

The Rise and Fall of the O'Hanlon Dynasty

by C. F. McGLEENON

In the Middle Ages the O'Hanlons were ousted from their original place as Lords of Uí Nialláin, with claims of being the leading ruling sept in the over-kingdom of Airghialla, to become the most powerful sept in Ballymore and Lords of Orior.

(Airghialla was a confederation of kingdoms in south Ulster corresponding approximately in area to the modern counties of Armagh, Monaghan, Fermanagh and Louth).

O'Hanlon pre-eminence was hard-won and constantly challenged by neighbouring septs such as the McCanns, O'Rogans and O'Heaneys, by more powerful dynasties like the O'Neills from the north, the McMahons from the west, the MacCartans from the east and, from the south, the Anglo-Norman families of the northern 'Pale.' Beset with potential invaders from all sides it is little surprise that the O'Hanlons earned for themselves the reputation in medieval times for being aggressive and bellicose. But if they asserted their independence and expanded their jurisdiction by aggression — often at the expense of weaker neighbours and the Church — they showed a political astuteness in consolidating their position. In a series of alliances they maintained O'Hanlon 'rule' until they lost all in the encroachment of Stuart plantation in the 17th century.

1, Lords of Oneilland — from St. Patrick to the mid-thirteenth century.

The O'Hanlons were descended from the Uí Nialláin sept, one of the ancient ruling families of north Armagh. Indeed they claimed kinship with Daire the chieftain who, traditionally, is supposed to have granted St. Patrick the sites for his churches in Armagh, and, later, twenty townlands as gifts for the support of the early Church of Armagh. The genealogy of the Uí Nialláin has been traced from the 7th century when they ruled a large area around Loughgall which stretched towards Armagh and Tandragee. Their immediate forbears were the Clann Choscraig who became the royal sept of Uí Anluain, Anluan being son of Diarmaikt who was son of Coscrach. The surname O'Hanlon occurs in the annal of the Four

Masters in the 10th century where it is recorded that Flaithbertach O'Hanlon had been treacherously murdered by the Clann Uí Breasail. The O'Hanlons were probably one of the most influential families in Armagh when Brian Boru, the High King, paid a memorable visit to the City in 1004 and the O'Hanlon family would have been represented at Brian's burial in Armagh after the Battle of Clontarf in 1014. The O'Hanlons must still have controlled the territory of the Uí Nialláin throughout the 12th century because there is a reference in the annals to the death of a Donough O'Hanluain Lord of Uí Nialláin in 1111 and to Ardgal O'Hanlon — Flaithbertach's great grandson — as King of Uí Nialláin in 1192-4. About 1194 Ardgal defeated and killed Conchobhar MacDonleavy who had led an incursion from Ulaidh, (the territory east of the Bann) possibly in search of lands to compensate for those lost to Anglo-Norman colonists in Antrim and Down.

The O'Hanlons of Uí Nialláin must have continued quietly to build up their power and expand their influence in the first half of the 13th century because the next reference is to Gilla Patraic O'Hanlon who is styled 'King of Oirghialla' by the Annals of Ulster in 1243. Gilla's pedigree is given as son of Ardgal, son of MacRaith, son of Cú Macha, son of Faithbertach. So influential and prestigious a figure was Gilla Patraic at this time that the leading bard in Ulster, Giolla Brighde Mac Conmidhe (Gilbridge MacNamee) composed a poem in his praise lauding O'Hanlon's widespread conquests east of the Bann, in Louth and in Meath. This eulogy was intended to appease O'Hanlon following an earlier satirical poem attacking him composed by another bard who had been employed to do so by Brian O'Neill of Tullahogue. O'Neill saw O'Hanlon as an obstacle to the expansion of his jurisdiction and resented O'Hanlon's prestige and influence. If such tactics seem childish and harmless today, they were taken quite seriously in early Ireland and were part of the bardic tradition. A local chieftain's social status and generosity could be measured by the fame and fortune of the file or bard at his court. One of the bard's political functions was to enhance the

prestige of his patron by composing eulogies to him or to allies specified by the chieftain. Another was to compose satires on his enemies, usually by attacking their reputation and character. The bards claimed their satires were so effective that they could 'rime a man to death.' MacNamee's ode in this instance, would seem to have been an attempt to repair the damage done by the initial satire.

The satire was an early symptom of the bitter rivalry which would recur between the two septs. Worse was to follow. Gilla Patraic was killed by a Connaught archer in 1243 — a hired assassin of the period. He was succeeded by his son Muiredach O'Hanlon. O'Neill's hostility to the O'Hanlons was further deepened in 1244 when Henry III invited all the Irish kings he considered to be autonomous to join his army against the Scots. Among the invitations sent was one to 'the O'Hanlon of Armagh.' As O'Neill considered O'Hanlon to be his vassal, he resented the implication of Henry's royal summons to O'Hanlon. In fury he had Muiredach taken prisoner and held on a crannog in Tyrone. Muiredach managed to escape on this occasion but was slain in 1246 by one of the McCann family on the direction of Brian O'Neill.

