

THE MACNAMARA TOMBS IN THE FRIARY OF QUIN.

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The tombs and inscriptions belonging to the once numerous and powerful *Clann-coilein* in the Friary of Quin are much fewer than we should expect to find in this the largest and most important church of the sept. So few in number are they, indeed, that one is tempted to ask—Where did the Macnamaras bury their dead? Many monuments of early date have, doubtless, like their occupants, long ago crumbled into dust, and some, perhaps, were wantonly destroyed during the Puritan occupation of the county, for those gentry, as was their boast, put little store upon works of art, either sacred or profane. It is also a fact to be noted that a goodly number of the Macnamaras had in past times the doubtful privilege of not dying in their beds, and so were buried without ceremony where they fell. But, with all that, it is impossible to exonerate our ancestors from the charge of carelessness in the suitable commemoration of their departed kinsmen, as is only too apparent in the paucity of monuments of the dead in our churches. The idea with them seems to have been—When a man died, be he noble or peasant, after a lavish wake and a stately funeral, he was buried and there was no more about him, except, in the case of the former, to bestow upon him his allotted place in the family pedigree and compose, perhaps, an eulogium in his honour. It is, however, rather disappointing that in this old fane more ancient sepulchral monuments have not escaped the withering hand of time, so as to make still more interesting to us what many consider to be the finest and most perfect ecclesiastical ruin in Clare.

On entering the church by the western door and walking up the nave, one cannot fail to notice the medieval “altar tomb” in the north-east corner of the choir. It is inserted bodily into the solid masonry of the wall, a section of which had evidently been removed for its

reception, and is still in pretty fair preservation, although chipped in parts. (1) It consists of a square cut-stone coffer, resting on a large and bold base-moulding, and covered with a slab, thus forming a box or altar tomb; several slender pillars, highly ornamented, and developing at the top into a sort of screen, support a canopy on which the heavy masonry rests. On the bevelled edge of the altar slab, corresponding to the west end and front of the tomb, is an inscription cut in antique lettering, which has given rise now and then to a good deal of discussion amongst local antiquaries, who, however, can seldom be got to agree as to its exact interpretation.

The accompanying illustration, taken from a rubbing made by me some two years ago, and afterwards carefully gone over letter by letter on the spot, gives a very good idea of this inscription, the correct reading of which is as follows:—

Sic iacent oīd fili^s laurencii filii mat^hi m̄cōm̄ara
et coullina ni mic cōm̄ara uxor ei^s gⁱ me fieri
fecerūt,

the contractions of which being expanded, will read thus—

HIC JACENT OID FILIUS LAURENCII FILII MATHEI
MAC CONMARA ET COULLINA NI MIC CONMARA UXOR
EÏUS QUIME FIERI FECERUNT.

Now, as “Laurence” and “Mathew” were unknown Christian names among the Macnamaras in former times, we must translate—

“Here lie *Aodh* [Hugh], son of *Lochlainn*, (2) son of *Mathghamhuin* [Mahone] *MacConmara*, and *Cobhlin MacConmara* his wife who [both] caused me to be made.”

It is to be observed that, although the legend is in latin, the sculptor did not forget to put the surname, *MacConmara*, into its proper Irish form, viz., *ni MicConmara*, when coming the second time after a female

(1) Mrs. Quilty, the guardian of the church, has told me that occasionally small chips of the tomb are taken away as mementoes. This is a scandalous practice, and should be put a stop to.

(2) There being no real equivalent of *Lochlainn* either in Latin or any other language, this name is usually englished in modern times into Laurence and Lot.

