

## The Galloglass of Thomond: *Gallóglaigh Thuadhmhumhain*

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*Uaisle cinidh clann tShuibhne  
d'ighibh na nGall a ngeimhle  
ag ol cúach ri chloind tShuibhne  
Goill ag suirge a mbruach mheirghe<sup>1</sup>*

[The noble (conduct) of Clann Suibhne  
to the chained and fettered foreigners:  
drinking from the cups of Clann Suibhne's king,  
foreigners wooing at Bruach Mheirghe]<sup>2</sup>  
*Poem to Toirdhealbhach Mac Suibhne (d.1399)*

All armed in a cote of yron plate,  
Of great defence to ward the deadly feare,  
And on his head a steele cap he did weare  
Of colour rustie browne, but sure and strong;  
And in his hand an huge Polaxe did beare,  
Whose steale was yron studded, but not long,  
With which he wont to fight, to justifie his wrong.  
*Faerie Queene* (Book V, Cant. XII), 1596

### Introduction

The galloglass of medieval Ireland was the premier military kindred that supplied élite fighting men for Gaelic and Anglo-Norman lordships from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Like other sections of Gaelic society the galloglass were organised into hereditary professional kindreds whose branches were settled in various lordships in Ireland. Galloglass kindreds that became attached to different aristocratic patrons competed with each other and an *esprit de corps* formed around how they acquitted themselves on the field. Their profession of arms meant that their role was not limited to training and fighting on behalf of their patrons; they also served as bodyguards to lords and constituted an essential element in supplying the vanguard of Gaelic military forces.

Originally Scottish mercenaries of Gaelic-Norse extraction who acquired the appellation *gallóglach* ('foreign warrior') in the mid-thirteenth century when they were first recorded in the Irish annals,<sup>4</sup> by the later medieval period they had established distinct military kindreds from Donegal to Cork. The galloglass was celebrated in Gaelic poetry, genealogies and chronicles as a warrior caste that formed the central component of the

<sup>1</sup> *Uaisle cinidh Clann Shuibhne* in the 'Book of O'Conor Don' addressed to Toirdhealbhach (mac Maolmuire) Mac Suibhne [d.1399] by an anonymous poet.

<sup>2</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>3</sup> I wish to thank Edel Greene, Dr Benjamin Hazard, Dr Katharine Simms and Martin Breen for their comments on the paper. All photographs by the author.

<sup>4</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1264.

standing forces of any territorial lord of substance. As a symbol of their complete integration into existing Gaelic political-social hierarchies, we may point to their own commissioning of genealogical and historical texts such as the early sixteenth century tract known as *Leabhar Chlannine Suibhne*,<sup>5</sup> as well as poetry from hereditary bardic families,<sup>6</sup> and their inclusion into the corpus of later genealogical compilations such as Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh's *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach*, and Cú Choigríche Ó Cléirigh's collection of genealogies.<sup>7</sup> Galloglass kindreds are also recorded erecting towerhouses and patronising the Church through sponsoring new ecclesiastical foundations.<sup>8</sup>

Significant numbers of individual galloglass and their lineages settled principally in Ulster as the result of aristocratic marriage alliances. They also found refuge there as a consequence of dispossession of their lands in western Scotland during wars of Scottish independence in the thirteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Their reputation for military prowess and reliability in battle, coupled with a distinct professional outlook and organisation, not only distinguished them as the foot-soldiers of choice for Gaelic lords, but also earned them privileges such as favourable tenurial rights. Moreover, their chief men or 'constables' were appointed as advisers to Gaelic lords and were granted towerhouses and estates in various lordships. As indispensable figures and counsellors to aristocratic families, rival galloglass kindreds spawned sub-branches in a manner akin to a 'corporate entity' whereby their profession of arms was enthusiastically embraced by cadet branches, and that networks based around lineage and military service were maintained between senior and junior branches.

By the sixteenth century if not earlier a permanent settlement of Clann Suibhne (*anglice* Mac Sweeney) galloglass occurred in Thomond where they served the ruling Uí Bhriain (O'Brien) family. Like the poets, historians and other members of the *aos dána*, or learned class, galloglass were rewarded for their professional services by land grants. This paper attempts to trace the origin of Clann Suibhne of Thomond and provide detail on their landholding, genealogy and profession of arms. Firstly, however, it is necessary to give an overview of the galloglass kindreds that so successfully proliferated throughout Ireland and came to be an essential part of the military forces of Gaelic lords.

### Gaelic military kindreds

Foremost of the galloglass lineages which can be identified as a military kindred was Clann Suibhne who were settled by the Uí Dhomhnaill in north Donegal at Fánad in the territory of Tír Chonaill, where they held the stronghold of Doe Castle (*Caisleán na*

<sup>5</sup> On a description of the tract see Bernadette Cunningham & Siobhán Fitzpatrick, *Aon amharc ar Éirinn: Gaelic families and their manuscripts* (Dublin, 2013) pp 28–30. The 'book' is a collection of three manuscripts, one which is a miscellany of religious material, the second which is a history of Clann Suibhne, and the third a *duanaire*, or poem-book, of Clann Suibhne.

<sup>6</sup> Katharine Simms, 'Images of the galloglass in poems to the MacSweeneys', in Seán Duffy (ed.), *The World of the Galloglass: Kings, warlords and warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600* (Dublin, 2007) pp 106–23.

<sup>7</sup> See Mac Fhirbhisigh's genealogies printed in Paul Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar Chlannine Suibhne: an account of the Mac Sweeney families in Ireland with pedigrees* (Dublin, 1920) pp 81–90. On the Ó Cléirigh genealogies see *ibid.*, pp 91–115. On the full genealogies also see: Dubhaltach MacFhirbhisigh, Nollaig Ó Muraile, (ed.), *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach: The Great Book of Irish Genealogies* (Dublin, 2003-4); and Séamus Pender (ed) 'The O Clery Book of Genealogies', *Analecta Hibernica*, 18 (1951), pp 1–198.

<sup>8</sup> According to Tadhg Mac Fithil, compiler of *Craobhsgeoileadh Chlannine Suibhne*, the monastery of Rathmullen in Donegal was founded by the wife of Ruaidhrí Mac Suibhne in 1516. She also erected a great hall for Franciscan friars at Donegal. Her husband Ruaidhrí Mac Suibhne also built the castle at Rathmullen at that time. Clann Suibhne were responsible for building Moross castle in 1532. See Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, pp 67, 73.

<sup>9</sup> M. Pia Coira, *By Poetic Authority: The Rhetoric of Panegyric in Gaelic Poetry of Scotland to c.1700*, (Edinburgh, 2012) p. 191.

*dTuath*). They were followed by the Meic Domhnaill, Meic Cába and other groups that initially settled in different lordships in Ulster.

It has been argued that the first galloglass which came to Ireland from Scotland came as part of the dowry goods of the daughter of Dubhghall mac Ruaidhri, Lord of Garmoran, in Argyll who married Aodh na nGall Ó Conchobhair in 1259.<sup>10</sup> The annals assert that the dowry consisted of 160 *óglaigh* or young fighting men.<sup>11</sup> But one of the early uses of the term *gallóglach* appears in the annals for 1290 in the context of an intra Uí Dhomhnaill feud for the lordship of Tír Chonaill.<sup>12</sup> However, given the type of extensive contacts between the Scottish *gàidhealtachd* and the Gaelic lordships of Ulster, it is feasible to assume that a trade in mercenary galloglass had grown up even earlier than these recordings, perhaps half a century earlier, a possibility entertained at length by Seán Duffy in his cogent piece on the subject.<sup>13</sup>

The hiring of mercenary troops by Gaelic lords was not new and indeed we can go back to probably the most famous of such instances when the Leinster king, Diarmuid Mac Murchadha, sought Anglo-Norman aid to regain his kingdom in 1169. In the context of the Uí Bhriain lordship of Thomond, one of the earliest references exists in the mid-fourteenth century saga-text *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh*. We read in this tract that during the internecine warfare between rival Uí Bhriain branches and the De Clare Anglo-Norman colony of *Tradraighe*,<sup>14</sup> the Comyn family (*Cuimínchib*) were used by the Uí Bhriain as paid ‘auxiliaries’ or mercenaries. The Comyn’s settlement in west Clare would suggest that they acquired lands as a result of their military support to Clann Thaidhg, the winning faction of the Uí Bhriain.<sup>15</sup> Four references in the *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh* spell out the role of the Comyns as mercenaries for the Uí Bhriain:

[1312]... *cosmail risna cuimínchib; a gcomlonn d’iarr mar Ercail*  
[not many are like the Comyns; whose fighting powers, as though he had been Hercules]<sup>16</sup>

[1313]... *do chomtinólatar a charait chuige ann sin .i. clann in Chuimínig agus blagh do na búrcachaib*  
[Hither again his auxiliaries (the Comyn’s sons and a detachment of the Burkes)]<sup>17</sup>

[1314]... *Muircertach d’iarraidh a charat cumachtach do chosnam a tíre cona taobimlib .i. Uilliam binnglórach brethfoisdinech Búrc, agus Tomás Buitilér cona borbsluaghaib, agus na cuimínigh*  
[Murtough went on to solicit his powerful friends for help to win him his own land with its circumference: I mean Mac William-Burke, Thomas Butler and the Comyns].<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Seán Duffy, ‘The prehistory of the Galloglass’, in Seán Duffy (ed.), *The World of the Galloglass: Kings, warlords and warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600* (Dublin, 2007) pp 1–23:1.

<sup>11</sup> *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1259.

<sup>12</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1290.

<sup>13</sup> Duffy, ‘Galloglass’, pp 1–23.

<sup>14</sup> *Tradraighe* roughly equates to Lower Bunratty barony.

<sup>15</sup> They are recorded holding lands in Ibrickan in 1615. See Luke McNerney, ‘The Earl of Thomond’s 1615 Survey of Ibrickan, Co. Clare’, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 53 (2013) pp 173–91, pp 186–7.

<sup>16</sup> Seán mac Ruaidhri Mac Craith, *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh: The Triumphs of Turlough*, trans. S.H. O’Grady (ed.), (London, 1929) (v.1) p. 69, (v.2) p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* (v.1) p. 71, (v.2) p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, (v.1) p. 78, (v.2) p. 70.