Echmarcach O'Hanlon — Lord of Orior

O'Neill's attacks upon the O'Hanlons would seem to have had the desired effects. Following this second assassination, the O'Hanlons moved out of the Uí Nialláin territory in the mid-13th century and south eastwards into Orior where they settled and made their power base for more than three centuries. O'Neill's vicious campaign also brought many of the nobles of Ulster back under O'Neill domination and most fought for him as his vassals against Anglo-Norman colonists and fell with him at a bloody battle at Downpatrick in 1260. Among the Ulster chieftains slain were Cú-Uladh O'Hanlon and Niall O'Hanlon. In an elegy, the poet MacNamee alludes to the O'Hanlon association with pre-Christian Armagh and laments:—

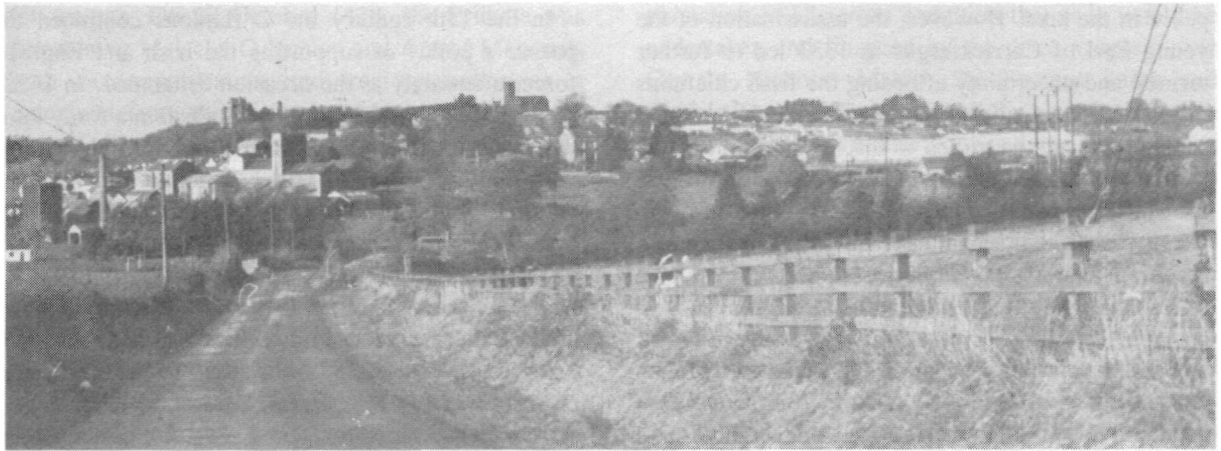
“Woe to him who wielded the axe or spear,
by which fell Cú-Uladh of Eamhain;
Great is the pity that thou beneath the axe hast fallen,
Oh Cú-Uladh Ó h-Anluain”

The process of re-building the O'Hanlon dynasty in a new location in the eastern part of 'Int. Aithir' — a medieval name for the territory corresponding to the modern Armagh county — began after the disasters of the Battle of Down and prevailed for the following

three centuries. The new O'Hanlon territory stretched from Tandragee to Moyry bounded on the east by the territory of Mac Cartain of Mid-Down and that of Magennis of South-Down; the boundary on the north and west was the river Cusher beyond which lay the continual threat from the Cineal Eóghain (O'Neills) and the MacDonnell galloglas of Clancarney while southwest were the Sliocht Aodha and Mac Murphys to The Fews. To the south was the Pale with its Anglo-Irish families, seat of power and launching pad for invasion by the English. Key figure in founding this new dynasty was Echmarcach O'Hanlon, son of Muiredach and grandson of Gilla Patrick. Echmarcach emerged in Orior as a powerful leader who combined violently aggressive deeds with a succession of opportunistic alignments with a variety of surrounding dynasties.

One of his first aggressive actions was to avenge the murder of his father, Muiredach, assassinated by the McCanns 20 years previously. The *Annals of Ulster* record that Echmarcach killed Lochlainn McCann in Armagh in 1266. Two years later he was in trouble with the English and held prisoner in a local castle but escaped. The following year 1269, he is reported as having killed Eichmhilidh MacCartain. In Ballymore parish he suppressed local septs — septs such as the O'Heaneys, the O'Lorcans and O'Sheils and usurped most of their territory.

The death of Walter deBurgh in 1271 left a period of indecisive rule in Ulster with rival claimants among the Anglo-Normans to the earldom of Ulster. Echmarcach O'Hanlon showed political opportunism by exploiting this indecision to expand his sphere of influence in the 1270s. In 1273 he allied with Aodh Buidhe to defeat and kill MacMahon 'king of Airghialla' with an eye to MacMahon's title. He was soon to press claims to be the most powerful ruler in Airghialla since MacMahon's death. Echmarcach also displayed political adroitness in choosing and changing sides among the Anglo-Norman earls jostling for the earldom. Having steered a safe course through the rival forces, he by-passed the Earl of Ulster and made direct contact with the main seat of power, King Edward I's ministers in Dublin whom he supplied with 'men-at-arms' (usually denoting heavy-armed cavalry of the period). For these he received payment and 'a robe of the King's gift to him.' The robe may have been a symbol of Echmarcach having been recognised by the King's ministers in Dublin as overlord of Airghialla.