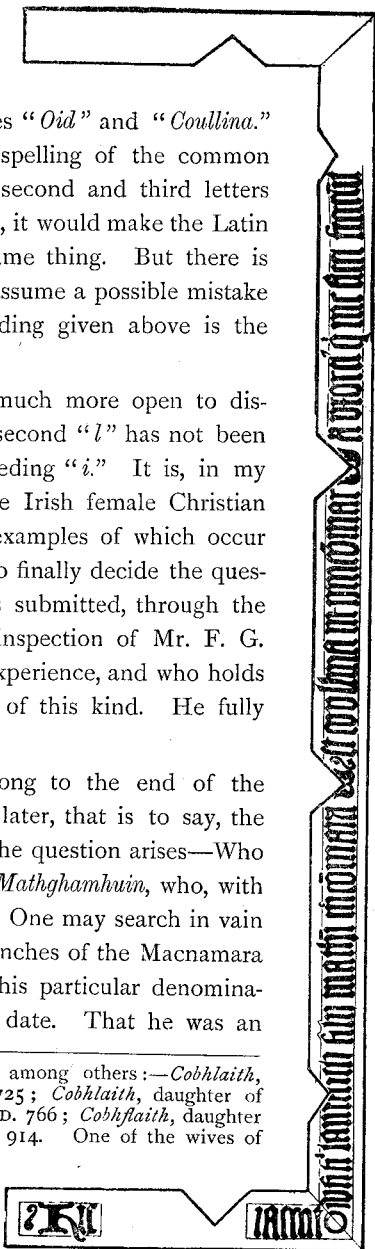
Christian name. There is no difficulty whatever, as is quite apparent, in the correct reading of this inscription, except as regards the names "*Oid*" and "*Coullina*." The former is plainly an improper spelling of the common Irish name *Aodh* [Hugh]; and if the second and third letters of the word were joined at the bottom, it would make the Latin "*Odo*," which, however, means the same thing. But there is no joining whatever, and, except we assume a possible mistake on the part of the sculptor, the reading given above is the correct one.

The other name, "*Coullina*," is much more open to dispute, owing to faulty cutting, for the second "*l*" has not been separated completely from the succeeding "*i*." It is, in my opinion, a latinized diminutive of the Irish female Christian name *Cobhlaith*, or *Cobhfaith*, many examples of which occur in our ancient annals. (3) In order to finally decide the question of the spelling, my rubbing was submitted, through the good offices of a friend, (4) to the inspection of Mr. F. G. Waller, F.S.A., a gentleman of great experience, and who holds front rank as an authority in matters of this kind. He fully confirms my reading of "*Coullina*."

The tomb and its lettering belong to the end of the fifteenth century, or perhaps a little later, that is to say, the first quarter of the sixteenth. Now, the question arises—Who was *Aodh*, son of *Lochlainn*, son of *Mathghamhain*, who, with his consort, erected this monument? One may search in vain the lines of descent of the various branches of the Macnamara clan, and not find an individual of this particular denomination who had lived in or about that date. That he was an

(3) The *IV. Masters* give the following among others:—*Cobhlaith*, daughter of *Ceallach Cualaun*, died A.D. 725; *Cobhlaith*, daughter of *Cathal*, abbess of *Cluain-Cuithbhinn*, died A.D. 766; *Cobhfaith*, daughter of *Duibhduin*, abbess of *Cill-dara*, died A.D. 914. One of the wives of king *Brian Borumha* bore a similar name, *Dubhcobhlaigh*, whose death the annalists record in A.D. 1008.

(4) Mr. R. W. Twigge, F.S.A., M.R.S.A.I.



important member of the sept, perhaps a benefactor of the House, goes without saying, for otherwise he would not have obtained a tomb in the choir, and, perhaps, not having left any descendants, the old pedigree makers omitted him from their lists. Be this as it may, nothing further is known about him or his good wife, *Cobhlin*.

Inserted into the wall at back of the recess under the canopy is a late slab, bearing the Macnamara crest and coat of arms, immediately under which is the following inscription:—

THIS MONUMENT WAS ○ ERECTED BY
 MAHON ○ DAUL M^c NEMARA AND ○ REPEIRED
 BY CAPTAIN ○ TEIGE M^c NEMARA
 OF ○ RANNAE, A.D. 1714. (5)

Captain *Tadhg MacConmara* may have been an excellent soldier, but all the same he was only a very indifferent epigraphist, for it is quite evident, had he been capable of reading the legend on the altar tomb, he never would have put up such a ridiculous inscription as the foregoing, which is obviously inconsistent with the ancient one. A false tradition that the monument was erected by one of his ancestors named *Mathghamhuin Dáll*, no doubt, existed in his time, and man of action that he was, he believed the story firmly, and acted accordingly. About eight or ten years ago, the words "MACNAMARA OF AYLE, 1402" were cut on the front panel of this tomb, by direction, it is said, of a lady belonging to that family. The inscription, however, was subsequently filled in with cement by order of the Board of Works.

The tomb apparently communicates at the back with the small room known as the sacristy, where there is a tombstone half buried in the wall, under which are interred several members of the Macnamara family of Ayle.