[1315]... *Mhuircertaigh mic Saidbe agus soar Torrdelbaigh: do thinóil co tindeseach ar thuaras [t]laib tromsluagh allmarrach agus uasal-gháidhel. i. cland Briain mic Murcaid mic mórDonnchaid, agus na cundúnaigh cath-airbreca, agus na cuimínigh*  
 [Murtough, son of [O’Kennedy’s daughter] Sabia and of Turlough More, retained for wages a copious force of both Gall and Gael: Brian mac Murrough mac Donough [O’Brien’s] sons [and followers], the Condons and the Comyns]<sup>19</sup>

These are the first references to mercenaries used in Thomond in this period. The Comyns were an Anglo-Norman family settled in Scotland and heavily involved in the wars of independence. A branch of them relocated to Ireland in the aftermath of the Anglo-Norman invasion where they established a lineage in Thomond.<sup>20</sup> The reference to them ‘retained for wages’ implies that a system of mercenary employment operated in Thomond. In another passage of the *Caithréim Thoirdhealbháigh* we read that the Irish combatants were ‘mail-clad men’, indicating that the forces used were heavily armoured and had adopted, at least to some degree, the type of military equipment and arms of their Anglo-Norman foes.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Conditions of service, training and payment***

By the fifteenth century the type of military kindreds that had emerged in Gaelic territories were the galloglass families, many with Scottish origins, settled on the mensal land of their lordly patrons. There they comprised a lord’s chief followers, and they were put in charge of castles and the lord’s household troops. Like other professional classes in Gaelic society such as the hereditary poets, lawyers, historians, superior craftsmen and physicians, the galloglass kindreds were enchartered on the estates of Gaelic lords and were endowed with lands, often which they held under favourable tenurial conditions.

Thus in 1607 Sir John Davies wrote that there ‘were lands given to certain septs privileged among the Irish, viz., the lands of the chroniclers, ryhmers and galloglass’.<sup>22</sup> According to Gerard A. Hayes-McCoy, Gaelic lords not only recruited from galloglass kindreds whose members supplied the constable and upper echelons of their ranks and whose presence helped maintain a link to their Scottish origins, but they also replenished galloglass numbers by recruiting from the native Irish population.<sup>23</sup> These recruits constituted the rank-and-file of the galloglass force. To this end the kindreds, while identifying with their Scottish lineage origins, were essentially composite kindreds where

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, (v.1) p. 84, (v.2) p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> E. St. John Brooks, ‘The Early Irish Comyns’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 86:2 (1956) pp 170–86. Also see the pedigree of Edward Comyn of Kilcorcoran dated 1756 and translated from a Latin manuscript seemingly in support of Edward Comyn’s application to be a Justice of the Peace. The pedigree commences by stating: ‘the Comyn family of Ibricane in the northwest part of the County of Clare in Ireland are originally of the ancient family of the Earl of Buchans family in Scotland who lived in the reign of Alexander the third king of Scotland in the year of our lord 1249 of which the family by the several revolutions in Scotland the title being extinct, none remains of the right line of that Earl but this family settled in Ireland’. See RIA MS 24.B 11 [appendix]. I thank Margaret Gallery for her transcription of this passage from the manuscript.

<sup>21</sup> Mac Craith, *Caithréim*, (v.2), pp 14, 36.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Morley, *Ireland under Elizabeth and James the First* (London, 1890) p. 364.

<sup>23</sup> Gerard A. Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland, 1565-1603* (Dublin 1937) pp 69–72. He uses examples of individuals mentioned in the Fiants to illustrate the point that the ‘gentlemen’ class of the galloglass were a minority and represented an ‘older hereditary element, a relic of the times when the gallógláigh were homogenous’.

the chief fighting men were nobles and lineal descendants of the Scottish galloglass families, but the bulk of their military force were, certainly by the later medieval period, of native Irish origin.

It is likely that those early Scottish galloglass kindreds that migrated to Ulster in the thirteenth century – namely Clann Suibhne, Clann Domhnaill, Clann Síthigh, Clann Ruaidhri, Clann Dubhghaill and Clann Cába – owed their initial success to military experience gained from the Scottish wars of independence.<sup>24</sup> The feudalised structure of parts of the Scottish *gàidhealtachd*, and the demand for hardened fighting men for Edward Bruce's campaign in Ireland, must have stimulated innovations in military practice among suppliers of galloglass in western Scotland, thus contributing to their success. In order to assimilate the skills of the galloglass over generations, it is reasonable to assume that a system of training or apprenticeship operated.

According to Barnaby Rich (d.1617) an English veteran of the Nine Years War, 'if the father hath been a galloglass, the son will be a galloglass'.<sup>25</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by the writer of a tract titled 'A description of the Power of Irishmen' in c.1540, who noted that 'their sons learn to be men of war from the age of 16 years and be continually practised in toils thereof'.<sup>26</sup> Elizabethan soldier and publicist, Thomas Gainsford (d.1624), observed that the Gaelic professional classes 'live in a kindred, the father instructing the son, or brother, and he his cousin or friend'.<sup>27</sup> A similar system of instruction must have taken place for members of the established galloglass kindreds, probably undertaken in a close-knit environment with other kin.<sup>28</sup>

The galloglass were characterised as a mail-clad, trained warrior infantry, to be depended upon as a reliable defensive force suitable for pitched fights rather than skirmish actions. In this manner they differed from other troops raised by Gaelic lords. Lightly armed troops such as the kern (*ceithern*) that were typically used for hit-and-run operations, and mounted infantrymen along with nobles on horseback, comprised the bulk of Gaelic military forces in the later medieval period.<sup>29</sup> The annals and other sources make it clear that the galloglass and other companies of troops (including the 'household' troops known as *ceithern tigh* who acted more like a lord's personal retinue) were distinct from each other, including their military dress, equipment and social status.<sup>30</sup>

There exists a number of accounts about the galloglass by Elizabethan writers in Ireland including Edmund Spencer who described them wearing a quilted 'jack' under their 'shirts of mail, and which footmen they call gallowglases ... and he being so armed in a long shirt of mail down to the calf of his leg, with a long broad axe in his hand'.<sup>31</sup> Richard Stanihurst, (d.1618) an Anglo-Irishman, described them as 'tall of stature, big of

<sup>24</sup> John Marsden, *Galloglas: Hebridean and West Highland Mercenary Warrior Kindreds in Medieval Ireland* (East Linton, 2003) p. 120.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Fergus Cannan, *Galloglass 1250-1600: Gaelic Mercenary Warrior* (Oxford, 2010) p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Liam Price, 'Armed Forces of the Irish Chiefs in the Early 16th Century', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 2:2 (1932) pp 201-7:207.

<sup>27</sup> Luke McNerney, 'A description of Ireland: A.D. 1618', *The Other Clare*, 36 (2012) pp 33-7:36.

<sup>28</sup> On earlier forms of military training and organisation see W. K. Sullivan (ed.), Eugene O'Curry, *On the manners and customs of the ancient Irish: a series of lectures*, ii, (London, 1873) pp 355-92.

<sup>29</sup> For a description of Gaelic forces and comments on their equipment see Seán Ó Domhnaill, 'Warfare in sixteenth-century Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 5:17 (1946-7) pp 29-54. On a more recent view see Katharine Simms, 'Gaelic warfare in the middle ages', in Thomas Bartlett & Keith Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996) pp 99-115.

<sup>30</sup> Simon Kingston, *Ulster and the Isles in the fifteenth century: The lordship of Clann Domhnaill of Antrim*, (Dublin, 2004) pp 174-5.

<sup>31</sup> Morley, *Ireland under Elizabeth and James the First*, p. 110.

limb, burly of body, well and strongly timbered; chiefly feeding on beef, pork, and butter.<sup>32</sup> Their equipment primarily consisted of a conical steel cap or bascinet-type helmet (*cinnbert*), shirt of mail (*luirech*) and a pole-axe (*tuagh*),<sup>33</sup> with other protective clothing underneath like a quilted tunic or *cotún*. They are also found in depictions on medieval grave-slabs and funerary monuments holding two-handed swords, such as we find at Kilmartin in Argyll or the stone effigy of the warriors on the Ó Conchobhar tomb at Roscommon who wear bascinet caps, mail coats and clutch two-handed swords.

The galloglass were organised into battalions or ‘battles’ of up to eighty men (‘spars’). Each galloglass would have had at least one retainer or a harness-bearer to carry his weapons and render him support during combat. According to a report in the State Papers:

A ‘battayle’ of galloglass is 60 or 80 harnessed men on foot, with spears. Every one of these men has his knave to bear his harness, whereof some have spears and others bows. Every [...] hath a bow and a sheef [of arrows], or three spears, without harness, and every two have a boy to bear their necessaries. Every horseman has two horses, and some have three, a jack well harnessed, for the most part a sword, a ‘skene’, a great spear and a dart. Every horse hath his knave, and their chief horse is ever led, and one of his kernes ride[s] always and bears his harness and spears if he has harness. They are for the most part good and hardy men of war, and can hard[i]ly suffer great misery, and will adventure themselves greatly against their enemies. [...] These men hate the King’s laws and, notwithstanding any gifts, will on occasion do their best for their own advantage. They make themselves strong and take the goods of other subjects when they please, as their own proper goods. When the lord dies the strongest succeeds: and the son seldom succeeds the father. They get many children besides their lawfully begotten, whereof all be gentlemen. Their father’s lands, purchases and farms are divided equally between them. They teach their sons to be men of war from the age of 16, and continually practised in feats thereof.<sup>34</sup>

The conditions of service of the galloglass must have changed over the centuries when they first come to the attention of the annalists in the thirteenth century. We know that billeting and tax arrangements were in place for the Scottish galloglass under Ó Néill in Ulster from at least 1316.<sup>35</sup> An early sixteenth century tract contains an agreement between Clann Suibhne and their overlord and employer, Ó Domhnaill Lord of Tír Chonaill. Revealingly, it speaks of the type of equipment that galloglass were expected to supply and how they were billeted on a lord’s territory. It also implies that the military system that had prevailed hitherto allowed for individual galloglasses to enter into agreements with other lords to fight; this agreement makes it clear that that system,

<sup>32</sup> On Stanihurst’s comments on the galloglass see Richard Stanihurst, *De rebus in Hibernia gestis* (Antwerp, 1584) pp 41–2. Also see Francis H. Tuckey, *The county and city of Cork: remembrancer or annals of the county and city of Cork* (Cork, 1837) p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> The axe of the galloglass has received considerable attention by scholars. See Gerard Hayes-McCoy, ‘The Gallóglach axe’, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 17 (1937) pp 101–21. The galloglass axe was still an essential part of their military kit, right up to the end of the sixteenth century. See Seán Ó Domhnaill, ‘Warfare in sixteenth-century Ireland’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 5:17 (1946) pp 29–54:37.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Mahaffy (ed.), *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, 1601–03 (with addenda, 1565–1654) and of the Hammer Papers Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1912) pp 665–6.

<sup>35</sup> Katharine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords* (Woodbridge, 2000) p. 122.

regarded as a Scottish mercenary ‘habit’, was replaced by an arrangement whereby their services were exclusively supplied to Ó Domhnaill.