Tandragee.

However, following this period of political manoeuvring in the 1270s Echmarcach would seem to have returned to his bellicose ways in the late 1280s and early 90s. In 1285 it is recorded that Echmarcach and his tenants were fined 100 cows 'for breaking the King's peace.' In 1286 it was 200 cows or an equivalent £20. And in 1291 Richard deBurgh, Earl of Ulster, called for and joined the army of the King's ministers coming North to subdue O'Hanlon. Their efforts must have been successful because a few years later the O'Hanlons and other septs had joined the Earl of Ulster and the King's army against the Scots. Having survived that war some appear to have been killed in a local skirmish. The Annals record that in 1297 a Cú-Uladh O'Hanlon, King of Oirthir along with his brother and Aongus MacMahon — the septs must have been reconciled — were returning from the Earl of Ulster's army against the Scots when they were killed by the citizens of Dundalk. It is not clear whether this Cú-Uladh was Echmarcach or his successor but in his lifetime Echmarcach O'Hanlon had consolidated a new territory in Orior for the O'Hanlons as power base including most of the eastern side of Armagh County from Tandragee to Louth with Loughgilly his 'Castrum O'Hanlon'. He had brought them to equality with and at times pre-eminence among the other septs of the North in the last decades of the 13th century.

Feuds and changing alignments in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The pattern set by Echmarcach O'Hanlon was continued by his successors in the 14th century. Their aspirations and fortunes fluctuated according to the balance of power in Ulster as the O'Hanlon leaders

chose and changed allies. In 1315 Edward Bruce of Scotland, at war against King Edward II, invaded Ireland. In the war in Ireland from 1315 to 1318 the O'Hanlon sept may have had divided allegiance. Niall O'Hanlon who had been invited by the Anglo-Norman Earl of Ulster to fight for Edward's army seems to have declined that invitation and remained neutral. His kinsman Manus O'Hanlon appears to have collaborated with Donal O'Neill of Tyrone to invite the Bruce army to Ireland. The O'Hanlons used the turbulence and uncertainty of the period to impose a 'black rent' on the Anglo-Norman settlers living in Dundalk which was a levy paid by the citizens to keep the O'Hanlons from attacking their property. If the O'Hanlons reckoned on a new deal if the Bruce invasion had been victorious, their hopes were dashed by the defeat and death of Edward Bruce at the Battle of Faughart in 1318 and the restoration of power to the Earl of Ulster.

At this time bitter rivalry broke out in violence among members of the O'Hanlon family for leadership of the sept. Manus O'Hanlon has his eyes put on Spy Wednesday of 1321 by his kinsman Niall O'Hanlon (either a brother or cousin) to secure the Lordship of Orior. Niall's reign thereafter was short-lived as he himself was slain before the end of that year by the citizens of Dundalk — not always a happy hunting ground for the O'Hanlons.

Following the defeat of the Bruce invasion, the O'Hanlons were forced to submit to the English Earl of Ulster and in the early 1330s Donal Rua O'Hanlon had to sign over his lands and rights to the new Earl and become his tenant with the condition that he provide 'bonnaught' i.e. lodgings and wages for 40 mercenary soldiers at the Earl's disposal to keep the

peace in the area. However, the assassination of the young Earl of Carrickfergus in 1333 led to further turmoil and uncertainty affording the Irish chieftains in Ulster opportunity to repudiate debts, tribute and service. Donal Rua turned to the King's ministers in Dublin and offered the O'Hanlon services once more for which it is recorded he received 8 shillings in 1333. On such occasions when the main Irish septs were in rebellion against the authority of the Crown, the O'Hanlons knew they were in a strong bargaining position. Their territory in Orior strategically provided a corridor between the Pale in Leinster and the Irish controlled territories in the North. In 1333 Donal Rua could provide an additional service in aiding the King's forces to subdue his neighbour John MacCartan of Mid-Down. The O'Hanlons made their strong bargaining position pay further by having their 'black rent' imposed on the citizens of Dundalk and district approved by the King's ministers. Not only did this provide the O'Hanlons with a source of revenue from the Northern Palesmen for most of the 14th century but also enabled them to enlist the latter's support when at war with neighbouring Irish septs. That support would seem to have been insufficient, however, in 1380 when it is recorded O'Hanlon, Lord of Orior, was slain with many Palesmen in a battle against the Magennis sept of South-Down.



Tandragee Castle.