(5) Captain *Tadhg MacConmara* was the man for whom Andrew McCurtin transcribed the "*Triumphs of Turlough*." He was of the Macnamaras of Rannagh, parish of Tulla. The lands of Ayle, Kilbarron, Moynagullen, etc., appear to have been part of the extensive property of *Donal*, son of *Donough Macnamara* of Ballinahinch, a ward of the King, only four years of age in 1630 (Inq. 7-8, 1630), and who seems to have, to a certain extent, escaped the Cromwellian confiscations, being still a minor in 1641. Some of his property, e.g., Kilbarron, was, all the same, given to transplanted papists. Ayle came into the possession of the Macnamaras of Rannagh in the eighteenth century, and they are known ever since as the "Macnamaras of Ayle."

Under the belfry, in a small room partly formed out of what was once the porch of de Clare's strong castle of Quin, stormed a short time previous to 1306 by *Cumeadhha Mór MacConmara*, lie the remains of another most interesting tomb. It only consists at present of three large fragments, which had been wrongly put together when the church was repaired by the Board of Works. A few years ago I got the parts placed in their correct relative position, when it was discovered that the flag had a very fine bevelled moulding running round its edge, and was once the covering slab of a fine box or altar tomb. The inscription, a good deal of which has been broken off, is in raised letters on the upper surface along the edge, and reads as follows, commencing at the west end (6):—

* HIC IACIT IOHANNES CAPIT * [AN]JUS
MACNEMAR[A QUI MORTUUS EST ANNO
DOM]INI : 1601 : PRO : AĪA : ORA *
ANINA · FILIA M^C I [BRIE]N ARRA ME
FIERI FĒ.^T

CARNEGIE
FREE LIBRARY
AND MUSEUM
LIMERICK.

This is all that remains of the tomb of *Séaghan*, son of *Tadhg* of Dangan-i-viggin (now Dangan), the *MacConmara Fionn*, lord of western Clancullen, who attended the parliament of 1585 at Dublin, but not as a member. (7) According to the old method of computation, which was not abolished until 1752, the legal year ended on March 24th, so that the true date of *Séaghan Fionn's* death is not 1601 as on the tomb, but the following year, as given by *IV Masters*, viz., the 24th February, 1602. (8) His widow, who erected the monument, was *Ainé*, or *Any*, daughter of *Turlough*, son of *Murtough Mac-I-Brien-Ara*. (9)

(6) I have supplied what must have been the missing part of the inscription in brackets, the * indicating the corners of the flag. It is read in the usual way for three of the sides, the letters pointing to the edge of the stone; but the fourth side, commencing with the word "ANINA," has the letters turned in the opposite way. This proves, I think, that it was intended to be read from one side only, and that the tomb was originally placed against a wall, like an altar.

(7) *Vide* O'Donovan's *IV Masters*, p. 1834.

(8) But according to an inquisition held at Ennis, August 2nd, 1624, *Séaghan Fionn* Macnamara died on 28th January, 1602. (*vide* Mr. J. Frost's *History of Clare*, p. 300).

(9) Carew MS. 599, B.M.

The following are the only other inscriptions now to be seen in the church on tombs belonging to Macnamaras :—

In the choir—

- (1) HERE LIES Y^E BODYIES OF JAMES CARRIG & MARGARET *
MACNEMARA WHO DIED Y^E YEAR 1757, ERECT-
ED * BY HIS SON JAMES.
- (2) ERECT^D BY FRANCIS M^CNAMARA * OF DURREE [? Doorra]
IN MEM^V OF HIS * BROTHER JAMES M^CNAMARA *
WHO DEP^D THIS LIFE THE 9TH * MARCH A.D. 1833.
MAY HIS * SOUL REST IN PEACE. AMEN.
- (3) [HERE LIES Y^E BODY OF * MICHAEL] M^CNAMARA
OF BALLYMARKAHAN * WHO DIED DECEMB^R
Y^E 22^D ANO. DO. * 1722. MAY HE REST IN
PACE AMEN * ERECT^D BY HIS SON MICHAEL
ANO * DOM. 1750.

