

THE FAMILY OF THE LOWER WOOD

by

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“There are nations with retentive memories whom the thought of independence does not abandon even in servitude and who, resisting against habit which is elsewhere so powerful, even after a lapse of years, still detest and abjure the condition to which a superior power has reduced them. Such is the Irish nation. It is in vain that English power has exhausted itself in efforts to extinguish that memory, to make the conquest be forgotten, and make the results of armed invasion be considered as the exercise of a legal authority. Nothing has been able to destroy Irish stubbornness. In spite of seductions, menaces, and tortures, fathers have bequeathed it to their sons... This unconquerable tenacity, this lengthened remembrance of departed liberty, this faculty of preserving and nourishing through ages of physical misery and suffering, the thought of that which is no more – of never despairing of a constantly vanquished cause for which many generations have successively and in vain perished in the field and by the executioner – is perhaps the most extraordinary and the greatest example that a people has ever given.”

Augustin Thierry.

While on holiday in Co Mayo during the summer of 1977 a chance encounter between my son, James Henry, and a local man, Tom Keane, started me on the search which led to the writing of this account.

“ I know the history of the Henry family in Erris,” Tom told my son. “ O’hInneirghe is the name of a family of the Cineal Eoghan who were chiefs of Culintra Co Tyrone. My great-grandmother was an O’hInneirghe.”

Here was a man born in and belonging to one of the most remote parts of the country, Doohoma, in Erris in Co Mayo, a man who made no claim to scholarship but for whom the centuries of oppression which separated him from his origins had failed to destroy his memory of them or his pride in them. His words came to represent for me the most

extraordinary confirmation of the assertion of Thierry and were the starting point of my search for a people and a place.

My husband, also James Henry, although aware that his proper name was O'hInneirghe (pronounced o-hin-yare- ee with the accent on the second syllable) and of the family tradition which held they came from the North of Ireland, had not previously heard the name of the place from which his ancestors were expelled.

It was Michael Holmes the headmaster of Doohoma school who first told him that the correct form of his name in the Irish language was O'hInneirghe and not the MacEnri form used by the many Henrys in the locality and until then by my husband himself. A lover of books and all things Irish, Mr Holmes was an enthusiast for the Irish language and very proficient in it. A stickler for accuracy, he was a perfectionist who would tolerate nothing slipshod. So my husband accepted the information about his surname without question and used the correct form on the rare occasions in later life when the Irish form of his name was required, but it was not until the meeting with Tom Keane that he remembered the classroom incident and the headmaster's exclamation "Ah! Not like that! If you want historical accuracy you must write your name thus – O hInneirghe."

Again it was fifty years before he learned why MacEnri became the accepted form in the area. Michael Henry, the folklorist from Bangor Erris explained how when the people of Doohoma established their own school in Land League Days, they were visited by a representative from the Land League whose job it was to advise on their many problems, problems of schooling, of land ownership, farming methods and many more. One area of advice was the proper Irish form of the anglicised surnames which the people had been obliged to adopt under English law. The Land League advisor to Doohoma was a Galway man named – MacEnri! Perhaps it was only to be expected that he should advise this form for Henry.

It speaks volumes for the scholarship of Mr Holmes that he knew these two names had different origins. And in support of this I now propose to quote at length from Professor Seamus O Ceallaigh's book "Gleanings from Ulster History" (Cork University Press 1951 p29: - "*The name of the plain was Magh Locha (Moyola) and that it was here dwelt Fir Mhuighe Locha of Cineal Binnigh descended as we may see in the genealogical table from Aedan MacLairne mhic Eochaidh Bhinnighe mhic Eoghan and this line throws a very*

interesting light on a people who may be regarded as a sort of lost tribe of Cineal Eoghan. The name O'hInneirghe (O Henery, Henry) is still a common one in the South and East of the present county of Derry. The family had nothing to do with MacEnri of the Bannside to the East and West of CalRaithin (Coleraine). Both these people anglicise their names "Henry" but MacEnri was by origin an offshoot of Muintir Ui Cathain." (O'Cahan, O'Kane, Kane, Keane are all forms of the original Ui Cathain.)

O h Inneirghe was however of great importance at quite an early period. This is scarcely to be contested. The chief of the family was killed (Annals of the Four Masters) on the occasion of an incursion by Muirheartach O Lochleann into the territory of the Ulaidh in 1156. It is to be inferred that he was in the force of Cineal Eoghan. In 1254 the death of Aindreas O'hInneirghe is recorded.

One of the lords whose death is lamented at the battle of Down in 1260 was Cian O'hInneirghe. But the most striking reference to this family in the Annals is at an earlier date:- "the refectory door of the Dubh Regles of Doire was provided by (Eachmarchach) O'Cathain and O'hInneirghe's daughter (A.D. 1192) -Dorus proinn tighe in Duibhreiclesa ie Denum la le Cathain na Croibhe and la ingin Ui hInneirghe)" and inferentially that she was the wife of O'Cathain son of Ragnall. Eachmharcach died in 1195. In MS xi Kings Inn Library I find mention of the fact that it was the daughter of O'hInneirghe who was mother of Feidhlim Son of Mairheartach Ruadh, ruler of Clann Aodh Buidhe (Clandeboyne) 1444 to 1474.

O'Donovan found a tradition that Glenn Con Cadhan had been the territory of the O'hInneirghe. In the folk story of the Peist of Glenn Con Cadhan the distinction of slaying the monster falls to the Cu or Hound of Cadhan OhInneirghe, hence the name "the Glen of Cadhan's Hound". This was folk etymology. The very personification of "Cadhan O'hInneirghe" suggests a long connection with the neighbourhood.

Papal and episcopal registers show members of the family in ecclesiastical positions in Baile Na Scoir. Identifying the O'hInneirghe as Fir Muighe Loche (the men of Moyola) Professor O'Ceallaigh gives the present Creaght Meadows as the location of Muigh Locha. When you cross the bridge at Toome you go from Antrim to Derry and are in the Creaght Meadows in the barony of Loughinsholin. The 1610 map of Loughinsholin shows Gleann Con Cadhan to the Northwest, covering the present parishes of Baile Na Scrin (Ballynascreen) Discert Martin

(Desertmartin) and Cill Clnuitnoachain (Kilcroughan); and Coill Iochterach (Killeter) in the South from the present Machaire Fiogad (Magherafelt) to the Ballinderry river.