Presumably this was a pre-condition of their permanent settlement on lands and entering into a long-term vassalage arrangement. It also implied that Clann Suibhne were sub-infeuded in their own sub-lordship and were required to provide a levy for Ó Domhnaill and billeting rights over lesser landholders. There is no reason to think that such agreements were not secured by other Gaelic lords interested in the contractual certainty of their galloglasses, especially in the event of a general ‘rising-out’ of a lordship:

*Et as annsin do cumadh galloglaig ar Chlann tSuibhne 7 as amlaid so do cumadh iatt .i. diass as in cethramuin 7 da bho as an bfer nach fuighthi dibh .i. bó as in duine 7 bo as in éidegh 7 is amlaid aderid Clann tSuibne sin do beith orra .i. luirech 7 sgabal fa fher dibh 7 seca 7 cinnbert fan dara fer dib 7 gan cáin sa cinnbert acht inchinn an galloglaig 7 gan cain sa tuaigh acht sgilling ag consabal 7 bonn sa nga 7 can buain acc O nDomnaill re nechtar aca 7 as amlaid do batar roime sin gan eirge amach can shluaigedh orra ag nech ar bith acht acc an tí do thoigeoratis fein 7 issé nos an hAlban do bi aca conuige sin .i. gach duine as a doman fein.<sup>36</sup>*

[and it was then that a levy of galloglasses was made on Clann Suibhne, and this is how the levy was made: two galloglasses for each quarter of land, and two cows for each galloglass deficient, that is, one cow for the man himself and one for his equipment. And Clann Suibhne say they are responsible for these as follows, that for each man equipped with a coat of mail and a breastplate, another should have a jack and helmet; that there should be no forfeit for a helmet deficient except the galloglasses brain [dashed out for want of it] and no fine for a missing axe except a shilling, nor for a spear, except a groat, which shilling and groat the Constable should get, and Ó Domhnaill had no claim to make for either. And previous to this arrangement no lord had a claim on them for a rising-out or a hosting, but they might serve whomsoever they wished. It was the Scottish habit [of military service] they had observed until that time, namely, each man according as he was employed.]<sup>37</sup>

From this it is clear that the organisation of the galloglass rested on a sophisticated system of fees and charges to sustain a ready force of military men. Contracts and bonds of vassalage also underwrote the economic relationship between Clann Suibhne and their employers the Uí Dhomhnaill. While it is not possible to fully detail here the fiscal system that sustained the professional followers of Gaelic lords such as the galloglass, it is well known that they provided services in exchange for exemptions on tributes of money, cattle or foodstuffs. They greatly benefited from the arrangement known as *buannacht* (*anglice* ‘bonnacht’), otherwise the quartering of galloglasses on the countryside where farmers and tenants were required to feed and lodge them.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> K. W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 2003) p. 104. The apex of the system was reached in the late sixteenth century as we read in the proclamation by Aodh Mór Ó Néill issued from Dungannon in 1601 which set out the terms of quartering and hiring *buannadha* (professional foot soldiers living on ‘cess’ or *buannacht*), showing how extensive the system was by that time. The system was derived from centuries of galloglass maintenance. See M. Ó Báille, ‘The Buannadha: Irish Professional Soldiery of the Sixteenth Century’, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 22 (1946-7) pp 49–94.

In the sixteenth century Toirdhealbhach Mac Suibhne agreed to foster the son of Ó Domhnaill, Lord of Tír Chonaill, besides receiving offers of fishing rights, rights of billeting ‘six scores of axes’ (i.e. fully equipped galloglass) on the territory of Tír Chonaill, as well as grants of lands and the privilege of sitting at Ó Domhnaill’s right-hand at feasts.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, we find in the survey of the forfeited lands of the earl of Desmond that the galloglass of Clann Síthigh were entitled to wages from the lands of landholders in his domains.<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere in the survey of the Desmond estates references to Mac Síthigh kinsmen shows that they possessed particular lands,<sup>41</sup> forming not only sinews of power and authority but also an important component in the political economy of Gaelic lordships.

### Clann Suibhne of Thomond

The origins and organisation of the galloglass having been briefly outlined above, we are now at liberty to discuss Clann Suibhne of Thomond. According to the sixteenth century genealogy and historical tract of Clann Suibhne titled *Craobhsgaoileadh Chlainne Suibhne*,<sup>42</sup> the kindred came to Tír Chonaill from Castle Sween in Knapdale in western Scotland and dispossessed the native inhabitants before settling in two waves. The earliest record of a Mac Suibhne in Ulster – the progenitor of the Irish kindred – was Murchadh Mac Suibhne in 1267 whose father was Maolmhuire an Sparáin of Castle Sween, himself the son of Suibhne (*a quo* Clann Suibhne).<sup>43</sup> In reality their settlement in Ulster was probably on account of being under pressure from the feudal expansion of the earldom of Menteith into Knapdale which had passed to the Stewarts after 1258.<sup>44</sup> After a period of settlement and consolidation in Tír Chonaill they spawned three principal septs: Clann Suibhne of Fánad who held Rathmullin Castle, Clann Suibhne of Banagh, and Clann Suibhne *na dTuath* who held Doe Castle.<sup>45</sup>

Various branches of the kindred spread out of Tír Chonaill, with a branch serving Ó Néill in Tír Eoghan. By the late fourteenth century they were in Connacht and attached to factions of the Uí Chonchobhair and the Anglo-Norman Clanrikard Burkes. After this time other family branches passed into the service of the Uí Bhriain of Thomond and the great Anglo-Norman family, the Butlers of Ormond. By the end of the fifteenth century they were settled in Cork as military followers of the Meic Carthaigh, Lords of Desmond, while their competitors and foes, Clann Síthigh, became attached to the Geraldines, earls of Kildare and Desmond.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, pp 43–4. Sitting at his right hand during feasts was a privilege that was also probably related to Mac Suibhne’s role as a personal body-guard to Ó Domhnaill.

<sup>40</sup> For Connello Barony the Desmond Survey (1597-8) notes that 324 quarters were charged with a ‘bonnybegg of 224 galloglass a company that remained at one place all the year round so as to be ready at an hour’s warning viz: 112 Galloglasse and 112 boys meat and drink at the country’s charge.’ See Lambeth Palace Library, ‘Carew Manuscript 625’, printed in John A. Murphy (ed.), *The Desmond Survey*, p. 103 (published by CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> For example see the reference to Rorie McShehie of Ballyeleyan including the castle of Kyllcollman in the Desmond Survey. *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> The tract was written by Tadhg Mac Fithil in 1532-44 with later additions of a miscellaneous nature by Torna mac Torna and another scribe. Cunningham & Fitzpatrick, *Aon amharc ar Éirinn*, pp 28–30.

<sup>43</sup> Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, pp 7–9.

<sup>44</sup> Marsden, *Galloglas*, p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> On a detailed discussion of the various galloglass kindreds see Kenneth Nicholls, ‘Scottish mercenary kindreds in Ireland, 1250-1600’ in Seán Duffy (ed.), *The World of the Galloglass: Kings, warlords and warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600* (Dublin, 2007) pp 86–105.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland*, p. 101.

It is not known when Clann Suibhne settled in Thomond. As already discussed, they did not feature in the mid-fourteenth century text *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* where it is noted that the Uí Bhriain employed the Comyns as mercenaries. According to the genealogies (see appendix) the lineage which settled in Thomond derived from Domhnall na Madhmann ('of the defeats') who is identified in the annals as fighting in an engagement in 1419 at Killogeleen in Galway for Clanrikard Burke and the latter's allies, the Uí Bhriain and the Clann Chuilén (i.e. the Meic Conmara).<sup>47</sup> One genealogy describes him as '*na madhmann ón Ráithghlais i cCloinn Riocaird bhéos*.'<sup>48</sup> *Ráithghlais* (Rathglass) is the parish of Killaan in Galway and if Clann Suibhne had a settlement there in the early fifteenth century then it may be assumed, although impossible to now substantiate, that after this date they settled in Thomond. Moreover, if we consider that Clann Suibhne were in south Munster by the mid-fifteenth century<sup>49</sup> it is feasible that their settlement in Thomond occurred at an earlier date. From this we can deduce that they probably settled in Thomond at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

One wonders if references preserved in the hagiographical text, *Miorbuile Senáin* ('The Miracles of Senán'), about happenings at Inis Cathaigh's monastic community during the fourteenth century, hint at the billeting of kern and galloglass. The text mentions that Donnchadh Ó Briain quartered bands and bonnaghts (*slóigh & a buannadha*) on Inis Cathaigh's church lands, including ten men quartered on the community of St Senán, as well as bonnaghts on the coarb and steward of the bell.<sup>50</sup> While not explicitly mentioning galloglass *per se*, their involvement remains a possibility. Alternatively, these comparatively early references may suggest that the levies billeted were kern or local troops quartered on the church lands rather than galloglass or other mercenaries.

We are on firmer ground with a document written in c.1540 with the purpose of assessing the military forces of Irish lordships. The document confirms the retention of galloglass 'battles' by the Meic Conmara of Clann Chuilén and their Uí Bhriain overlords: 'McNemarry, lord of Clinchollan' could muster 200 horse, 1 battle of galloglass and DC [600] kern.<sup>51</sup> Murchadh Ó Briain, the king of Thomond, was estimated to have fielded 200 horse, 2 battles of galloglass and DC [600] kern.<sup>52</sup> None of the other lords such as 'McMahowne' or 'O Loglin' were recorded as fielding galloglass, evidence that they remained a luxury only affordable to the larger lords and dynastic families.<sup>53</sup> Ó Briain's capacity to muster more galloglass was surely an essential ingredient in his claim as Thomond's territorial lord *par excellence*. This confirms that galloglass kindreds were well established in Thomond and attached to the aristocratic families by the mid-sixteenth century.

Despite their presence in Thomond during this period only occasionally do they feature in the annals. They first appear in the annals for Thomond in 1564 when dissention arose between rival branches of the Uí Bhriain that resulted in the employment of Clann

<sup>47</sup> *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1419.

<sup>48</sup> Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, p. 88.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp xliv, 57.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Plummer, 'The Miracles of Senán', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 10 (Halle/Saale, 1914) pp 1–35:17, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Price, 'Armed Forces', p. 204. The contemporary source also stated that 'a batayle of Galoglas by 60 or 80 men harneysed on foot w[i]th sparrs everi one wherof hath his knave to beare his harneys wherof sume have speares sume have bowes'. The reference to 'knave' indicates that the galloglass were served by a retinue that included a man-servant and a horse-boy, making them a fighting unit of three men.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Simms, *Kings to Warlords*, p. 124.