In the 15th century the O'Hanlons continued to pursue a policy of supporting the Irish and English forces alternately as the occasion demanded. In 1422 they joined a northern force of English in a foray into Connaught. In the following year they were marching with the Irish septs of Ulster to attack the English colonists of Louth and Meath. From this campaign they obtained booty and placed the colonists of Dundalk under a heavier 'black rent' than ever before. In 1524, however, they submitted to the new Viceroy.

The pattern of feuds and killings also continued. In 1476 the O'Hanlon's son was killed by his brother in a skirmish and in 1481 Felim, Lord of the O'Hanlons, who had a reputation for "good and noble deeds," was slain. In 1492 the sons of Lord O'Hanlon killed a son of Cairbre O'Neill in Dundalk. The O'Neills exacted revenge later in the same year by slaying young Edmund O'Hanlon.

Disputes with the Church

By the 15th century, too, relationships between the O'Hanlons and the Church had deteriorated. The frequent issue of letters by the Archbishops from their residences at Termonfeckin and Dromiskin suggests that relations between the sept and the Archbishops rarely ran smoothly for any appreciable period of time. In 1366-7, Archbishop Sweteman had admonished Malachy O Hanlon, Lord of Orior, and other members of the sept for a series of misdemeanours including robbery of goods and clothing from the Archbishop's retinue and threatened the sept with excommunication and interdict if they did not make restitution and mend their ways. When this was not effective he had proceeded to excommunicate Malachy and his followers. In 1407 Archbishop Fleming felt obliged to take similar action against Argallus O Hanlon, Malachy O Hanlon, Odo McLoy and their followers for slaying Maurice Odowgenan, his tenant and falconer. The local clergy were directed by letter of excommunication and interdict issued by the Archbishop on 1 May 1407 that the culprits were to be publicly denounced at Church and in the market-places and were to be refused service of food, drink and the necessities of life. In 1427 Archbishop Swayne had to admonish Maurice Rufus O Hanlon, Ninor O Neill and their followers for rustling 100 cows, 2 horses and implements from the vicar of Donaghmore, and in January 1428, had to write again directing the local clergy to warn Manus, Malachy, Maurice and Brian O Hanlon to make restitution to an herenach and

his tenants. On 27 October 1428, the Primate was threatening Malachy O Hanlon and Arthur Magennis with excommunication and interdict following a complaint from the Cistercian Monastery at Newry about O Hanlons and others *usurping lands, granges, rents and other possessions*; and he directed the local clergy to command the two leaders to restore the rightful tenants of the abbey to their lands.

The on-going disputes between Primate and O Hanlon sept would seem to have reached higher levels of acrimony when Archbishop Prene, on one of his visits to his tenants in Armagh, was taken prisoner by the O Hanlons and his chaplain on another occasion. Bell, Book and Candle were used against Felim O Hanlon, 'Captain of his nation' to make a fierce denunciation of the sept. The O Hanlons were no worse than other septs in transgressions against the Archbishops. There is frequent reference in the Archebiscopal registers to the O Neills, Magennis and the other septs trespassing on Church rights and incurring the wrath and admonitions of the Archbishops. On such occasions the admonitions usually brought repentance — for a while.

Eochaidh O Hanlon and the struggle for survival in the 16th century.

The O'Hanlon dynasty was to survive throughout the 16th century. Leading figure was Eochaidh O'Hanlon, chief of the sept in the latter half of the century who combined acumen in political and military opportunism to preserve the hegemony of his territorial authority in Orior from Tandragee to Moyry despite increasing pressures as the century progressed. Eochaidh's first major experience of the threat from Tudor imperialist expansion was in the attempted Chatterton settlement in his territory in the 1570s.

It is significant that the agencies of the Crown should have approved The Fews and Orior as a key area for plantation. It contained the route between the Dublin-Government — controlled Pale and Gaelic Ulster controlled by the O'Neills of Tyrone; and would be the frontier territory and buffer zone between those forces in the great and decisive military struggle for supremacy at the end of the 16th century. It was one thing to plot areas for colonisation; it was quite another to find the necessary finance to fund such schemes. In 1571 Queen Elizabeth was reluctant to proceed with plantation schemes which incurred expense from her own purse. However, she approved three schemes for

plantation in Ulster on condition that each would be undertaken and financed by the three proposers viz Captain Nicholas Malby, Sir Thomas Smith and Captain Thomas Chatterton. Malby's proposal was to settle MacCartan's country of Kinelarty in mid-Down and Smith intended to colonise the territory of the Clandeboye O'Neills in East Ulster.

In October 1572 Captain Thomas Chatterton was granted permission by Queen Elizabeth to possess and plant the territories of Orior, the Fews and Galloglas country before 25 March 1579. He was given authority, for 7 years, to 'invade, subdue or expel or bring to mercy the people of Orior.' Under the terms of the grant, Chatterton was to apportion lands into 'ploughlands' of 120 acres for each of which he would pay a rent of 20 shillings per annum to the Queen. Each footsoldier in Chatterton's service was to receive a ploughland of 120 acres and every horsesoldier, 2 ploughlands. Lands were not to be leased to 'mere' (meaning pure-bred) Irish for a term longer than 5 years. The grant was to be surrendered if the above conditions were not fulfilled.