Cill Iochterach, few place names have suffered more in translation just as few places suffered more at the hands of the colonisers. There are many spellings of the name, more than 20 in plantation papers alone. Coill Iochterach means the Lower Wood. It was the lower wood of Glen Con Cadhan, “the great fastness” of the native Irish according to their enemies. The poem by McNamee mentions the hounds of O’hInneirghe, these were the famous wofhounds long exported to the continent by the Irish. A four hour chase with these powerful animals was usual. Coill Iochterach in the days of its glory must have resounded to the clamour of the hunt. The woods of oak, ash and elm teemed with wild life. Game of all description, including deer, abounded there. Pine martens, much prized for their valuable pelts were found there. There were clearings in the great woods where cattle might be safely pastured. In this “great fastness” secret pathways through the forest were known to the natives who had tricks of closing them with an intricate pattern of interwoven branches that made pursuit very difficult. Wolves became a menace as the clans were dispersed and the settlers moved in.

The various spellings of Coill Iochterach have confused some people about its location but a glance into Dr Hill’s “Plantation in Ulster” (An historical account of the plantation in Ulster at the commencement of the 17th Century 1608 – 1620, published by McCaw Stevenson and Orr 61, Upper Arthur St Belfast) will show it on the Northwest side of Lough Neagh, South of the Moyola river. This was Tom Keane’s Culintra.

It is a long step from the lush pastures of the “great fastness” to the bleak wilderness of Erris, thrusting itself into the Atlantic Ocean – Finisterre! Is it not strange that no definitive account has ever been written of this trek of horror? No historian has approached the task, nor has any novelist used it as a backdrop for a tale of human suffering. The closest that I have been able to find is the account given by Walpole of the dispersal of the Irish from the three provinces to Connaught:-

“Slowly the beggared nobility and gentry (and commons) set out on their sorrowful pilgrimage. The Anglo-Irish who in the reign of Henry II had dispossessed the native Irish were driven from the estates they had held for five hundred years (to make room for Cromwell’s soldier colonists). The season was wet, the roads were well nigh impassable and the squalid multitude as they struggled into the West found that the barren land into which they had been sent was all too small for the promised accomodation. When the exiles reached

Connaught they were pillaged by the officers employed to set out their allotments, who had to be bribed, either with money or a portion of the land awarded, before they would stir in the business. These worthies – the Kings, the Bingham, the Coles, St Georges, Ormsbys, the Gores, the Lloyds – having cheated the transplanted of a portion of their lots bought up the remnant for a few shillings the acre, to the extent of eighty thousand Irish acres. Here (in Connaught) they were hemmed in, as in a penal settlement with the ocean on the one hand and the Shannon on the other, forbidden to enter a walled town under the death penalty, with a fringe of disbanded soldiers planted in a belt one mile wide all around the sea coast and along the line of the river to keep them from approaching the border line.”

The Ultachs (the Ulstermen) transplanted to Mayo bear the old names. Maguire, O'Donnell, O'Doherty, O'Neill, MacDonnell and many others – and they are still there. They were known to their Mayo neighbours as the Ultachs. In his book “Belmullet” pp105/106 P Knight writes: -

“Ballycroy and Achill have been for an undetermined number of years inhabited by a colony from the North of Ireland who are called by their neighbours “Ultach” or Ulstermen. At what point this colony settled here I have not been able exactly to find out but suppose they must be some of those native inhabitants of Ulster expelled by James the First and their land given to Scotch and English settlers in five counties of the north. It would seem that their leader was one of the O'Donnell family, for from the old peasantry of Achill I heard two Irish verses repeated, descriptive of the time of the death of Hugh the great grandfather of the present proprietor, Sir Richard O'Donnell, viz. 1762, and one of his (Hugh's) father Colonel Manus, 1736, so that there remains but little doubt from these traditional remembrances that such was the case. Sir W Betham in his curious and interesting “Irish Antiquarian Researches” Part 1 p 189 states that the father of this Colonel Manus, Roger of Lifford was the first settled in Mayo, so the settlement of the O'Donnells would seem to be sometime after 1646”

Ruairi or Roger O'Donell (known as Roger or Ruairi of Lifford) was transplanted to Connaught with a “large band of followers” to make way for the plantation of Ulster. His son, Manus O'Donell (1736) was one of the two men who went surety for Father James Henry, of whom more later. Ruairi of Lifford's Father, Manus was a colonel in the army of Eoghan Roe O'Neill and was killed at Benburb. This Manus was a son of Nial Garbh O Donell whose defection to the English contributed much to the defeat of O'Neill and O Donnell.

It was in Mayo that Cucoigry O Cleary was commissioned by Calbhach Ruadh O Donnell to write the history and genealogies of the Tirconnell race. O Donnell complained of being driven out of Mayo where his family had taken refuge and being forced to seek a new home in the vicinity of Cruachan, Co Roscommon. This is the reverse situation of the O Donnells of the Mullet who were first settled in Roscommon and then driven on into Mayo with a price on their heads. Mr Padhraic O Donnell of Cross, Belmullet, remembers his grandfather recounting the story of their travels from Tirconnell via Roscommon to the Mullet.

The sad twist of fate that made Nial Garbh O Donnell a traitor also condemned his great family to banishment. Chieftainship among the Irish was a hereditary gift bestowed by election from among a number of candidates qualified by birth for the post. If an aspirant for the highest place was unsuccessful as in the case of Nial Garbh he frequently resorted to arms. Nial Garbh had good grounds for consideration as chief of his name. His mother Rois O'Neill was the daughter of Shane the Proud (Shane Donnealeach as he was known to his own). His father Con had been overlooked in favour of his brother Aodh O Donnell and his nephew Aodh Ruadh, (Red Hugh). The smouldering resentment of Nial Garbh was to bring down his house. A horseman of remarkable prowess, his personal valour (and he was brave to the point of recklessness) was marred by his envy. His wife was Nuala O Donnell, a sister of Aodh Ruadh. She left him when he deserted to the English and she was one of the party that left Donegal with the "Flight of the Earls". Nial Garbh's seat was at Castlefinn a few miles North of Lifford. Nial Garbh met his end as a prisoner of the English in the Tower. Manus his son fell at Benburb fighting for the Irish cause. His son Ruairi was the last O Donnell to hold land at Lifford. He surrendered 4000 acres to Trinity College and took the road to the West.