Suibhne and Clann Síthigh who were billeted on the countryside and ravaged it of cattle as payment for their services.<sup>54</sup> The description in the annalistic entry that the ‘bonnachtmen’ came from beyond the Shannon is likely a reference to Clann Síthigh who were settled in Limerick and other parts of Munster. Galloglass troops from other territories were involved in Thomond at this period. In May 1570 the earl of Ormond entered Thomond with a large force including 400 galloglass and banished Conchobhar Ó Briain, the third earl, who fled to France only to be restored to the earldom after seeking a pardon.<sup>55</sup>

Subsequent annals refer to Clann Suibhne’s activities in Thomond such as the conflict that erupted in 1573 between Domhnall Ó Briain and the third earl of Thomond, Conchobhar Ó Briain, and his brother Toirdhealbhach. The annals relate that a ‘select body’ of galloglass of Clann Síthigh were brought into Thomond from beyond the Shannon, while ‘youths’ (*gall-ócclách*)<sup>56</sup> of Giolla-Dubh Mac Suibhne, himself a descendant of Domhnall na Madhmann the progenitor of the Thomond branch, fought a battle at the hill of Bel-an-Chip in east Clare.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, we read in the annals that when the forces of Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill made an incursion into Thomond in 1599 he was accompanied by his chief constable of galloglass, Mac Suibhne of Banagh, who plundered the Burren.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Galloglass to Ó Briain***

Returning to the system of bonnacht that enabled the chief lords to support galloglass levies in times of peace and for ready mobilisation, we are fortunate that for Thomond a document exists which codified the fiscal obligations that underpinned their settlement. The mid-fifteenth century *Suim Ciosa Ua Briain* (‘rental of O’Brien’) makes reference to immunities granted to the Meic Fhlannchadha brehon family of *Tuath Ghlae* (Killilagh) in Corcomroe, in respect to their standing as a learned family.<sup>59</sup> The recording of these immunities appears after a description of rents payable to Ó Briain such as the billeting of galloglasses (*galloglacaibh*) and levying of ‘royalties’ (*bonna agus bairr*), or a ‘bonnacht’, on lands in Killilagh and elsewhere during peacetime and in war.<sup>60</sup>

It is clear from the text that the bonnacht of the galloglass was imposed on certain quarters in Corcomroe such as at Killilagh, and on certain quarters around Kilfenora, and also at Carran in the Burren and around Noughaval and Kilcorney.<sup>61</sup> What is less clear is the role of ‘sportsmen’ (*gilladaibh*) who were also billeted on parts of the country such as at Killilagh, but the context infers that they might have had a military role. The galloglass enjoyed billeting rights elsewhere in Thomond, but we are hampered by the paucity of material in reconstructing the system with any degree of precision.

Two undated brehon deeds record dues owed for maintaining galloglass. One deed written sometime between the 1570s-90s<sup>62</sup> refers to ‘Crappoge’ (*recte* Knappoge) in Kilchreest being ‘free in every respect except giving their portion to galloglasses alone’. The

<sup>54</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1564.

<sup>55</sup> Mary O’Dowd, *Calendar of State Papers Ireland: Tudor Period 1571-1575* (Kew & Dublin, 2000) p. 274.

<sup>56</sup> This should be read as ‘galloglass’.

<sup>57</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1573.

<sup>58</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1599.

<sup>59</sup> Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, p. 42.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 37–8. I thank Dr Katharine Simms for her advice on this matter.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 41–3.

<sup>62</sup> The date is inferred on the basis that Tadhg Mac Mathghamhna mentioned in the deed is Teige (Tadhg) who held the towerhouses of ‘Dangen my buyrke’, ‘Clonyetheralla’, ‘Cahiracon’, ‘Ballamacollman’ and ‘Derecrossan’ in 1574. This

other deed, probably written in the 1590s, refers to the purchase of land at Carrowancalla in Kilrush that was sold on account of a brehon decree and which cost the freeholder 18 cows, of which 16 cows ‘went to galloglasses’ and payments to a brehon.<sup>63</sup> From these two decrees it is clear that galloglasses were billeted in southwest Clare on territories that were under the local lordship of the Meic Mhathghamhna.

It may be possible, however, to reconstruct aspects of the galloglass system by considering details gleaned from other sources. There exists a relevant reference in an inquisition into the lands held by Seán Mac Conmara Fionn, Lord of Clann Chuiléin, in 1586. The inquisition, in recounting the overlord rights that Ó Briain claimed during times of war in Mac Conmara’s territory, noted that during a ‘rising-out’ his ancestors had one footman upon every quarter of land with victuals for two days; if their service exceeded two days Ó Briain was himself liable to find them ‘meate and drinke upon his owne chardge’.<sup>64</sup> This system of military service likely prevailed throughout Thomond. The quartering of footmen on every quarter and a specified time when victuals could be provided at the cost of Ó Briain’s allies probably resembled, if not in structure then in spirit, the type of system that governed the mobilisation of Ó Briain’s galloglass at times of war, albeit the latter would include the billeting of the lord’s galloglass, or ‘bonaght-beg’ on quarters.

It is uncertain whether the references to galloglass in *Suim Cíosa Ua Briain* for Corcomroe signify galloglass of Clann Suibhne billeted on specific quarters. Only in later documents can we be certain that members of Clann Suibhne had not only become enchartered on the Uí Bhriain estates, but also became attached to Ó Briain as his chief constable and, in at least one instance, his personal official of his chamber, or to use modern parlance, his ‘bodyguard’.

In a curious note about the nobility of Thomond written in *c.*1567 the anonymous author described the earl of Thomond having under him ‘Oyn McSwyny, captain of the Earl’s galloglaghes’.<sup>65</sup> This galloglass was, no doubt, a *gallóglach tighearna*, otherwise a ‘lord’s galloglass’, and held this designation in right of his hereditary position and martial experience. He must have succeeded his kinsman, Conchobhar Mac Suibhne, recorded in the annals as *consapal Tuadhmmumhan* who was slain in combat in 1559.<sup>66</sup> According to a list of castles in Thomond compiled for the earl of Ormond in 1570, a ‘Colle Mac Swyne chief capten of the gallowglas of the country’ held the castle of Kilkee.<sup>67</sup> This description is evidence enough that Colla Mac Suibhne held the position of constable or captain of the earl of Thomond’s galloglass and held Kilkee castle in exchange for military services rendered to Ó Briain. A further list of castles, compiled in 1574 by Edward White, recorded ‘Owen McSwyne’ as the possessor of ‘Dunymulvihill’, ‘Carigentogher’

Tadhg Mac Mathghamhna, Lord of East Corkavaskin, died in 1594. The deed was written by Conchobhar Mac Cruitin who is probably the same individual recorded in another Mac Mathghamhna deed in 1576. See Hardiman (ed.), ‘Irish deeds’, pp 15–16. Also see Gearóid Mac Niocaill, ‘Seven Irish Documents in the Inchiquin Archives’, *Analecta Hibernica*, 26 (1970) pp 47–69:51. See *AFM*, *sub anno* 1594; and R.W. Twigge, ‘Edward White’s Description of Thomond in 1574’, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 1:2 (1910) pp 75–85:80.

<sup>63</sup> Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, pp 17–18.

<sup>64</sup> Luke McInerney, ‘The West *Clann Chuiléin* Lordship in 1586: Evidence from a Forgotten Inquisition’, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 48 (2008) pp 33–62:61.

<sup>65</sup> K.W. Nicholls, ‘A Commentary on the Nobility and Gentry of Thomond, Circa 1567’, *The Irish Genealogist*, 4: 2 (1969) pp 65–73:69.

<sup>66</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1559.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Breen, ‘A 1570 List of Castles in County Clare’, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 36 (1995) pp 130–8:133.

and ‘Bealefirvearnayn’ towerhouses.<sup>68</sup> Holding three towerhouses, all of which situated at Inchicronan in east Clare, and one of which was built by Toirdhealbhach Ó Briain (d.1525) bishop of Killaloe,<sup>69</sup> suggests that Owen McSwyne was holding them as a grant from Ó Briain.

As we have discussed in the foregoing, galloglass served not only as constables and fighting men, but also as personal retainers of Gaelic lords. Essentially they held the dual role of bodyguard and official-advisor. Kenneth Nicholls has pointed out a reference in the Petworth House papers which refers to a former galloglass who in a lawsuit of 1605 stated that he served the third earl of Thomond (d.1580) and ‘waited on him in his chamber’.<sup>70</sup> Being so privy to the person of the earl this reference unequivocally demonstrates the point that chief men of Clann Suibhne had by the late sixteenth century, if not earlier, attained the high ranking position of personal galloglass to Ó Briain.

We may also submit that many personal followers that comprised Ó Briain’s retinue, as so often was the case in Gaelic lordships, held their position out of hereditary right. What is less certain is the relationship between these hereditary offices to each other. According to Seathrún Céitinn it was Mac Gormáin who served as marshal to Ó Briain, but what was the relationship between Ó Briain’s ‘marshal of the hosts’ (*a mharuscáil sluaigh*)<sup>71</sup> and his Clann Suibhne galloglass? The details are not easily divined from existing sources. While it can be determined that in managing their lordship the Uí Bhriain (like the Meic Conmara in east Clare) used hereditary stewards to levy and collect rents and food-tribute,<sup>72</sup> it is less certain where the professional galloglass fitted into the administration of lordship. In all likelihood they subsisted outside the machinery of a lordship’s administration such as the collection of rents. Instead they imposed a burden on the freeholders and farmers required to sustain them with food and lodging while they readied themselves for military action. Matters such as law enforcement and other issues of domestic policy were left to the brehons and stewards whose names were countersigned on brehon charters to guarantee compliance.<sup>73</sup>

In 1576 Ó Briain’s galloglass were officially abolished by the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney, at an inquisition he presided over at Ennis. Specifically he abolished the ancient customs of ‘coigny, kernetty, and bonaght’ and ordered that henceforth English Common Law was to be adhered to in Thomond.<sup>74</sup> The following year Conchobhar Ó Briain, third earl of Thomond, petitioned the crown for confirmation of lands and letters patent of the

<sup>68</sup> ‘Carigentogher’ has been identified as *Caisleán an Oileán*, otherwise Carahil castle, near Lough Inchicronan. Bealefirvearnayn is now known as Obrienscastle in Crusheen. I wish to thank Martin Breen for his advice on this point. Also see Seán Ó hÓgáin, *Conntae An Chláir, a tríocha agus a tuatha* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1938) p. 295.

<sup>69</sup> RIA MS 24 D 10, p. 71. This is Obrienscastle in Crusheen.

<sup>70</sup> Nicholls, ‘Scottish mercenary kindreds’, p. 86.

<sup>71</sup> Seathrún Céitinn, *Foras Fearsa ar Éirinn*, 3 (London, 1908) pp 12–14. Read Mac Gormáin for ‘Mag Cormáin’ in the text. Also note that ‘Captain MacGorman’ acted as a witness to the will of Murrough O’Brien, first earl of Thomond, in 1551. See Brian Ó Dálaigh, ‘A Comparative study of the wills of the first and fourth Earls of Thomond’, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 34 (1992) pp 48–63:59.

<sup>72</sup> Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, p. 43.