Two Chatterton brothers tried obstinately to master and settle the hostile and exposed territory of wood and bog with English military servicemen — 'to wrastle and work and go to the worst.' A Chatterton Fort near Camlough is marked on late 16th century maps. However, Viceroy Sidney on his return in 1575 found that little had been achieved with too many hostile native Irish inhabitants and too few English settlers: 'for they be tall and honest gentlemen and have lost in that enterprise all that ever they have and all that anybody else would trust them with, and their blood and limbs too'. In 1576, their grant was revoked. Thomas Chatterton was slain by the O'Hanlons shortly afterwards and his brother was killed by the 'Mac Donnell Galloglas' in 1585. Captain Nicholas Malby's attempted settlement in the neighbouring MacCartan country of Kinelarty was similarly ill-fated and in 1575, when that area was also found to be 'desolate and waste,' the patent was also revoked. Both undertakings had been too extensive for private enterprise — a lesson well learned by the plantation planners at the beginning of the 17th century. Control of the Fews was regained by the sons of Felim Rua O'Neill of the Sliocht Aodha of The Fews.

Following the revocation of Chatterton's patent, the territory of Orior returned to the disposal of the Queen who had claimed ownership of it since the Act of Confiscation of 1569. Having failed to control the area

by *privae* military enterprise and plantation, Queen Elizabeth resorted to the second Tudor imperial ploy viz. to negotiate terms with the local Irish chieftain to rule the territory on behalf of the Crown through the approach of 'surrender and regrant.' Thus on 20 September 1587, Eochaidh O'Hanlon described as 'chief and captain of his nation' surrendered the territories of 'Upper and Nether Orrye' to the Crown. In return, a new patent was issued on 1 December 1587, by which O'Hanlon was granted the title Sir Eochaidh O'Hanlon and confirmed in the territories of Orior for life, then to his male heirs, failing whom to his brothers. The terms of the patent abolished the old title of the O'Hanlons of Orior. It also required Sir Eochaidh to maintain at the ready 12 kerne of footsoldiers and 8 horsemen to attend the Viceroy or Governor of Ulster in any emergency hosting or rising. In his new position, Sir Eochaidh agreed to pay the Queen a rent of £60 per year.

The Nine Years War

The burden of rent and other demands upon his means probably weighed heavily upon Eochaidh. It is doubtful, however, that they reduced him to the sorry state suggested in a satirical poem written by Aenghus O'Daly during the Nine Years War on 'The Tribes of Ireland.' In this, O'Hanlon's plight is reduced to one of ridicule in the verses:

“Ó’ h-Anluain a dtigh an Mhullaigh
B’olc a chulaith ar a bheith ann;
ceathramh spidéoige aige ar theinidh,
A’s fir Oirthear uile b’á chreim!

Beagán bainne a mórnán maoidhteach
Beagán bláthaighe a g-cuachán cam;
Beagán aráin le cois balla,
A’s nead ag an dubhan-allaidh ann”

“O’Hanlon at the house of Mullagh,
Whose suit of clothes was wretched when there,
Had a quarter of a red-breast on a fire
And the men of Orior all to devour it!

A little milk in a leaky noggin,
A little buttermilk in a crooked cup,
A little bread close to the wall,
And the spider having his nest therein”

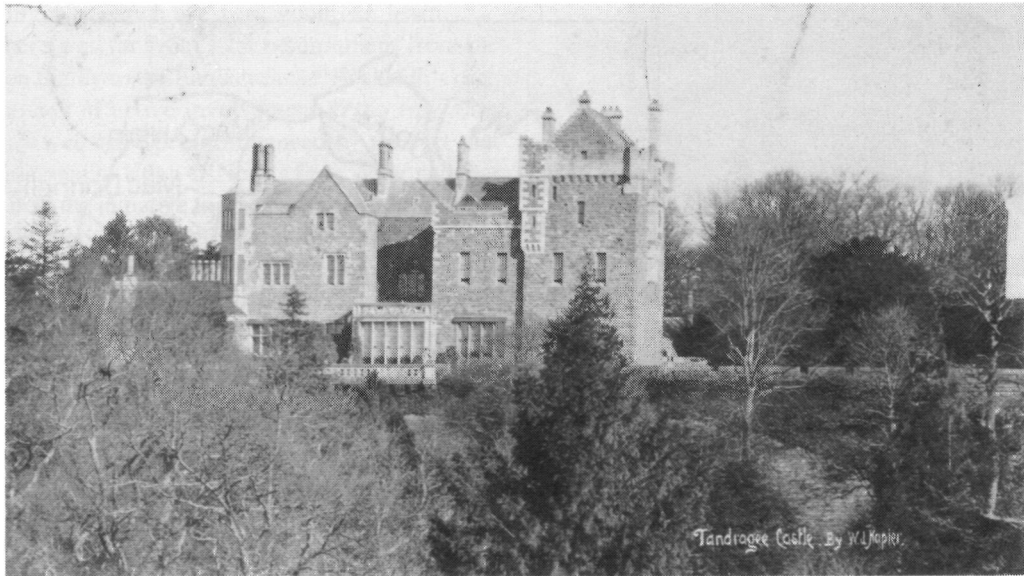
Political motivation and background intrigue have been attributed to the composition of this omnibus satire directed against the chiefs of the principal Irish septs