Our family (O'hInneirghe) were Ultachs who had settled on Ballycroy. The first of them in Erris was called Seamus and by coincidence it was my son Seamus O'hInneirghe (James Henry) who introduced us to the history of his transplanted ancestor. Micheál Henry the folklorist gives us this account:-

"The Henrys came from Culintra in Tyrone. They were O'hInneirghe then but under British domination they had to drop the O and use the anglicised name Henry. About 1900 when the Gaelic League was active they adopted a gaelicised form, MacEnri. They were driven to Donegall, then to Connaught and travelled overland through Ballyshannon. Ballysodare and

then inland through the Ox Mountains in Sligo. Some settled in Curtee, some in Aclare and Charlestown and their descendents are still there under the name Henry. Seamus O'hInneirghe was the only one of the name to travel as far west as Ballycroy, and this was because he was in love with Eilis Ni Domhnaill a member of the O'Donnell family. They married and settled in Ballycroy. One of their sons was Father James Henry (I will have more to say of him later) another went to Inishbiggle, another to Gortbreac and began work there as a weaver. No one of the Gortbreac family remains locally now, the last member died in a home for the elderly in Westport in 1980."

The story expressly states that Seamus O'hInneirghe came on horseback. And that he was accompanied by two close friends, Seamus O'Domhnaill and Seamus O Cleirigh – known as the three Seamuses. They all settled in Ballycroy.

We do not know for sure how long the journey from Tyrone to Ballycroy must have taken because so little has been written about it. The transplanted included the old and infirm, pregnant women, young children, and men wounded in the long drawn out wars. Some were on horseback and there must have been transport such as carts for those unable to walk, but most of the people in that sad exodus were on foot. We do know what the season was like, the weather was appalling and all the tracks were awash. These people were the victims of an intolerable wrong – the seizure of their land by foreigners and expulsion from their ancestral homes. At first they made valiant efforts to hold what was theirs, by the use of the law, and it was only when the law proved useless that they resorted to the sword. The dispossessed fought with savage resolution in the Confederate Wars and the ancient Gaelic custom of rallying contingents from various chiefs was used here for the last time. Their early successes at Benburb and elsewhere raised hopes of restoration and for a while some of the original owners did return to their homes. Dr Hill (in "Plantation in Ulster") has this interesting passage:- *"From the lists of grants to natives we find that only a very few of such in each county was to partake in the plantation scheme and whilst they had previously held the rank of gentlemen so styled indeed (through) their miserable patents they were obliged to accept the merest shreds of their own soil. The grants made to the Gaelic lords were not honoured. The greedy servitors got the land, one way or another. The British settlers did not want to dispense with Irish labourers but for the class that had been more respectable than themselves they had only only fear and indeed hatred, and as the settlers were well armed and the natives not permitted to carry firearms they soon drove the original owners off. The representatives of ancient and noble families were afforded refuge among the Irish labouring*

class who in many cases had been their former tenants and who remembered from what they had fallen.”

The wealth of this dispossessed people had been in cattle. They owned huge herds, running into many thousands in some cases, rather like the latterday cattle barons of Texas and they moved them from one pasture to another into the mountains or down into the valley as the weather or season dictated – known as the “creaght”. The creaght however was more than a cattle drive, it was a community gathering, a way of life and a coming together where gossip as well as goods were exchanged. The Irish of Ulster had been on the move in creaghts since 1611.

The memory of the creaghts also survived the centuries. My husband’s mother, herself an O’Cathan, related to my eldest son Edmund the old tale of the trek westward, of the dispossessed, the awesome difficulties, surmounting those difficulties, fighting their enemies, and being led westward into their nowhere by a black bull. And where the bull rested, there they settled.

The transplantation to Connaught was ushered in with the catch cry “To hell or to Connaught”. Cromwell, with whom the phrase is closely associated was but one of the many fanatics inflicted on the country. Nor was he the first to consider transplantation – Henry viii had done so but rejected the idea as likely to be too costly in lives and money. He, of course, did not have so firm a grip in the country. The order to cross the Shannon was proclaimed in the autumn of 1653 by beat of drum. All had to obey by 1st May 1654. Throughout the struggle from 1642 to 1652 the Irish were prepared to fight and die if necessary in defence of their religion or for the return of their property but the “old English” were not cast in this mould. They had come in, after all, with various invasions and were not overly anxious to take up the sword against their onetime countrymen. They seem not to have realised until too late that nemesis was at hand for them too, they were also evicted by Cromwell, but at least they had the courage not to abandon their religion.

To keep their foothold in Derry the English formed alliances with renegade Irish and erected forts in order to encircle O’Neill. One of these was at Derry, to command the line of retreat up the Roe valley and through Glenshane and other passes into Glenconcadhan: another at Coleraine, to prevent the MacDonnells and the Scots mercenaries from coming to his assistance: and at Toome, to sever communication between the O’Neills of Clannaboy and

the septs of Coill Iochterach. We know from plantation records that the septs of Glenconcadhan and Coill Iochterach had weapons – John Leigh an Englishman wrote:-

“And in this place especially about that part of the barony called Killytragh being a strong fastness do inhabit the chief nest of those that upon any sudden occasion being offered them would first show themselves in action for Tyrone’s party, they being able out of this one quarter to draw together at least 200 able men and well armed within 24 hours. Also I observed that under cover of having liberty to wear arms in the time of O’Doherty’s rebellion for their own defence, the country is now everywhere full of pikes and other weapons which the Irish smiths daily make.”