<sup>73</sup> According to a note from 1592 on the exactions of the earl of Desmond his kern ‘assist[ed] the justices, seneschals, receivers, stewards of courts, and sergeants in the execution of the laws and customs..and [the] receiving and levying, and gathering of his revenues’. The note makes clear that the galloglass were not used for enforcement of domestic policy, instead coming under the designation ‘bonnibeg and bonneybur’ who were soldiers kept in ‘readiness, as well as in peace and war’. William Bullen (ed.), *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth, 1601-1603* (London, 1870) p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> S. Brewer & William Bullen Esq. (eds), *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth, 1575-1588* (London, 1868) pp 116–7.

earldom which his father was granted by Henry VIII. Confirmation of these grants is contained in the State Papers, including a description about the ‘bonnaght’ of galloglass:

He desires that the bonnought of galloglass that has been accustomedly paid out of his own lands may be reserved to himself now that the galloglass are discontinued. We conceive that the bonnought was a cess of victuals reared universally upon the whole country of Thomond for the wages of the galloglass, according to the number of spears whereof part was reared upon the possessions in the Earl’s lands, and part upon the lands of the freeholders.<sup>75</sup>

What can be gleaned from this reference is that the bonnaght system of quartering galloglass on lands of the earl continued up to that time. Moreover, the passage confirms that the bonnaght which was levied not only on the earl’s lands but also on the land of his freeholders was the ‘cess’ or a tax of food-stuffs used to pay the galloglass. Levying the bonnaght ‘universally upon the whole country’ demonstrates the extent of the system. If the mid-fifteenth century *Suim Ciosa Ua Briain* (‘rental of O’Brien’) is anything to go by, galloglass and footmen were billeted on lands in Corcomroe, Corkavaskin and the Burren for at least a century prior to the system being abolished. Much of these areas, including territories in Corcomroe and Burren, were under the lordship of the Uí Lochláinn and Meic Mhathghmhna families, who in turn were vassals of Ó Briain.

The discontinuance of the galloglass in the 1570s signalled the beginning of the end of the Gaelic system and, more particularly, the independent (military) power of the earl of Thomond. The capacity to maintain galloglass troops was central to a Gaelic lord’s claim to military power. Dismantling this system was more than a symbolic act as it meant that the earl would have no independent means to raise troops. Conceivably it was also meant to undermine a key linchpin of the economic system that had sustained the semi-feudal nature of lordship.

### ***Landholding & settlement***

The branch of Clann Suibhne which settled in Thomond held their chief estate at Kilkee in west Clare. Kilkee was where they held a castle in 1570 under the proprietorship of ‘Colle Mac Swyne’ who, as we have already seen, was the chief captain of the galloglass of Thomond.<sup>76</sup> According to the annals Colla died in 1576, being described as *consapal Dál c-Cais* and, in the manner of other Gaelic nobles and chief men, he ‘kept a house of hospitality’ (*tighe n-aoidheadh*).<sup>77</sup>

It is uncertain when Clann Suibhne took up lands at Kilkee. Westropp speculated that they held Kilkee castle as a grant in a deed of 1550 under the Meic Mhathghamhna, lords of Corkavaskin.<sup>78</sup> However from internal evidence contained in the deed it is more likely that it was issued in the late sixteenth if not the early seventeenth century.<sup>79</sup> Receiving Kilkee castle as a grant suggests that it constituted part of the lordship lands of Ó Briain

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>76</sup> Breen, ‘1570’, p. 133.

<sup>77</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1576.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas J. Westropp, ‘Promontory forts in the “Irrus,” County Clare. Part I.-The Kilkee group’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 38 (1908) pp 28–147:40.

<sup>79</sup> Dating based on the floruit of Nicholas Cumin, an attorney, who elsewhere is recorded as dying in 1625. 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. 310.

where he could settle his chief followers. According to the fifteenth century *Suim Cíos a Ua Briain*, Kilkee owed Ó Briain 14 pence, along with various other places ‘from the beach westward in Corkabaiskin’ where his ‘footmen and sportsmen’ were quartered.<sup>80</sup> These lands were also described as ‘tributary lands’ of Ó Briain. So it is possible that a grant of the lands to Clann Suibhne was based on the designation of the lands yielding a tribute to Ó Briain and where military levies had been imposed from at least the fifteenth century.

Whatever the date of Clann Suibhne’s settlement at Kilkee it is evident that they were an established kindred holding a castle and lands in much the same fashion as their parent branch in Tir Chonaill.<sup>81</sup> A late-sixteenth century deed of the family is a document of primary importance because it mentions that prior to Edmond Roe (*Emann ruadh Mac an Gilla duibh Mac Suib[h]ne*) holding the lands of Rath near Kilkee, they were mortgaged to his father Gilladuff (*fl.* 1573)<sup>82</sup> by Muirheartach Mac Mathghamhna in a previous deed written in Irish.<sup>83</sup> This earlier grant is evidence that Clann Suibhne held the lands at least one generation prior to the late-sixteenth century when the deed was written.

Edmond Roe must have been one of the chief men of the county and it is significant that the deed recorded him as a *duine uasal* – a term that denotes either ‘gentleman’ or ‘noble person’ – a designation that is not found in many of the Irish deeds printed by Hardiman. Further proof of his elevated status may be ascertained by the fact that he was a witness to the Composition of Connacht in 1585.<sup>84</sup>

Another branch of the family possessed Kilkee castle and we learn from an inquisition of 1606 that they held the castle and its estate over successive generations:

Inquisition, taken at Kilrush, on the 11th May, 1606, in the presence of Nicholas Kenny, finds that Collo MacSweeny died on the 31st of August, 1576, being then owner in fee of the castle, town, and lands of Kilkee; that he left a son Hugh, of full age as his successor; that Murrough MacSweeney, also of Kilkee, the brother of Collo, laid claim to the ownership of a moiety of the property, which claim after his death, was continued, by one Owen MacSweeney in the character of a mortgagee.<sup>85</sup>

We can detect here that the Gaelic custom of partible inheritance (i.e. ‘gavelkind’) was responsible for the dispute in inheritance, whereby a brother (and his descendants) could claim a moiety, or portion, of the property. This, no doubt, had its origin in the redistribution of the hereditary lands which in southwest Thomond occurred every May and also on the death of a co-heir.<sup>86</sup> This branch of Clann Suibhne which held Kilkee

<sup>80</sup> Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, pp 40–1.

<sup>81</sup> We are told in *Craobhsgeoileadh Chlainne Suibhne* that the family were responsible for erecting Rathmullen castle in 1516 and Moross castle in 1532. Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, pp 67, 73.

<sup>82</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1573.

<sup>83</sup> Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> He only appears in an inquisition printed in Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 267 which was held as part of the Composition Agreement. His residence at that time was given as ‘Ballyvraslan, gent’, a townland in Kilmacreehy. He does not appear in the Composition Agreement material printed in A. Martin Freeman, *The Compossicion Booke of Conought* (Dublin, 1936).

<sup>85</sup> Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 280.

<sup>86</sup> Gearóid Mac Niocaill, ‘Seven Irish Documents in the Inchiquin Archives’, *Analecta Hibernica*, 26 (Dublin, 1970) pp 47–69: 49. On the operation of ‘gavelkind’ in Thomond see the case of the O’Hehirs who mention in a chancery pleading in 1622 that their lands descended to them ‘in course of Irish Gavelkind without any manner of disturbance’. *Chancery Bills: Survivals from pre-1922 Collection* [6 Nov.1622] National Archives of Ireland [series BB, no. 162].

castle was, demonstrably, the chief branch of the lineage, evidence of which is found in a grant from 1606:

To Hugh M'Swynne, son and heir of Colloe Mac Swynne, late of Kilkie in Co. Clare, gent, deceased, was granted on 16 Dec. in the said year, for a fine of 12*d.* Irish, livery of seisin of all lordships, castles, lands, etc of which said Colloe, who held in capite by military service, died seised, without proving his age, etc; saving the advowsons and homage'.<sup>87</sup>

The granting of the lands and castle to 'Hugh Mac Swynne' under English Common Law indicates that he was the eldest son. The grant is also of primary interest because it confirms that the lands were previously held 'in capite by military service' reflecting what must have been the original conditions of tenure between Clann Suibhne and O Briain; that is, military vassalage in exchange for land grants and payments.

Around this time appeared a number of distantly related branches of Clann Suibhne in southwest Clare. It is possible that they descended from the same progenitor who came to Thomond generations earlier. It is not uncommon in respect to the settlement of mercenary kindreds to find their landholding scattered and parcelled across a territory; their spatiality of settlement reflected lands grants and leases obtained from local nobles and the availability of unencumbered land to settle and billet galloglass on.<sup>88</sup> We read in the Fiant lists for the year 1602 a pardon issued to 'Colloe McSwynne of Killkhy',<sup>89</sup> probably a son of Hugh who, as we have seen, was granted land at Kilkee in 1606. As we will see later, Hugh appears to have remained at Kilkee until at least 1618 where he is recorded as a juror in an inquisition, being one of the chief men to testify.<sup>90</sup> The same Fiant also records Moylemore McSwynie (gent) of Carrickhole and Moyler McEdmunde also of Carrickhole (i.e. Carrigaholt), both of whom must have been representatives of a different branch of the family.<sup>91</sup>

Another important branch of Clann Suibhne was settled at Kilfiddane where Edmond Roe held an estate at Derriniddane. It was still occupied by his descendant in 1641.<sup>92</sup> According to an inquisition Edmond Roe held Derriniddane on his death in 1625, whence it passed to his fifteen year old son Turlough.<sup>93</sup> He may have been the same Edmond Roe whose father Gilladuff possessed the lands of Rath near Kilkee after receiving them in a mortgage from Muirheartach Mac Mathghamhna sometime in the late sixteenth century.<sup>94</sup> The presence of a different branch of the family holding lands at Kilkee and elsewhere is no surprise; as a professional kindred who had quartering rights on land a degree of mobility was inevitable. Only the chief branch of the family who held Kilkee castle in 1570 were probably allocated demesne lands that were attached to their office as constables of galloglass, their other lands being hereditary within the kindred.

<sup>87</sup> John Caillard Erck (ed.), *A Repertory of the Inrolments of the Patent Rolls of Chancery, in Ireland; Commencing with the reign of King James I*, 1 (Dublin, 1846) p. 277.

<sup>88</sup> Simms, *Kings to Warlords*, p. 123.

<sup>89</sup> Kenneth Nicholls & Tomás G. Ó Canann (eds), *The Irish Fiant of the Tudor sovereigns during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip & Mary, and Elizabeth I* (Dublin, 1994), [Fiant 6615].

<sup>90</sup> Petworth House MS 16 D.1, Chichester, [Clonderalaw Great Office, 5 September 1618].

