 41. See [anonymous], ‘Contractions’, *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, 14:165 (June, 1904), pp. 573–5.
 42. Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith (ed. & trans), *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach: The Violent Death of the Children of Uisneach* (London, 1993).
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
 46. Pádraig de Brún & Máire Herbert, *Catalogue*, p. 98. Also see Cambridge University Library, Add Ms 6565. 94r.
 47. Mac Giolla Léith, *Oidheadh*, p. 27.
 48. In 1403 Niocol Ó hIcheadha wrote the medical manuscript, *Lile na hEladhan Leighis*. See Standish Hayes O’Grady, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1 (London, 1926), p. 222. For a translation of its colophon see Nessa Ní Shéaghda, ‘Notes on some scribal terms’, in James Carney & David Greene (eds.), *Celtic Studies: Essays in Memory of Angus Matheson 1912-1962* (Dublin, 1969), pp. 88–91.
 49. John O’Donovan (ed.), *The Tribes of Ireland: A Satire by Aenghus O’Daly...* (Dublin, 1852), p. 82; and O’Donovan & Curry, *Ordnance Survey*, p. 10.
 50. RIA Ms 24, M. 40, p. 96.
 51. I am indebted to Katherine Simms of Trinity College Dublin for her comments regarding ‘Clann Ui Chonirthinnidh’. According to Simms, this phrase is a garbled rendering of Clann Mhic an Oirchinnigh, where the final ‘c’ of ‘Mhic’ has become detached and assumed to the beginning of Chonirthinnidh, and the ‘an’ which is prefixed to the original ‘Oirchinnigh’, causing it to be compound as ‘on’ in Chonirthinnidh. The ‘ch’ in the original spelling of ‘Oirchinnigh’ has been transmuted to ‘th’ of Chonirthinnidh. In some genealogical manuscripts, the ‘mhic’ is often written as ‘ic’, therefore in this instance causing confusion between ‘ic’ and the ‘Ui’. The ‘Ui Chon’ here should really read as ‘Mhic an’, which appears in the collective form of the name, Clann Mhic an Oirchinnigh.
 52. R. Simington, *Books of Survey and Distribution, Being Abstracts of Various Surveys and Instruments of Title, 1636-1703* [Co. Clare] (Dublin, 1949), pp. 169, 171.
 53. NLI, Ms G193, p. 237.
 54. I thank Prof. Pádraig Ó Riain for his assistance with this translation.
 55. RIA Ms 24, M. 40, p. 59.
 56. I wish to thank Risteárd Ua Cróinín for his kind assistance in deciphering this note.
 57. RIA Ms 24, M. 40, pp. 40, 109.
 58. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
 60. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 61. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
 63. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
 64. i.e. ‘Micheál Ó Raghallaigh, author [of this verse] from Ennistymon.’ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 65. RIA Ms 24 M 40, p. 31.
 66. I wish to thank Risteárd Ua Cróinín for his kind assistance in deciphering this note.
 67. i.e. money, especially when gained in a dishonest or dishonourable manner.
 68. RIA Ms 24 M 40, p. 6.
 69. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
 70. *Ibid.*
 71. *Tithe Applotment Books*, Doorra parish (1825).
 72. I thank Prof. Pádraig Ó Riain for this reference. See James Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish deeds and writings chiefly relating to landed property from the twelfth to seventeenth century: with translation, notes and a preliminary essay’, *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, 15 (1826), pp. 1–95, pp. 71–2. It is recorded as ‘Ballybane’ in the 1586 inquisition of the lands of John McNamara Fionn, near other places in Bunratty parish. See Luke McNerney, ‘The West Clann Chuiléin Lordship in 1586: Evidence from a Forgotten Inquisition’, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 48 (2008), pp. 33–62, p. 58.
 73. *Tithe Applotment Books*, Bunratty parish (1828).
 74. See Eilís Ní Dheá, ‘Manuscript Men’, in Liam Irwin, (ed.), *Explorations: Centenary Essays* (Limerick, 1998), pp. 284–300.
 75. Frost, *History*, pp. 182–3.
 76. R.W. Twigge, *Materials for a History of Clann Cuilein*, British Library Add Ms 39262 [Twigge Collection], pp. 31–2.
 77. Sylvester O’Halloran, *An Introduction to and an History of Ireland*, 1 (Dublin 1803), p. 211.
 78. I thank Bernadette Cunningham of the Royal Irish Academy Library for her advice regarding this manuscript.
 79. RIA Ms 24 M 40, p. 1.
 80. RIA Ms 23 H 12, p. 201.
 81. On Ó hAnnrachain and other scribes from Kilrush see Eilís Ní Dheá, ‘Micheál Ó hAnnracháin agus a Chomhscríobhaithe i gCill Ruis’, *The Other Clare*, 17 (1993), pp. 45–7.
 82. RIA Ms 23 H 12, p. 201.
 83. *Modern Irish: Toraíocht*.
 84. I wish to thank Risteárd Ua Cróinín and Brian Ó Dálaigh for their advice in translating this note.
 85. See Prof. Pádraig Ó Riain, ‘Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge i gCill Chaoi’, *Éigse* 13 (1969-70), pp. 33–49.
 86. RIA Ms 24 M 40, p. 96.
 87. See www.duchas.ie
 88. *Griffith Valuation* (1855), Kilfearagh parish.
 89. *Second Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Enquiry* (1826–7) (q.v. Kilfearagh).
 90. On a detailed study of hedge schools see Antonia McManus, *The Irish Hedge School and its Books, 1695-1831* (Dublin, 2004).
 91. *Second Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Enquiry* (1826–7).
 92. Hugh Mac Curtin, *Elements of the Irish Language* (Louvain, 1728).