As well as encirclement and armed force Chichester the Lord Deputy used famine to subdue the natives. His own words written in 1607 are:- *“It is the famine that must consume the Irish as our swords and other endeavours worked not that speedy effect which is expected; hunger would be a better because a speedier weapon to employ against them than the sword...I burned all along the Lough (Neagh) within four miles of Dungannon and killed 100 people sparing none of what quality age or sex soever, besides many burned to death. We killed man, woman and child, horse beast and whatsoever we could find.”*

Spencer the English poet, author of “The Fairy Queen” is credited with being the author of the famine policy, a policy adopted by Mountjoy, by Chichester and by their successors in the mid 19th century. In his “Flight of the Earls” p1 Father Paul Walsh writes:-

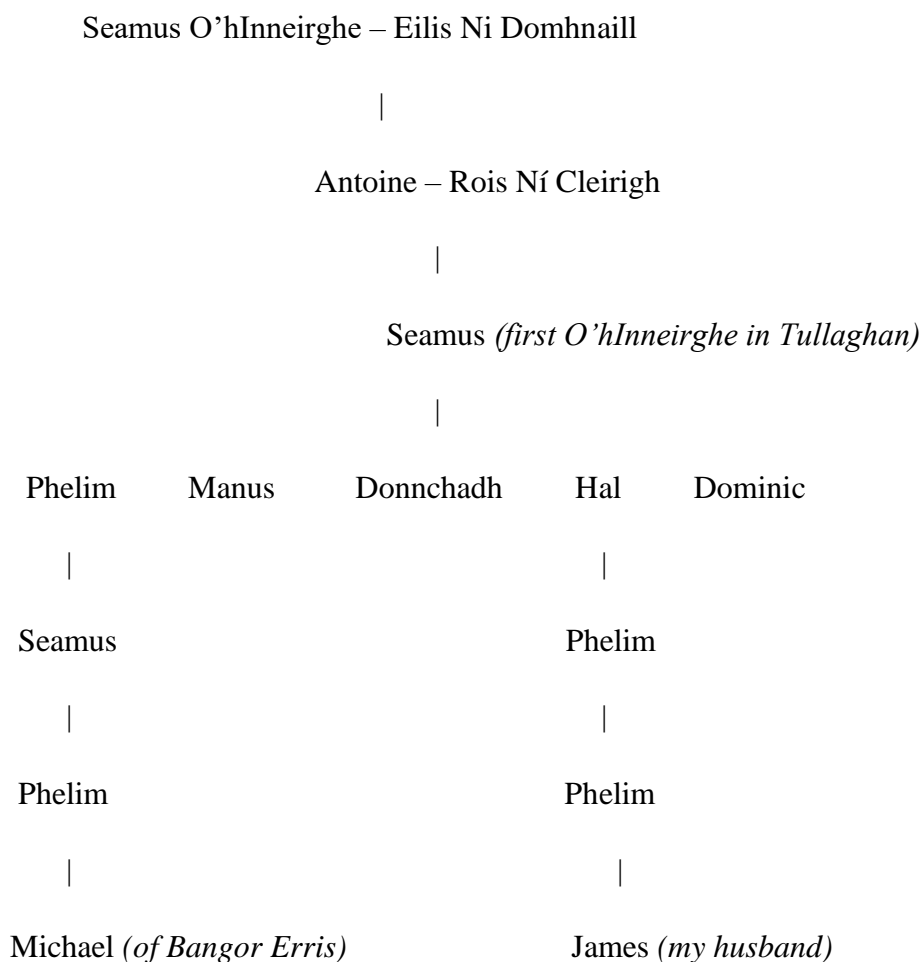
Sir Arthur Chichester was appointed Deputy in succession to Sir George Carey and had the sword delivered to him on 24th February 1605. He became Lord Lieutenant on Mountjoy’s death in 1606 and held that post until his dismissal on 27th November 1615. His term of office was characterised by a series of forgeries and robberies which have been descibed admirably by T M Healy in his book “Stolen Waters”

Chichester and his servitor and righthand man Sir Thomas Philips came to Ireland with nothing but their soldiers’ pay. Philips started his military career abroad, in France and had made very little when he was sent by Cecil to join Chichester at Carrickfergus. Recognised as a fellow-spirit, he was installed by Chichester on the Tyrone side of the Bann. We have no record of what the Irish of the time thought of these two worthies, nor indeed do we have any from Sir Arthur himself because he did not believe in leaving documents lying around when

they could be so easily incinerated, a fate he doled out to the natives as liberally as to the documents. He and the Attorney General Davys were responsible for the destruction of Irish law and the expulsion of the Irish chiefs.

I give here the family tree of the O'hInneirghe family in Erris to the present day, beginning with Seamus who arrived in Ballycroy at a date before 1654.

(I think there might be a generation missing here, or else some of those mentioned must have been quite old when having children. JAMacC)



Seamus had travelled overland. This phrase is explained by Michael Henry as distinguishing between those with stock and larger retinues and those others who travelled by sea, many of who ended up on the islands off the western coast. One of the sons of Seamus and Eilis called James was ordained to the priesthood and was appointed to the parish church at Addergoole. Again it was Tom Keane who first told us about a chalice presented to the church at

Addergoole by this same Father James. In the “Western People” Oct 1st 1977 p4, Father Edward McHale PP Killala writes:-

“James Henry. The 1704 list gives him as living at “Grinan” And being then 33 years old. He was ordained in 1696 at Dublin by Dr Plunkett of Meath. The sureties for his good behaviour were George Brown of Liskillin and Manus O Donnell of Rosturk. He had been transferred to Addergoole by 1715... that he was still in Addergoole by 4th April 1726 is evidenced by the Latin inscription on the base of a Penal Days chalice of Laherdane. It is described as follows by Rev J F Lavelle:- the cup is of plain design while both the knob and base are chased. The base is octagonal and upon it are handwrought engravings of the Crucifixion hammer, pincers and scourge. The top view of the base resembles that of Roynce Chalice AD1711 though not so elaborated at the outer margins. A Latin inscription reads, “Pray for the soul of Father James Henry and his assistants who had this chalice made for perpetual use in the parish church of St Kieran at Addergoole in the diocese of Killala, Ireland, AD1725/6”

My husband and I were shown the chalice by Father Tom MacGuinness when we visited the church at Lahardane where it is still in use. Fr MacGuinness told us of an earlier visit by two priests, one called Henry, the other Henery who, like ourselves, had heard of the penal chalice. The fact that in penal times priests had to be licensed had at least one good effect – it meant a record of Father James and of his whereabouts. And the chalice itself remains a symbol of the constancy of the Ultachs to the old religion and the Old Irish habit of presenting scared vessels to the church even in straightened circumstances of those very bad times.