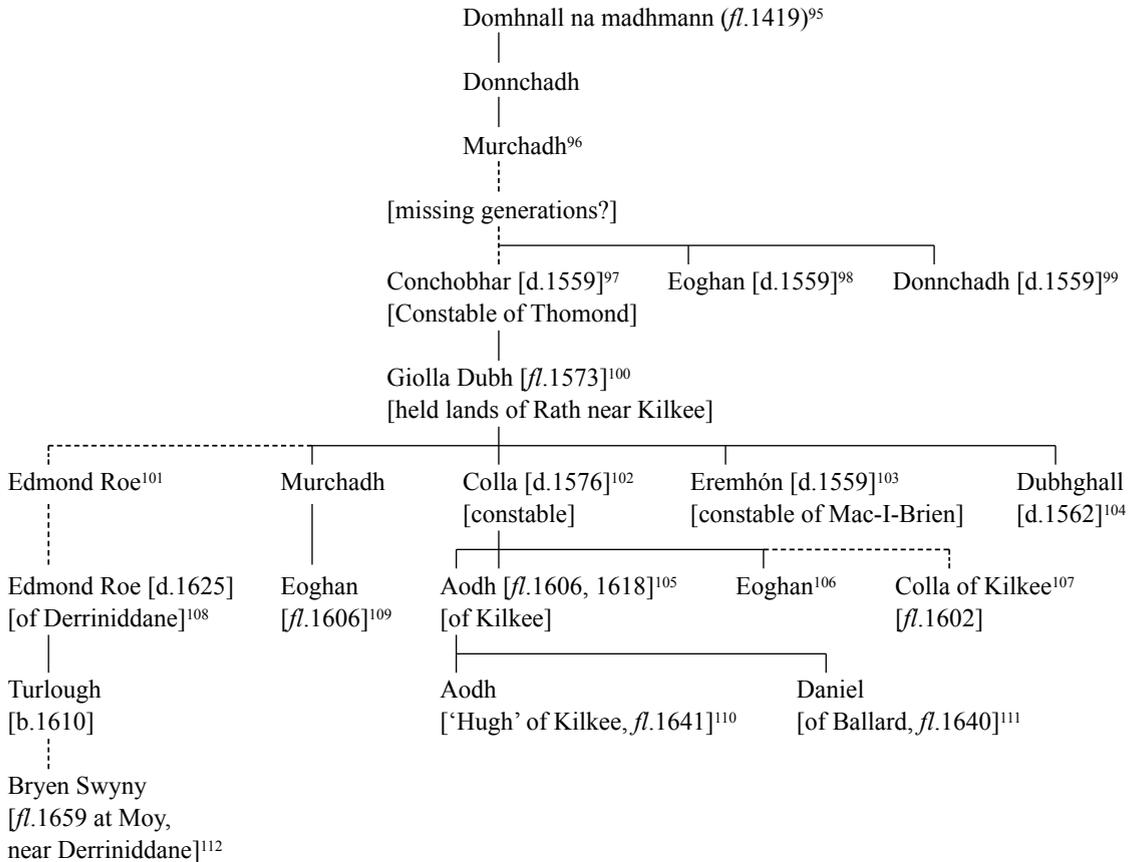
<sup>91</sup> Nicholls & Ó Canann (eds), *The Irish Fiant* [Fiant 6615].

<sup>92</sup> Bryen Swyny occupied Moy which situates next to Derriniddane and which historically was probably part of the larger denomination of Derriniddane.

<sup>93</sup> See Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 312.

<sup>94</sup> Hardiman (ed.), 'Ancient Irish Deeds', pp 60–1. Alternatively he may have been the grandson of Gilladuff.

### Branches of Clann Suibhne in Thomond



<sup>95</sup> *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1419.

<sup>96</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1559. The reference mentions those slain in battle: ‘three sons of Murrough, the son of Donough, son of Donnell-na-madhmann Mac Sweeny, namely, Conor, Constable of Thomond, Owen, and Donough’.

<sup>97</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1559.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1573.

<sup>101</sup> Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, pp 60–1.

<sup>102</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1576.

<sup>103</sup> *AFM*, sub anno 1559. He died in the service of Mac-I-Brian as his constable.

<sup>104</sup> Killed whilst fighting in the territory of Ó Conchobhar. *AFM*, sub anno 1562.

<sup>105</sup> See Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 280; and Petworth House MS 16 D.1, [Clonderalaw Great Office, 5 September 1618].

<sup>106</sup> Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, pp 87, 112.

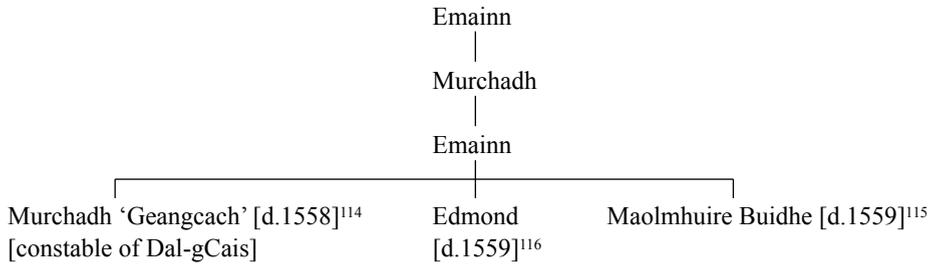
<sup>107</sup> ‘Colloie McSwyne’ of Kilkee (Fiant 6615).

<sup>108</sup> Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 312

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>110</sup> R.C. Simington (ed.), *Books of Survey and Distribution, Being Abstracts of Various Surveys and Instruments of Title, 1636-1703* [Co. of Clare] (Dublin, 1949) p. 387. Hugh’s estate at Kilkee was half of the 162 statute acres recorded as good land and half of the 195 acres recorded as inferior land. The other half was possessed by Sir Daniel O’Brien. Noted in a

### Unidentified branch of Clann Suibhne of Thomond in the annals<sup>113</sup>



According to an inquisition of 1618, freeholders listed in the barony of Clonderalaw included ‘Hugh Swiny of Kilky’ who was empaneled as a juror, and three other kinsmen of Clann Suibhne: Donnogh McSwiny and Edmond mcDonogh McSwiny, gents, of Kilmurry-Clonderalaw parish, and Edmond Roe McSwiny of Derinnedan, gent, of Kilfiddane parish.<sup>117</sup> Edmond Roe appears to have been part of a sub-lineage that had claims on land around Kilkee that were once part of the estate of his father Giolla Dubh. Here we have an example of the lineage-expansion that characterised Gaelic society whereby cadet branches of families proliferated, and consequently their landholding spread over territories as newly formed branches established themselves on new lands. We may take it that several important lines of Clann Suibhne descended from Giolla Dubh and the annals note that at least two of his sons were constables, one of whom served outside of Thomond for Mac Uí Bhriain Arra, and was killed in 1559 in his service (*‘a chonsapal .i. Eremhon’*).<sup>118</sup>

From one of these branches belonged Moelmory mcEdmund Buy McSwyny of Ballygriffy who was employed to gather intelligence for the English authorities during the Nine Years War.<sup>119</sup> Members of Clann Suibhne in Thomond had previously seen crown service. We read in the reports hastily dispatched to Sir Richard Bingham, Governor of Connacht, from southwest Clare in September 1588, that Owen McSweeney and Nicholas Cahane had ‘a parley’ with a party of Spaniards from an Armada ship that briefly anchored off Kilrush and came ashore in search of provisions.<sup>120</sup>

book of leases of the earl of Thomond is a deed of release made by Hugh McDaniel McSwynce to Barnaby earl of Thomond of ‘their’ interests in the lands of Kilkee dated 1 August, 1640. Another lease in a different book (same shelf mark) contains reference to Daniel McSwynce’s lease of Ballyard on 1 August, 1640. It seems likely that the former reference here to Hugh McDaniel is an error and that should read as two persons, i.e. Hugh and Daniel, as the term ‘their’ would suggest. See Petworth House Archive MS C.13/17, ‘A schedule of deeds and writings’, [May 1736]; and Petworth House Archive MS C.13/17, ‘A list of leases in the closet in Dublin’, p. 24 [undated but early 1700s].

<sup>111</sup> Petworth House Archive MS C.13/17, ‘A list of leases in the closet in Dublin’, p. 24.

<sup>112</sup> Séamus Pender, *A Census of Ireland, Circa 1659* (Dublin 1939) p. 180.

<sup>113</sup> Derived from entries in *AFM sub anno* 1558 and 1559. The branch does not occur in *Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne*.

<sup>114</sup> *AFM, sub anno* 1558.

<sup>115</sup> *AFM, sub anno* 1559.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Petworth House Archive MS 16 D.1 [Clonderalaw Great Office, 5 September 1618].

<sup>118</sup> *AFM, sub anno* 1559.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Mahaffy (ed.), *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland: 1601-3* (London, 1912, pp 424–5.

<sup>120</sup> Hans Claude Hamilton (ed.), *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1588, August–1592 September*, 4 (London, 1885) p. 30.

Preserved among the State Papers is a report on the activities of Moelmory. In 1602 he was 'specifically employed into the country of the rebels' and reported on the convocation of rebels that had gathered at Dunboy in Co. Cork to prevent the landing of the forces of Sir George Carew Lord, President of Munster.<sup>121</sup> The earl of Thomond was in command of crown forces and saw action in southwest Cork following the battle of Kinsale. It is likely that Moelmory was serving with the earl when campaigning in Cork, and was dispatched to gather intelligence. His report also told of the rebels asking for more aid from Spain and the departure of some rebels to Spain, including a Thomond man, Donnogh mcMahowne mcEnaspicke O'Breen.

Moelmory must have been an eye-witness to the paying out of money to several principal persons among the rebels, including James Nelane 'a man of Thomond' whom he identified as the paymaster. Finally his deposition also mentioned that his uncle, Tyrlagh McSwynny 'is now in rebellion and a near and inward man with O'Sulevan'.<sup>122</sup> This last point cautions against thinking that on account of the earl of Thomond's loyalty to the crown his hereditary followers such as his Clann Suibhne galloglass would naturally eschew older alliances in favour of crown service.

Galloglass were employed not only by the great 'lords of the soil' who commanded battles of them and allowed them to live off the 'cess' of their lands, but they were also employed by lesser families. An example of this can be found in a chancery pleading lodged by Donnough McInerinyhein of Carrigoran in Kilnasoolagh in c.1600. The pleading relates to a violent intra-sept dispute among cousins of the Meic an Oirchinnigh lineage. The aggrieved Donnough alleged that his 'father [i.e. Laughlin] was murdered by Mahowne McInerry of Knockslatterie and Malmorry McEdmonde galliglass and brother in law to the said Mahowne upon the first of February AD 1573'.<sup>123</sup> Donnough was, apparently, five years of age when his father was killed and the lands subsequently occupied by his cousins. We cannot be sure but Malmorry McEdmonde was possibly 'Moelmory' of Ballygriffy noted in the State Papers in 1602. The absence of a surname in the chancery pleading is mitigated by his forename and appellation 'galliglass', two unmistakable identifiers that he was a Mac Suibhne. Clearly family ties played a part and the employment of a galloglass by Mahowne McInerry points to the retention of professional galloglass by lesser landholding families. With this act the hereditary lands of Clann an Oirchinnigh remained in the hands of Mahowne until his death in 1618.<sup>124</sup>

In the intervening period between the battle of Kinsale and the 1641 insurgency, many social and economic changes occurred in Thomond as the county became increasingly anglicised. On the death of the fourth earl of Thomond in 1624 the standing of the hereditary service professions such as the poets, historians, brehons and physicians was in severe decline; the same was true of the Clann Suibhne galloglass. During this period individual Meic Suibhne are mentioned in land deeds indicating their continued importance in southwest Clare. With the abolishment of the economic system that had sustained the retention of professional galloglass as a mercenary standing force, the status of Clann

<sup>121</sup> Mahaffy (ed.), *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland*, p. 424.