of Ireland. O'Donovan (1852) saw the satire as part of a 'conspiracy hypothesis' in which the poet Aenghus O'Daly from Cork was employed by the English authorities as an 'agent provocateur' to lampoon his countrymen into frenzied military indiscretion. For the moment, an interesting aspect of the satire is the multiplicity of references and detailed allusion to the private and background histories of leading Irish families in four provinces — so thorough as to suggest that the poet from Cork traversed most of Ireland building up a research dossier. Thus the ridicule poured on O'Hanlon's lack of hospitality seems more like a calculated attempt to provoke leader and family into open hot-headed warfare than an accurate description of his circumstances. Dymook's 'Treatise on Ireland' give O'Hanlon's forces in 1599 as 200 footsoldiers and 40 horse soldiers and that his territory reached from Newry to Armagh — hardly an indication of a destitute man. The localised knowledge in the reference to O'Hanlon's house at 'Mullach' is another matter. The location of 'Mullach' — meaning 'summit' or 'hill-top' — has given rise to a variety of speculation. O'Donovan suggested Mullagh near Forkhill and Mullaglass, in the parish of Killeavy as possibilities. However, it could also have referred to O'Hanlon's main residence on the hill of Tandragee or to Mullaglass townland in Ballymore parish.

If the satire was an attempt to taunt Irish septs, suspected by the English authorities of hostility and opposition, into open war a conclusion must be that the O'Hanlons were numbered among enemies or potential enemies of the Crown forces in the Nine Years' War. The Tudor rulers had discovered that a knighthood to an Irish leader was not always the most reliable or permanent guarantee of allegiance to the



The River Cusher near Tandragee.



Tandragee Castle.

Crown in the process of attempted anglicisation. Eochaidh O'Hanlon was not the first Irish chieftain to have agreed to this title and change of Irish custom and law to succession — nor the first to have second thoughts. Most were unable to deliver the total co-operation and allegiance of their sept to the English — particularly in time of war.

And so it was in the Nine Years War between Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and the English. O'Neill's power base was along the River Blackwater with field bases at Lough Rorcáin and Marlacoo Lake in that part of Oneilland which arrows into Mullabrack Parish alongside O'Hanlon territory near the river Cusher. In the event of war in the north English strategy was to maintain open access from the Pale to Armagh City through the centre of the county. Thus English policy was to supplement the military protection from the garrison town of Newry, held by the Bagenal family since 1542, with support — or at least neutrality — from the septs of south-East Ulster viz MacMahons of Monaghan, the Sliocht Aodha (O'Neills of the Fewes), O'Hanlons of Orior and the Magennises of South-Down.

In 1587, Sir Francis Walshyngham, Secretary of State, had advised:— "If Her Majesty reserve to herself all the inhabitants from the Blackwater to the Pale, such as the O'Hanlons, MacCann, Magennis, MacMahon and if the Fewes be left to the government of some well-chosen men it shall assure the Pale from

invasion, and cut off all dependancies of these urraighs or principal persons from the O'Neills forever...."

When war broke out in the north in the last decade of the 16th century Sir Eochaidh O'Hanlon was fighting on the English side. In the series of skirmishes between O'Neill and Lord Deputy Russell supported by Sir John Norris and Sir Henry Bagenal of Newry, Eochaidh is mentioned in State Papers as guide and standard-bearer for Russell's cavalry which attacked O'Neill in the Newry area on 12th July, 1595. On this occasion it is recorded that Eochaidh was shot in the foot. There is no reference to him being actively involved in the field in subsequent engagements. He is not mentioned among those fighting with Norris and Bagenal at the Battle of Mullabrack on 5 September 1595; nor at the Battle of the Yellow Ford in 1598. Perhaps Eochaidh was still recuperating from his wounds of 12 July 1595 or considered he was getting too old for active combat. His second son — Turlough O'Hanlon — seems to have assumed his father's mantle of hereditary standard-bearer of Ulster and commanded a body of cavalry at The Yellow Ford. There is also reference in State Papers to a Phelim O'Hanlon (probably a younger brother of Sir Eochaidh) acting as agent for the Government in the mid-1590s. Richard Wakely writing from Newry to Sir Ralph Lane mentions:—

"....And by my next letters you shall be advertised from Phelim O'Hanlon of such particularities of the Earl of Tyrone's most recent councils that he (sic) by

his intelligence which are very good can learn..."