As well as Father James and those mentioned as going to Inishbiggle or remaining in Gortbreac, there was at least one other son, Antoine. He married Rois Ní Cleirigh, daughter of Francis O’Cleirigh and Honoria MacSweeney. The Father Manus MacSweeney who was hanged by the British at Newport on 8th June 1799 was a member of this family.

Antoine and Rois were the parents of Seamus O’hInneirhghe who crossed over Tullaghan Bay to settle in Tullaghan. He had five sons. These five were the forebears of all the present day Henrys in Erris. They were:- Phelim, Hal, Manus, Denis and Dominic.

Phelim remained at Tullaghan and his direct descendent Micheál today occupies the original farm at The Ferry, Tullaghan Bán. It was Micheál's father (also Micheál Henry, the folklorist of whom I have already spoken) now in his nineties and living in Dublin who contributed much of the information that we have about these early Henrys and who has a very interesting article about them in "The Living Landscape, Kilgalligan, Erris" published by Comhairle Bhealoideas Eireann, Dublin 1975, p 262. Descendents of this Phelim are now scattered far and wide, one returned to the Ulster of her ancestors and lives in Monaghan.

Hal, (diminutive for Cathal) married a Miss Campbell (MacAilin) from Ballycroy. Their son Phelim married Mary Keane (O Cathan) of Doohoma, where Hal had settled. Phelim and Mary's son, also Phelim, married Margaret Keane (O Cathan) from Cross, Belmullet. This lady was my husband's mother. She had a great regard for the old times and their ways and for the old tales, she it was who told my son the story of the black bull leading the Ultachs to the west. Her father Cathal O'Cathan had been at one time the owner of Inis Gloire (the Isle of Brightness) famed for its monastery established by St Breandan, and the beautiful legend of The Children of Lir (you are still shown on the island what purports to be the four graves of the children.)

My husband's uncle, Seamus O'hInneirghe, was trained as a teacher in the school at Tourmakeady. He and Sean O Ruane of Doolough set off together for the school, crossed to Ballycroy at the Ferry, Tullaghan and made this entire journey on foot. They qualified as teachers, and Sean went on to become a Professor at Galway University. Seamus married Mary Maguire of Rossport and emigrated to Buffalo New York where he died in an accident in 1929. He was a noted Irish scholar and keenly interested in the Irish language. My husband remembers coming across a letter to him from Douglas Hyde which revealed a close friendship. It was in Irish and signed "An Craobhain." This must have been sometime in the thirties and there is now, alas, no trace of the letter.

But this mention of Douglas Hyde reminds me that it was he who first made me aware of the attribution of colours to each of the winds which he had discovered in the west of Ireland and which he describes as "curious" The north wind was black – this is the origin of the phrase "black north" But I was particularly struck by my daughter's ascription of colours to each day of the week, to numbers and in other ways giving to one sense the faculty of another. My husband had exactly this same "curious" method of sense attribution in his youth.

The next of the five sons, Manus, went to Aughoose and married a Miss Heverin. Their daughter, Bridget, emigrated to Philadelphia and married a Glenamoy man, Patrick O Doherty. Cardinal Denis O Doherty of Philadelphia was their son, and Bishop MacIntyre of Philadelphia was their daughter's son. A direct descendant of Manus lives in Kilgalligan.

John Henry one of the last great Seanacaidhe (*story tellers*) whose fluency in the Irish language has brought prominence on radio and TV. A tape recording of his stories in Irish accompanying a book has recently been published. His wife Nancy is also descended from the O' hInneirghe, her grandmother was a member of the family. Their sons now live in Dublin.

Denis remained in Tullaghan where a direct descendent Rois still lives.

Dominic who went to Roy West was the ancestor of Tom Keane the man who initiated this search. We are fortunate to have a record of the stock given to Dominic by his father Seamus of Tullaghan. He was given twenty sheep and their lambs, a mare and a foal. These animals were confiscated by Bingham's agent Lynch. Dominic did eventually have his stock returned but lived in Tullaghan until the matter was cleared. He married a Miss Gallagher of Corraun. They had six sons. One of them, Anthony was a prominent Land Leaguer and served three years in the British prison in Ballykinlar* for his pains (he as the first O'hInneirghe to set foot in Ulster since his family's dispossession) and on his release was offered many inducements, including the offer of land to abandon the cause of the Land League. But he remained steadfast and it has been said that it was largely due to his efforts that the landlords were removed from Erris – certainly Bingham, Blinton and Carter left. Anthony had some remarkable escapes from the Recoats but he left for America eventually where his descendents are to be found in Boston, still active in politics. Phil Henry of Roy is another descendent of Dominic's, as are the Henrys of Edinburgh. Father David Henry belongs to this branch, he it was who celebrated mass in Lahardane using the chalice of Father James.

**Ballykinlar wasn't opened till later so, either Kilmainham is meant, or a later family member must have been out in 1916 and imprisoned there.*

Those of the family who remained in Letra, Ballycroy eventually emigrated to America and the last member who resided at Gortbreac Ballycroy had gone to live in a home for the elderly when we went in search of him. On the day we called at the home in Westport we were told that he had died just a few months previously.

Before discussing the references to the name O'hInneirghe it might be a good thing to say a word about that most important source, the Annals of the Four Masters (AFM) My quotations are taken from the AFM (Annala Riogliacta Eireann) translated by John O Donovan LLD MRJA, published by Hodges Smith and Co, Grafton St Dublin 1856.