<sup>122</sup> This 'Tyrlagh' could be Turlough Roe who appears in the State Papers for 1602 and was described as a 'gentleman of Thomond'. He was taken prisoner at Dunboy and was facing execution by the English forces, according to a letter from Sir George Carew to the Privy Council. See J.S. Brewer (ed.), *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts 1601-03* (London, 1870) p. 266.

<sup>123</sup> *Chancery Bills: Survivals from pre-1922 Collection*, B. No.228, National Archives of Ireland [Original Court of Chancery Bill].

<sup>124</sup> Luke McInerney, 'Land and lineage: the McEnerhins of Ballysallagh in the sixteenth century', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 49 (2009) pp 7-32:22-8.

Suibhne also diminished. Several lines of the family can be found during this period in the parishes of Kilballyowen<sup>125</sup> and Kilmurry Clonderalaw, the latter was where they held lands at Cassarnagh from at least 1612.<sup>126</sup>

In the first half of the seventeenth century many men emigrated from Ireland to undertake service in the Spanish army. In the lists of the imperial Spanish forces members of Clann Suibhne from other family branches were recorded.<sup>127</sup> The attraction of a military career must have been particularly appealing to members of Clann Suibhne given their martial tradition of arms. Several Mac Suibhne kinsmen feature as insurgents in Co. Clare in the ‘Protestant Depositions’ of 1642. Owen McSwiny of Kilballyowen was active in attacking Protestant settlers around Kilrush, he himself being in the service of Sir Daniel O’Brien.<sup>128</sup> It is hard not to regard his family’s long tradition of mercenary service not a factor behind his service to O’Brien. Owen is cited in other depositions carrying out attacks on settlers with ‘a force & armes’ and despoiling their properties.<sup>129</sup> Another Mac Suibhne from Kilballyowen, ‘Mulmore Mc Swiny’, described as a gentleman, was implicated in the siege of Ballyallia in 1642 by the Catholic Confederate forces.<sup>130</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century the role of professional military kindreds which had served aristocratic families had ceased to exist. But their profession of arms meant that some members of Clann Suibhne maintained their status and landholding up to the Cromwellian settlement.

### Images of the galloglass

Contemporary depictions of the galloglass are well known and images of them adorn funerary monuments, grave-slabs and stonework throughout the western Isles of Scotland and Ireland. Particularly vivid images of the hallmark features of the galloglass can be seen on the Ó Conchobhar tomb at Roscommon and also on a set of stone grave-slabs now housed at Kilmartin church in Argyll (Fig. 1). Common adornments include military equipment such as the two-handed sword, a mail coat two-thirds the length of the body, and a steel cap or bascinet helmet.

There are also many representations of the quilted padded coats worn by galloglass in sculpture, such as the mid-fourteenth century effigy of Giolla Bhrighde Mac Fhionghain at Iona.<sup>131</sup> Likewise we see on the carved tomb of Alexander MacLeod (d.1528) at St Clement’s Church in Harris a padded undergarment on one of the warriors, worn as an additional layer of protection underneath a mail coat. MacLeod’s tomb shows a scene with hunting dogs and a man holding a two-handed pole-axe, providing us with a vivid reminder of a galloglass in action.<sup>132</sup>

In Thomond there are a few images of the galloglass that can be identified. Principally these depictions are found on what is now known as the McMahan tomb at Ennis Friary. What is remarkable about this assemblage of carved stone images is that they are a late medieval view of the Passion of Christ, and to this end the soldiers depicted reflect contemporary military dress. The McMahan tomb is a limestone canopy tomb which

<sup>125</sup> Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 317. Maoelmurry MacSweeney was recorded as of Kilballyowen in 1628.

<sup>126</sup> John Ainsworth (ed.), *The Inchiquin Manuscripts* (Dublin, 1961) p. 313 (no. 984), and p. 309 (no. 981). On the inheritance of their lands at Cassarnagh in Kilmurry Clonderalaw (*viz* Casherna) see Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 318.

<sup>127</sup> Nicholls, ‘Scottish mercenary kindreds’, p. 95.

<sup>128</sup> TCD MS 829, fols 38r-38v, ‘Deposition of Thomas Mayden’ [8/10/1642].

<sup>129</sup> TCD MS 829, fols 009r-009v, ‘Deposition of Maximilliam Graneere’ [5/11/1642].

<sup>130</sup> TCD MS 829, fols 028r-029v, ‘Deposition of Urias Reade’, [12/5/1643].

<sup>131</sup> Cannan, *Galloglass 1250-1600*, p. 17.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.



**Fig. 1** Grave-slab at Kilmartin, in Argyll



**Fig. 2** Image of the Passion, Ennis Friary

according to the research of John Hunt and Peter Harbison, must have been as erected in 1460-70, a date which agrees with more recent assessments.<sup>133</sup> The reconstructed tomb, situated in the centre of the nave, was originally constructed over a vault on the north side of the high altar. The original tomb was used to form a mid-nineteenth century altar-style monument dedicated to the Creagh family of Dangan.<sup>134</sup> The tomb incorporated five panels representing the Passion, with one panel of particular interest depicting a female figure who has been identified as Mór Ní Bhriain and which has an elaborate double cone-shaped headdress.<sup>135</sup> The clothing and style of the carving places it as mid-fifteenth century, along with the other panels. The panels share a very similar composition to the Nottingham alabasters which were executed in soft material, and exported from England to Ireland and elsewhere. It is therefore feasible that the depictions are derived from the image-scenes carved on the Nottingham alabasters.<sup>136</sup> But the striking similarity of the images in Ennis to the dress and equipment of the galloglass is nonetheless difficult to ignore in the context of native sculpture and galloglass imagery.

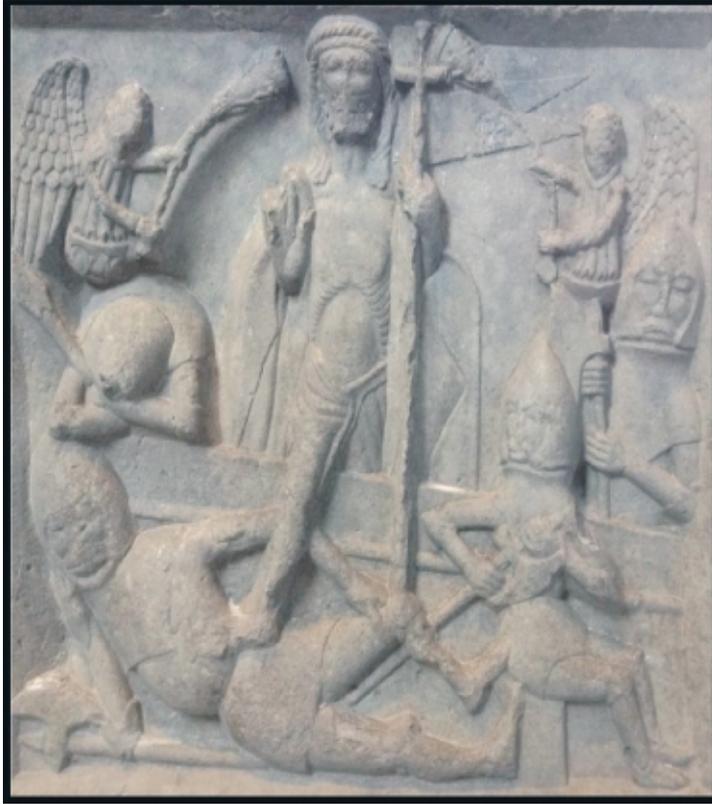
Of particular interest here is the depiction of the arrest of Christ and the reconstruction

<sup>133</sup> See Brian Ó Dálaigh & Hilary Gilmore, 'Canopied wall tomb of Ennis Friary, 1460-70', *The Other Clare*, 20 (1996) pp 20-4, and John Hunt & Peter Harbison, *Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture, 1200-1600: a study of Irish tombs with notes on costume and armour* (Dublin, 1974) p. 243.

<sup>134</sup> Mary Kearns, 'The Elaborate headdress – Ennis Friary', *The Other Clare*, 30 (2006) pp 53-4:53.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 53-4.

<sup>136</sup> I thank Edel Greene for her advice on the Nottingham alabasters.



**Fig. 3** Image of the Resurrection, Ennis Friary

of the biblical scene of Gethsemane, when Jesus is arrested after the arrival of a detachment of soldiers (Fig. 2). In this panel Christ is set upon by several soldiers, three of which are shown wearing conical steel helmets ('bascinet-type') in the same style as those that adorn galloglass in other fifteenth century images.<sup>137</sup>

On prominent display in this image is the pole-axe held by one of the soldiers which is an unmistakable representation of the galloglass long shafted axe. The design of the axe-head is stylistically similar to those of the galloglass displayed in the woodcuts of Derricke's *Image of Irelande* of 1581.<sup>138</sup> The axe blade being long and elongated accords closely to the description of the arms of the galloglass given by John Dymmok in 1599: 'the weapon they most use is a batle axe, or halberd, six foote longe, the blade whereof is somewhat like a shomakers knyfe, and without pyke'.<sup>139</sup> In another panel on the McMahon tomb other images of the galloglass can be observed. In this panel the soldiers represented feature in a scene about the resurrection of Christ (Fig. 3). Three of the soldiers wear the conical helmet of the galloglass and the same three carry long pole-axes which, as we have seen, were characteristic weapons of the galloglass.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, the image of a mounted warrior with a two-third length mail coat worn over a padded or quilted tunic and wearing a conical helmet. TCD MS 1440, fol.24r [*Historia et Genealogia Familiae de Burgo*].

<sup>138</sup> Ian Heath & David Sque, *The Irish Wars, 1485-1603* (London, 1993) pp 15, 22. Note the presence of pipers in these woodcuts accompanying the Irish forces.

<sup>139</sup> Richard Butler, *A Treatise of Ireland, by John Dymmok.*, 2 (Dublin, 1843) pp 1–85:7.

The galloglass axe formed a sub-theme in bardic poetry and its prominence, according to Katharine Simms, was that it ‘distinguished the professional soldier from the Irish nobles fighting on horseback with spears.’<sup>140</sup> It is revealing that the weapons which feature in this panel are the two-handed galloglass axes, rather than swords. The scene is also of interest as it appears to show coats (possibly of mail) that terminate above knees and the presence of poleyns or cup-shaped knee-guards. The occurrence of poleyns implies that the soldiers were equipped with greavs, or armour of the lower legs. This is an unusual feature and is not always evident on images of galloglass.

Other effigies exist which appear to be depictions of galloglass equipment. For example, the medieval sculptured head which situates on the north wall of Carron church has been dated to the fifteenth century. The helmet has been described as a ‘knight’s head’ and has been compared to the bascinet-type helmets carved on the figures on the McMahon tomb at Ennis Friary.<sup>141</sup> However if the context of contemporary non-funerary depictions of galloglass is considered, then the Carron sculptured head can be interpreted as a simple bascinet, of the type found on fifteenth century effigies of galloglass.