Yet there was far from total commitment from the O'Hanlon family to the English cause. Eochaidh's own apparent lack of active involvement in the fray after 1595 may well have been influenced by the fact that he was married to Hugh O'Neill's fiery sister and that O'Neill held the initiative for the first 7 years of frontier warfare influencing the old man not to totally alienate himself from O'Neill's cause. There is evidence that Sir Eochaidh's eldest son, Eochaidh Óg, and his two younger sons Shane Óg and Brian were committed followers of O'Neill. Included (in English lists) among the leaders and numbers of Irish fighting for O'Neill in 1595 were:— "..... O'Hanlon's sonnes upon their own creath ... 80 men."

Following O'Neill's resounding victory at the Yellow Ford in 1598 the chiefs of south-east Ulster — including O'Hanlon — were solidly behind O'Neill and remained so for over two years. From 1601, however, their support began to waver in the face of Mountjoy's relentless campaign in the north. On 6 April 1601 an English force led by Captain Josias Bodley of Newry and Captain Edward Blaney, Governor of the fort at Mountnorris razed O'Neill's crannog base in Lough Rorcáin. In the following week Turlough MacHenry O'Neill of the Fewes, and Ever Mac Cooly MacMahon had defected to the Lord Deputy and within the next week Sir Eochaidh O'Hanlon followed their example.

This temporary collapse in April 1601 of the coalition of the chiefs of south-east Ulster was off-set by the arrival of the Spanish at Kinsale on 21 September 1601. By October Hugh O'Neill again held the initiative in south-east Ulster and burned 22 towns along the coastal plain of Louth and Meath with Turlough Mac Henry and Ever Mac Mahon conscripted to help him which promoted an official report:—

".... These men are people of Ireland, perfidious, ungrateful and apt to wind with every innovation and are not to be trusted. I have however, some hope of O'Hanlon and Maginness..."

Eochaidh O'Hanlon is not listed among the Irish leaders who accompanied O'Neill to Kinsale though some of his four sons may have been there. By distancing himself from O'Neill at this crucial time, Sir Eochaidh seemed to have succeeded temporarily, in securing his estates in Orior. But having steered a course of survival through the Nine Years War and then having survived the avaricious aspirations of the



O'Hanlon Coat of Arms.

government servitors in the period following the inconclusive Treaty of Mellifont, the elderly Eochaidh quite suddenly lost almost all of his patrimony. This was brought about by a chain of events beyond his control and initiated some 100 miles away.

The Rebellion of Eochaidh Óg O'Hanlon in 1608 and the fall of the O'Hanlon dynasty in Orior.

In April 1608 Sir Cahir O'Doherty of Inishowen rose in rebellion. In May 1608 Sir Eochaidh O'Hanlon's eldest son and heir apparent to his estates — Eochaidh Óg — together with the son of the recently executed Brian Mac Airt O'Neill led a force of about 100 in Orior and the Fewes in support of O'Doherty. Both men were provoked into this futile action by family ties. Eochaidh Óg was married to Margaret O'Doherty, sister of Sir Cahir of Inishowen. When the latter rose in revolt, Eochaidh Óg felt obliged to show some gesture of solidarity with his brother-in-law and joined with the young O'Neill from Loughgall in rebellion across mid-Armagh in Orior, Fewes and Tyranny. Margaret, Eochaidh Óg's wife, would seem to have joined her husband 'on the run.' Her fate is unclear. One report described how she was found alone in the woods by soldiers who stripped her and left her there to perish from hunger and exposure in August 1608. Yet the name Margaret O'Doherty, wife of Eochaidh Óg O'Hanlon is listed among those pardoned on 26 May 1609.

The rising was futile and short-lived. Their main adversary was Turlough Mac Henry O'Neill of the Fewes who by July had captured Eochaidh Óg and the young O'Neill. They were sentenced to be transported to serve under the Protestant Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. Lord Deputy Chichester thus planned to be rid of many of the Irish swordsmen and, in October 1608, personally supervised the Armagh party being put aboard ship at Carlingford. Following some years distinguished service in the Swedish army, Eochaidh Óg was allowed to return to England. However, the English government was determined to prevent any potential challenge to the new plantation settlement in Eochaidh Óg homeland. While Sir Toby Caulfield's accounts in 1610 include record of a small payment and small land grants to the two children of Eochaidh Óg viz: Phelimy and Brian O'Hanlon, the rebel father was unwelcome. Thus when Eochaidh Óg turned up in London he was arrested and sentenced to be hanged, despite commendation from the King of Sweden. He was only reprieved when he agreed to return to Sweden. However, he made his way to Brussels where he was commissioned as captain of a company of Irish infantry in the Spanish army in which he served until his death in 1622.