Paul Walsh says of the AFM:- *On the 10th August 1636 the great work that has been known since the days of Father John Colgan OFM as the Annals of the Four Masters was completed. It was not at all the first collection of annals that came from Irish scribes but it was put together in circumstances that lend it an importance not accorded to other books that carry the name of Annals of Ireland. Indeed, in point of date the Four Masters compilation is the latest of its kind. Nothing of equal magnitude has been attempted since.* Four Masters and their work, Fr Paul Walsh, page 1.

A word should be said here about the work of Dean Lyons of Belmullet. In O Curry's "Ancient Irish History" published by James Duffy 7, Wellington Quay and 22, Paternoster Row London 1861 there is on pp 645/6:- *"The late Dean Lyons of Belmullet... undertook to examine the archives of the Eternal City in search of Irish books and manuscripts (in 1842/3) He was himself a good Irish scholar. All his searches were unproductive until, he visited the College of St Isidore in which ... he found 20 volumes of Irish MSS, some of them of the greatest interest in value to the ancient civil and ecclesiastical history of Ireland."* On the same page O Curry tells us that he made up a catalogue of the MSS. They were valued at £400. Dr Lyons sent the catalogue and an offer of money to Rome but he died before an answer was received. The Great Starvation followed shortly afterwards and we do not know if an answer was ever received.

Our family surname comes from Inneirghe who ruled the area now known as Derry, about 828AD. He was the 14th generation in descent from Nial of the Nine Hostages. Nial's son Eoghan established the Cineal Eoghan (the family of Eoghan) and gave his name to Tir Eoghan and Inis Eoghan. His son was Eochy Binnigh, whose name means the harmonious or tuneful one. It as he who first established supremacy in this area. In his book "Ballinascreen" the derivation of the name "Bynagh" is explained by the author Fr Coulter. *"The Deanery of Bynagh was made up of parishes now situated in Co Derry. The name Bynagh is of civil not ecclesiastical origin deriving from the Cineal Binne the people who held sway here until the*

12th century. Eochy Binnigh was the progenitor of Cinneal Binnigh who dominated the region now known as Derry and left their name on the diocese to this day.”

On p1835 of AFM there is a footnote which reads:- “*Gleann Con Cadhan* anglicised *Glen Con Keine* a name now applied to a valley in the barony of Ballynascreen in the southwest of Londonderry but it was anciently the name of a territory comprising the parishes of *Ballinascreen, Kilcronaghan and Desertmartin*. According to the tradition in the country this was the territory of the *O Henrys*, a respectable sept of the *Kinel Owen* who were tributary to *O Neill* not *O Kane* whose territory joined them.”

Dr O Donovan gives the name *Ua hAinniaraidhe* as the origin of *Ua hInneirghe*, but Prof Seamus O Ceallaigh does not agree. Dr O Donovan makes his assumption on the following entries in the AFM:-

1) “*Inneirghe, son of Mochan, Lord of Cianachta slain 953 AD in Connaught in the army of Conghalach son of Maolmitigh*”

This is the earliest reference to the name in the Annals. In the Irish language O Donovan gives *Inderghe* as the spelling.

2) “*Conchubar O h-Ainiarriadh Lord of Cianachta slain 1096 AD. He was slain by Ua Cein Lord of Uimic Cairthinir or Tirkearin, east of Lough Foyle and adjoining Ciannachta (Keenaught) in Derry. Conchubar Ua hAinniarraidhe Lord of Cianachta, and Ua Cein Lord of Ui-Mic-Airthinn fell by each other in a combat.*” Vol 2 p 953.

3) “*Gilla Easbuig Eoghan Ua hAinniariadh Lord of Ciannachta – Glenn Geimhin was killed by his brothers in 1121*” Vol 2 p 1013

4) “*The Ulidians turned against Muirchertagh Ua Lochlainn and proclaimed war upon him. An army was led by Muirchertagh into Ulidia and he obtained the hostages of the Ulidians to secure their obedience to him; however the Ulidians under the conduct of the Dunsleibhe made an attack upon some of the army and slew Ua hInneirghe, chief of the Cuillentrach.*” Vol 2 p 1119. (1156 AD was the first year of Muirchertagh Ua Lochlainn’s reign over Ireland and O hInneirghe is in the ranks of the Cineal Eoghan.)

5) “*1192 AD – the doorway of the refectory of Duv-Regles-Columcille was made by O Kane of Creeve and the daughter of O Henery*” Vol 3 p 93. (A.U. 1192 – Dorus proinntighi in Duibreiclesa ic a denum la U Cathan and La ingin hUi Indeirghi)

This entry is by far the most important mention of our family in the annals. It refers to the doorway of the refectory of the Black Abbey, the first monastic settlement in Derry built on a site donated by the Prince of Aileach, Ainmire, afterwards High King. The Duv-Regles was the favourite school of its founder, Columcille. It was built in AD 544. O Cathan of Creeve was Eachmarcach* son of Raghnaill. Creeve is the area now known as the Cutts of Coleraine.

- *Eachmarchach = horseman, MacCafferty = son of the horseman.*
- *It is a coincidence, after 800 years, that the daughter of an O'hInneirghe, Joyce Ann Henry, should have married a MacCafferty, Séamus, in Derry in 1972.*

A plaque in the present day Long Tower Church Derry tells us that it stands on the site of Duv Regles, the first church of St Columcille built AD 544. The Duv Regles vanished long ago when Dowcra tore down its walls and used the stones to build the walls of Derry.

In AD 1260 the Battle of Down fought at Drumdearg (the Red Ridge) near Dun-de-Leath-Glass (Downpatrick) This was the disastrous encounter between the native Irish chiefs under O'Neill (Brian) and the Anglo-Normans under Stephen de Long Espee. Over three hundred prominent Irish chiefs perished, among them Cian O hInneirghe of Glenconcadhan. Over fifteen chiefs of the O Cahan family died here, with MacLoughlin of Meath (Dermot) According to the chroniclers of the day the Irish went out attired in shirts of silk to meet the mail clad Normans. De Long Espee was killed shortly afterwards by his own people, a fate frequent enough in mercenary circles.

In the Irish genealogies those who fell at the Battle of Down have the words "Catha an Duin" (Battle of Down) inscribed at their names. Fergus O'g Mac-an-Ward, also composed a poem on the battle and in the third verse he describes "O Inneirghe of the sedate brow."