Another non-funerary depiction of a galloglass bascinet-type helm can be seen on a medieval stone carving from Inis Cathaigh. This carving has been described in detail elsewhere<sup>142</sup> and its conical shape and depiction of a steel helmet rather than a material cap distinguishes it from an image of a cleric. The carving has parallels with Carron church to which it is also thought to date from the fifteenth century, and to this end it can be interpreted as a contemporary image of a galloglass head.

Finally it would be remiss not to give a cursory treatment of other sculptures that might have been modelled on the galloglass. An effigy in a tomb recess at Corcomroe Abbey also displays the pleated jack and, possibly, armoured shoes. This effigy is part of the elaborate funerary monument of Conchobhar na Siudane Ó Briain, who died in 1267, and whose tomb niche is visible in the north wall of the choir.<sup>143</sup> Its features reflect common elements found in other galloglass tomb sculpture. Indeed the Ó Briain tomb shares similarities with the effigy of Coimhaigh na nGall Ó Catháin at Dungiven Priory (d.1385), a point noted by John O’Donovan in 1839.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, a genealogical tract which was in the possession of Seán Ruadh Ó Catháin of Corofin in 1839 stated that a branch of the Ulster Uí Cháthain settled at *Liath* (townlands of Leagh North and South) on the monastic estate at Corcomroe in 1398.<sup>145</sup> There exists evidence of the Uí Cháthain settlement in fifteenth century papal correspondence.<sup>146</sup> Could it be that galloglass accompanied the settlement of the Uí Cháthain at Corcomroe, or that depictions of the dress of Gaelic lords on funerary monuments mirrored the military attire of their galloglass?

The distinctive military dress of the galloglass is frequently encountered on the tombs of the Gaelic secular élite both in western Scotland and Ireland. Such styles are evident on a number of horizontal grave-slabs in the churchyard of Kilneuair (St Columba) near

<sup>140</sup> Katharine Simms, ‘Images of the galloglass in poems to the Mac Sweeneys’, *The World of the Galloglass: Kings, warlords and warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600* (Dublin, 2007) pp 106–23:117.

<sup>141</sup> Jim Higgins, ‘Medieval Sculptures from Carran Church, Co. Clare and their Significance’, *The Other Clare*, 16 (1992) pp 21–6:22.

<sup>142</sup> Jim Higgins, ‘Some Medieval Stone Carvings Return to Scattery Island, Co. Clare’, *The Other Clare*, 38 (2014) pp 77–80:78.

<sup>143</sup> Mac Craith, *Caithréim*, (v.2) p. 6.

<sup>144</sup> John O’Donovan & Eugene Curry, *The Antiquities of County Clare* (Ennis, reprint: 2003) p. 8.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* Also see Luke McInerney, *Clerical and learned lineages of medieval Co. Clare: A survey of the fifteenth-century papal registers* (Dublin, 2014) pp 121–2.

Loch Awe in Argyll. These graves, inspected by the author in May 2014, appear to be late medieval and the carved figures are adorned with pleated (or mail) knee length jacks and conical bascinet-type helmets. Given that the nearby castle of Fincham was associated with Clann Chaimbeul who supplied galloglass and, at a later period, the Scrymgeour constables of Dundee,<sup>147</sup> Kilneuair's carved figures may reasonably be taken to be galloglass or secular rulers displaying galloglass dress. The effigy of Conchobhar na Siudane Ó Briain with its military dress appears to share stylistic parallels with the carved grave figures at Kilneuair and may echo the appearance of galloglass.

### Concluding remarks

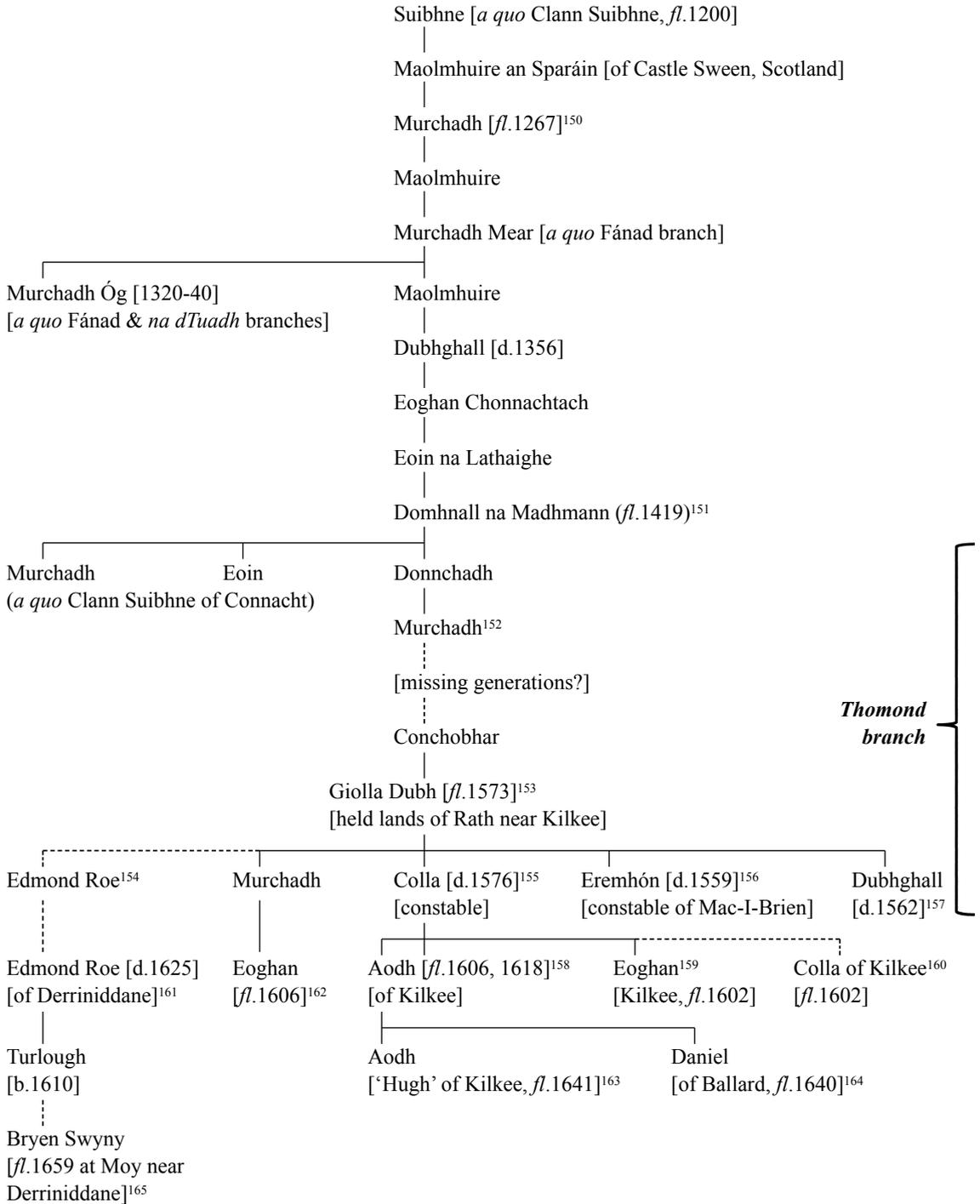
This paper attempts to survey material relating to the galloglass of late medieval Thomond. In doing so, it presents annalistic accounts of galloglass operating under Ó Briain as well as the genealogical links to Clann Suibhne who were the main galloglass kindred that settled in Thomond. Other areas investigated include the landholding and tenurial conditions of the galloglass, both of which formed an important element of the political economy of lordship. That is, the fiscal system which supported the galloglass and enabled them to be quartered on lands as a standing military force. This system prevailed in Thomond until the official abolishment of the galloglass in 1577 with the proclamation of English Common Law at Ennis.

The high status of Clann Suibhne galloglass endured for at least another generation with family branches holding lands and the castle of Kilkee into the seventeenth century. After which point they remained important locally, playing a part in the insurgency of the Catholic Confederate forces in early 1640s. The reputation of the galloglass outlived their official role and was still in the minds of contemporaries, years after their hereditary functions had ceased. Writing in 1618, Elizabethan soldier and publicist, Thomas Gainsford, could safely say that the galloglass were 'in manner extinct' but like the kern which he describes, they 'ha[d] strong and able bodies, proud hearts'.<sup>148</sup> We may take these words from a soldier of Elizabeth's Irish wars as a reminder of the ethos and prowess of the galloglass which had remained a potent force up to the close of the sixteenth century.

<sup>147</sup> The Scrymgeour lineage held land around Kilneuair (Glassary) from 1292 and the castle from the 1370s. The Campbells (Clann Chaimbeul) held it in 1315 when it appears in a grant to 'Dugal Cambel'. See *Origines parochiales Scotiae: the antiquities ecclesiastical and territorial of the parishes of Scotland* 2:1 (Edinburgh, 1854) pp 42–8; and see Heather Frances James, 'Medieval rural settlement: a study of Mid-Argyll, Scotland', (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2009) pp 251–2.

<sup>148</sup> McNerney, 'A description of Ireland: A.D. 1618', p. 36. Also see Thomas Gainsford, *The Glory of England...* (London, 1618 revised 1619, re-issued 1620).

### Appendix: Genealogy of Clann Suibhne of Thomond<sup>149</sup>



- <sup>149</sup> This pedigree is constructed from a number of sources and contains conjectural relationships. See the pedigree printed in the appendix of Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces* (Dublin 1937); Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, pp 87, 112.
- <sup>150</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1267.
- <sup>151</sup> *Annals of Loch Cé*, *sub anno* 1419.
- <sup>152</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1559. The reference mentions those slain in battle: ‘three sons of Murrough, the son of Donough, son of Donnell-na-madhmann Mac Sweeny, namely, Conor, Constable of Thomond, Owen, and Donough’.
- <sup>153</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1573.
- <sup>154</sup> Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, pp 60–1.
- <sup>155</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1576.
- <sup>156</sup> *AFM*, *sub anno* 1559. He died in the service of Mac-I-Brian as his constable.
- <sup>157</sup> Killed whilst fighting in the territory of Ó Conchobhar. *AFM*, *sub anno* 1562.
- <sup>158</sup> Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 280. Petworth House MS 16 D.1, Chichester, [Clonderalaw Great Office, 5 September 1618].
- <sup>159</sup> Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar*, pp 87, 112. Also see ‘Owen McSwyney of Kilky, gent.’ (Fiant 6617) [1602].
- <sup>160</sup> ‘Colloe McSwyney’ of Kilkee (Fiant 6615).
- <sup>161</sup> Frost, *History and Topography*, p. 312.
- <sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.
- <sup>163</sup> Simington, *Books of Survey and Distribution*, p. 387.
- <sup>164</sup> Petworth House Archive Ms C.13/17, ‘A list of leases in the closet in Dublin’, p. 24.
- <sup>165</sup> Pender, *1659 census*, p. 180.