The enforced exile of his son and heir with his supporters, the sad fate of his daughter-in-law Margaret and his own treatment by the ruthless Chichester must have left the elderly Sir Eochaidh a broken man. The Lord Deputy decided that the sins of the children would be visited upon the father in using the rebellion of Eochaidh Óg as excuse to wrest extensive hereditary estates in Orior from the O'Hanlon sept. The old chief's patient acquisition and preservation of the O'Hanlon territories were nullified in 1608 when Chichester ruled that Sir Eochaidh had compromised his home and estates by harbouring his rebellious son and his wife for one night in the family castle at Tandragee. The Lord Deputy forced Sir Eochaidh into a cruel bargain whereby the old man was granted an annuity of £80 for the remainder of his life in return for dispossession of much of the Barony of Orior. Thus from the second decade of the 17th century it was a St. John from Wiltshire — and not an O'Hanlon — who would reside in the castle at Tandragee, and much of the land in the parishes of Ballymore and Mullabrack would be included in the plantation scheme of the early 17th century.

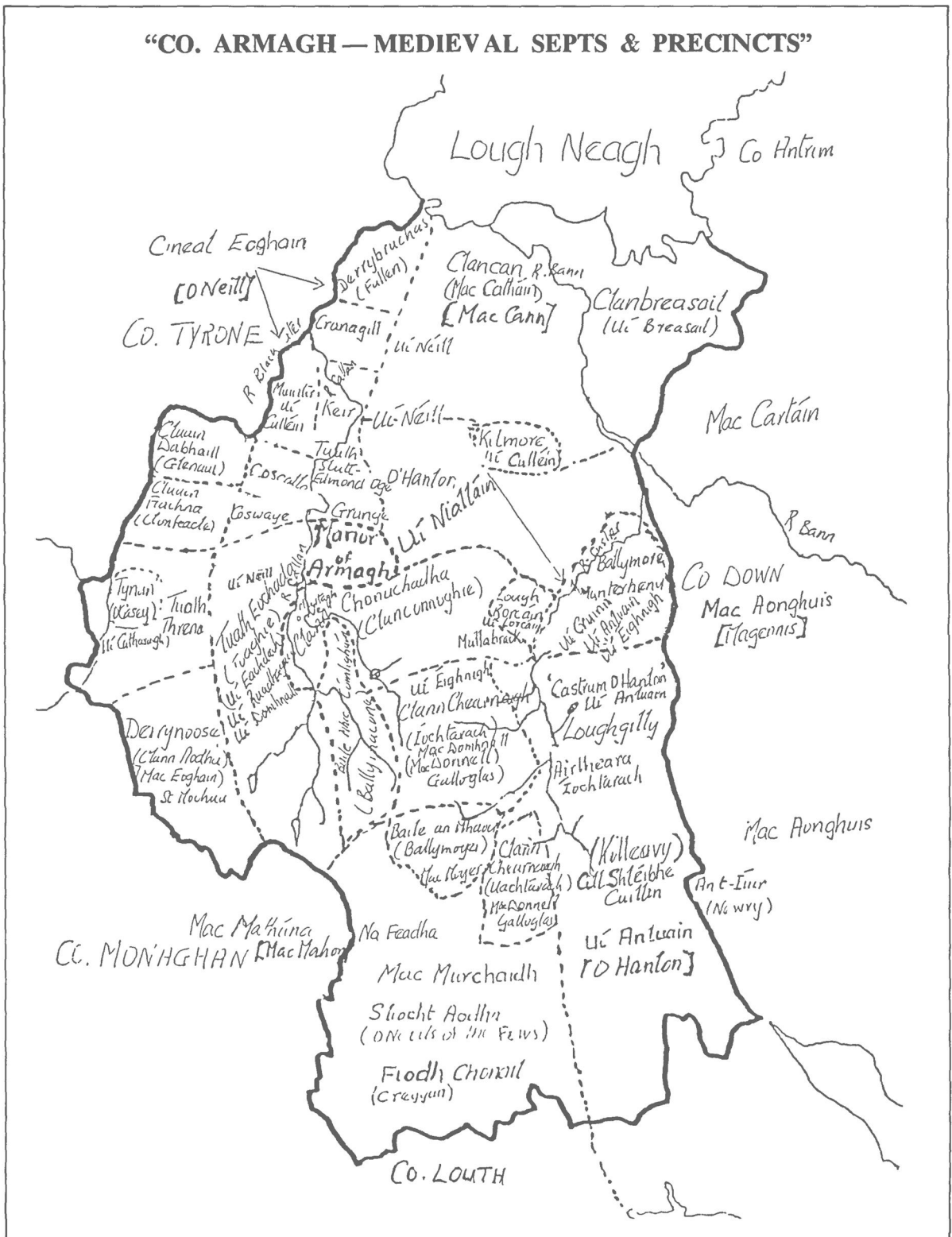
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Marlacoó Lake.

“CO. ARMAGH — MEDIEVAL SEPTS & PRECINCTS”



Co. Armagh Map.