Dr O'Donovan collected a lament for O'Neill and those killed at Drumdearg from four different sources. The lament was the work of Giolla Bridge Mac Conmidhe, and one of the O'Donovan's sources was a direct descendent of the author. He was Malachy MacNamee of the Cross at Ballinascreen. The reference to Cian O hInneirghe reads:-

*"With Cian of the fleet hounds disappeared the
nobility and glory of Eire*

Removed from us were wisdom and comeliness when Cian was hidden in the grave"

Aindiles O Henery, tower of the valour of the North of Ireland died in 1254 AD. In the old translation the entry appears as:-

“AD 1254 Anglis Hinerge the threshold of manhood (eang nama) in the North of Ireland died” Vol 3 p 351

The last reference to O h Inneirghe is from MS No xi Kings Inn Library. *“A daughter of O hInneirghe was the wife of Muirchertagh Ruadh, ruler of Clannaboy and the mother of Feidhlim.”* Muirchertagh Ruadh 1444 to 1474 was succeeded by Feidhlim who died in 1497.

And this reference brings us to a very interesting tradition. Through the history of the Erris O hInneirghe the name Phelim recurs in every generation. It is a name forever associated with O Neill. It means “ever good” It is remarkable that in both my husband’s family and in all the collateral branches the name recurs again and again. For example, my husband’s father was called Phelim, so was his grandfather (see the family tree above) He had a brother called Phelim and three first cousins so called.

Another tradition gives the old graveyard at Ballinascreen as the place of burial of the O hInneirghe. It has little to identify it as such now: there is a ruined church and several illegible headstones but its location on the stream Moyola is pleasant and vivid and its associations are interesting.

When Irish was the people’s language the river was known as Abainn na Scrin (the river of the shrine) and the shrine is Scrin Columbcille. Ballinascreen means the townland of the Shrine. It is here that Columcille prayed that Cineal Eoghan and Cineal Conall might be spared the ravages of the plague that had driven him north from St Mobhi’s school at Glasnevin. His prayer was answered.

The link with Sliocht Maine O Neill of Tyrone is given in O Clery’s genealogy which lists our family as Sliocht Maine Ua Neill, as well as in Dualta Mac Firbis’s MS in the Royal Irish Academy Dawson Street Dublin.

The last O Neill of Coilliochterach was Phelim Groom MacPhilemy who forfeited the miserable holding left to him when he rose out with Eoghan Roe. He was killed at Glenmacquin.

In George Hill’s “Plantation in Ulster” there is an entry on “Remittals and Abatements of Rents” p 249:-

“... the said encumbent prays to be allowed the several sums of money hereafter expressed, viz., sums remitted and given away by special warrant from the Lord Deputy to the following persons being principal gentry of the country, out of the rents which they were to pay His Majesty for part of the escheated lands, partly to content them after the flight of the traitor Tyrone, and partly also at the revolt of the traitor O Doherty, whereby they were drawn to live more peaceably, by whose credit and power in the country the swordsmen and ill-disposed persons there (who were abundant in those countries) were kept back from many outrages that they were ready and inclinable to in those dangerous times” The principal gentry referred to included *“Hugh MacShane O Neal, his brother and kinsman and Phelim Mac Cormac Toole O Neal and his kinsmen in consideration of taking Shane Carragh brother to O Cane chief rebel next to O Doherty, remitted them rents ended at Hallowtide 1610 at £20 per annum”* The kinsmen are the O hInneirghe. We know this because their names appear in one of the patents of James, viz.,

“Under Pat 6 of James 1 p 132 xxv 38 General pardon to felome Oge O Neale Mac Cormac Toole of Glynconcayne, Rowrie Duffe O Henery, Donnell O Henry, Henry O Henery, Jenkin O Henery. This pardon also extended to Hugh Mac Shane of Blank.” Also under patent 3 James 1 p86 cxvii -39: this interesting reference to “Henerys” still associated with the Clannaboy O Neill. *“General pardon to Owen Oge O’Neile of Slught Mc O Neile in Downe Co gent. MANUS O HINIRIE YEOMAN HENRY MC HINGUERIE.”* (sic)

This Hugh MacShane is the man described by Fr Paul Walsh as one of many perfidies. Certainly the taking of Shane Carragh O Cahan and his chaplain, and the delivering of them to the English was no honourable act. Shane Carragh and his chaplain were hanged at Dungannon. Hugh MacShane was himself hanged for his part in the so-called conspiracy of 1615. This was the attempt to rescue Con O Neill the young son of Tyrone who was held by Caulfield at Charlemont. Hugh’s part in the affair was the taking of Mountjoy Fort in Coilliochterach. The MacHenrys implicated were not of the O hInneirghe: they were O Cahans, and are frequently confused with the OhInneirghe. All who took part were hanged without benefit of trial.

Phelim Oge listed with his kinsmen the Henrys was murdered with Donel Oge O Neill. Ever Mac Rory O Neill, chief of Coilliochterach, and Feardoracha Mac Brian Cragh complained in writing to the deputy at the death of their kinsmen. Ever Mac Rory was succeeded by Phelim

Groom who was the last O'Neill to hold land in Coilliochterach. After the flight of the Earls his castle and demesne lands fell to Sir Thomas Phillips.

This man, backed by Chichester, improved his lot out of all recognition. He got a lease for the castle and fort of Toome with 30 acres adjoining: a lease of the customs at Portrush and Portballintrae: the Bann ferries at Toome and Coleraine: and a licence to make aqua vitae at Coleraine and the Route. In January 1608 he was made superintendent of the County of Coleraine and the territory of Glenconkeyne, Coleraine and Toome. He took up residence in the old abbey at Coleraine and installed a Protestant minister there.

He arrested Donal O Cahan and petitioned Cecil for a grant of O Cahan's castle across the Bann with 4000 acres adjoining. His plans for expansion however, were arrested by the plantation scheme undertaken by the City of London. He had to surrender some lands that he acquired at Derry and the abbey lands at Coleraine, as well as the markets of that town and the ferries across the river. He asked to be compensated for those losses by the grant of two estates in the country selected by himself and described by him as of very little value. A large estate at Limavady he represented as only suitable for a horse park. A smaller estate at Coilliochterach was described as a marsh. This estate was sold in 1633 by the sons of Thomas Phillips to Thomas Dawson whose son Thomas was afterwards commissary of the musters of the English army in Ireland.

One of his sons he called Chichester: obviously he knew who was boss in Ireland: he had no James. In later life he found himself in straightened circumstances and was forced to mortgage "his" estate. He was instrumental in bringing the case against the Londoners in which they were fined £70,000 and forfeited their Irish property because the court accepted his evidence that the Londoners had made huge profits out of their estates. Phillips, ever on the receiving end, was awarded £5000 of the rents of the forfeited lands. The very high rents that the natives had to pay reduced them to beggary and we read of Sir Thomas rejoicing that in 1628 an Irishman who formerly had 100 cows now had six. This man, who got the O Hinneirghe land (and who felled its forests -10,000 trees for the building of Derry alone) is described in English histories as "a trustworthy and honest man" His tenancy of the Lower Wood was shortlived by comparison with that of the O hInneirghe. They have been Connaught men for just over 300 years – a long weekend in terms of their occupancy of the Lower Wood. Phillips died in August 1636.

I have already given some indication of how Chichester benefitted. He received the entire territory of Inishowen, the castle of Dungannon and 1300 acres. He was created a Baron of Belfast. He held on to the fishing rights on the Bann and Lough Neagh by conveyance to his relations. He brought over from England his nephews John Trevelyan and Arthur Bassett to settle on some of the land he had acquired. The Attorney General, Davys, was Sir Arthur's man and not the King's. These predators were joined in the share-out of spoils by James Hamilton, a favourite of James 1, who proved to be a match for them in perfidity.

The degree to which Chichester and his aides succeeded can be gauged from the fact that this "great fastness" of the great Irishry showed in the census of 1659 fewer than 20 native Irish in Killetra (no names are given) and this is the only reference to Killetra in the census. It also shows 18 native Irish O Henrys in the barony of Loughinisholin, 12 in Coleraine and 10 in Tirkieran. In 1672 there is one Phelomy Henry listed in Killetragh (at T 808, Groves Document.)

The name O Henry appears only once in the Fiants of Elizabeth p 214, "No 5770 Cormac Oge O Henrye 7th December 1592 pardoned" He is the solitary member of the family pardoned under the Fiants.

An interesting footnote in a book that must surely be one of the most important sources of information about the 1641-1650 Confederate War reads:-

"The portrait of Owen Roe O Neill in the present volume is from an apparently contemporary oil painting in the possession of Alexander Falls Henry Esq Maghera Co Derry who inherited it from his ancestors of the branch of the O Neills named Ui hInneirghe anglicised Henery or Henry"

The book is "The Aphorismical Discovery of Treasonable Faction" pxvi. A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland from 1641 to 1652 edited by John T Gilbert FSA MRIA published for the Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society 1879. It was written by P.S. which initials according to Fr Paul Walsh stand for one of the Sheils family, which has associations with Aodh O Neill and his famous grand nephew Eoghan Roe.

In the Ulster Journal of Archaeology p 32 we find a further reference to the portrait of Owen Roe:-

"There is every reason to believe that the portrait of Owen Roe O Neill from which our lithograph is faithfully copied on a reduced scale is genuine. It is an oil painting on wood and

measures sixteen inches by twelve. On the back is written in characters now much obliterated “Owen Roe O Neill at the Court of by the celebrated Dutch artist Van Bruggens.”

The Henry family who owned this picture emigrated to Australia and are mentioned by Mr Owen Walsh in his book “ Famous Maghera Men” which tells of one of them, a Dr Henry of Ballinascreen who had been a physician in the Navy and had attended Napoleon Buonaparte. This Dr Henry was an accomplished linguist and knew that his name was O hInneirghe. He died during the years of the Great Starvation (1845 – 1847), one of his descendents emigrated to Australia taking the painting of Owen Roe O Neill with him.

Through the good offices of Mr Owen Walsh I received the following information from Mr McKenna, a retired schoolmaster of Draperstown. A certain Michael Henry, originally of Gortnaskea Draperstown supervised the building of Draperstown for the Drapers Co and had the public house (The Railway Tavern) built for himself. Michael’s wife was Rose O Henry daughter of Cormac Henry of Gortnaskea. A date stone above Cormac O Henry’s door reads “Built by Cormac O Henry 1763” It will be remembered that the only O Henry pardoned in the Fianths of Elizabeth was a Cormac.

And now to return to Tom Keane. Just as Tom’s words which began this quest are a prime example of the “lengthened remembrance of departed liberty”, the banishment, the trek westwards and the settling of the O hInneirghe recapitulate in miniature the picture of the people described by Thierry. So too the “ unconquerable tenacity” is exemplified in the grandmother’s tale of the banished people driving their herds into the unknown until they could settle where regeneration might begin at that place in the western mountains where the black bull rested.

“Very few of the direct descendents of these undertakers have survived to attend the funeral of the system they set going; but their representatives have fought hard for their “rights” and have blustered furiously at the very mention of ‘confiscation’ although they represented those who lived, movd and had their being in that injustice. Many of them had been “ennobled”; they have formed rings and exclusive sets, and, fenced in by encircling walls, have remained aliens and enemies in the country of their plantation. There is not at present in Ulster one solitary representative of any planter’s family who should not hang his head with very shame at the thought of the way his possessions were aquired after 1600. Far more worthy the O Neill grave slab on the Montorio, ([San Pietro in Montorio, Roma](#)) or the unrecorded tomb in some desecrated churchyard unde the shadow of a crumbling ruin or broken cross than the

inainties that record a Caulfield or a Bagenal or an Acheson. Song and story and tradition will tell of an O Neill, and O Cahan, and O Donnell or an O Doherty when only Dublin records and local scorn speak of a Chichester, an Upton or a Hill and their “quarterings” human or heraldic.”

(The Ulster Land War by Francis J Bigger p 6.)