This last tomb was barbarously mutilated many years ago, about a foot of it having been broken off to make room for the vault erected over the remains of Dr. Patrick MacMahon, R. C. Bishop of Killaloe, some short time after his death, which took place on 7th June, 1836. The stone is now covered with a layer of concrete, and consequently the above inscription cannot be seen. (10)

In sacristy, north of choir—

- (1) HERE LYETH THE BODY OF * MARY CREAGH OTHERWISE
MACNEMARA WIFE OF ANDREW * CREAGH OF THE
CITY OF LIMERICK * MERCHANT, & ELDEST
DAUGHTER * OF DANIEL MACNEMARA OF *
ARDCLUNY IN THE COUNTY OF * CLARE ESQ^R
AND MARY MACNEM^{ARA} * OTHERWISE O'CALLAGHAN
HIS WIFE * DAUGHTER AND HEIRESS OF *
THADY O'CALLAGHAN OF MOUNTALL * IN SAID
COUNTY ESQ^R DECEASED * WHO DIED THE 28th OF JUNE
1756.

(10) I have put the words in brackets which must have been on the part broken off.

(2) Partly embedded in modern wall—

HERE LIES THE
 M^CNEMARA OF
 DYED THE 18 OF
 CAP. TEIGE M^C
 RANNA AGED 82
 YE 27th JULY, 1741
 M^CNEMARA OF BA
 WHO DIED IN Y^E
 HIS AGE Y^E 10th

Under belfry is a flag on which, if the light is favourable, the following may be read near edge of stone in letters that have now almost disappeared :—

(1) HERE LYETH THE BODY OF * DANIEL M.CON[MARA]
 164—

This tomb in all probability belonged to *Domhnall MacConnara Fionn*, son of the before mentioned *Séaghan*, who died A.D. 1643. His wife was Lady Honora Burke, daughter of Rickard, second Earl of Clanrickard, and Lady Margaret O'Brien, daughter of Donough, second Earl of Thomond.

(2) A fragment of a slab, which is undoubtedly part of a Macnamara tomb, on which may be read—

M^A MORIN[A]
 M^A

In recess, south of belfry tower is another tombstone with the following inscription—

HERE LIES Y^E BODY OF * PETER M^CNAMARA
 WHO * DIED MARCH Y^E 10th 1764 * AGED 73
 YEARS. ERECTED * BY HIS SONNES CONNER *
 & MICHAEL . ANO. DOM.

On north wall of nave, in ogee recess—

(1) HERE LIES THE * BODY OF EDMON^D * MA^CNEMARA
 GRA * [NDS]ON TO HUGH * [MA^C]_{DE}NEMARA OF
 CO[RB]ALLY DECEASED * WHO PARTED THIS * LIFE
 MAY THE 7th * AGED 21 YEARS . 176—.

- (2) HERE . . . ES THE . . . DONOUGH . . .
 MARA OF BA WHO DE . . . D 1654.

The last is from a note supplied by Mr. T. J. Westropp, M.R.I.A., but which escaped my observation when last I visited the church.

In south transept—

- (1) THIS TOMB WAS ERECTED BY MATH^W * MACNEMARA
 OF MOOHAUNE IN Y^E YE^{RE} * 1500 [sic] AND
 REPAIR^D BY HIS GREAT * GRANDSON
 MATHEW MACNEMARA * OF SUMMERHILL
 IN Y^E YEAR 1768 IN * MEMORY OF HIS FATHER
 TEIGE AND * HIS BROTHER JA^S ROWE [the red]
 M^CNEMARA.

It is to be feared that Mr. Mathew Macnamara of Summerhill was a bad chronologist, as his great grandfather must have lived 150 years later than A.D. 1500, except he was a second *Finntan*, son of *Bochra*, an individual mentioned in Irish legend who is said to have survived the Deluge, and lived on until the days of the monarch *Diarmuid Mac Cerrbheoil*, who died at Tara in the year of Our Lord 558.

- (2) HERE LIES THE BODY OF JAMES * M^CNAMARA
 WHO LIVED BE * LOVED AND DIED REGRETTED *
 OCT^R 24th 1820 AGED 35 Y^{RS} * ERECTED
 BY HIS BROTHER * PATRICK FOR HIM AND FAMILY.

(3) The only other tomb belonging to the Macnamaras in the transept is that of the celebrated Major John Macnamara of Moyreisk, commonly called "*Fireball*," who died in 1836. It is a cut stone box tomb, ornamented with the family coat of arms, but without any inscription whatsoever. Under the belfry may be seen a headstone with the single word "DONOGH" cut in large raised letters. It almost certainly belonged to a Macnamara, but who the individual was, I know not.

The foregoing is a complete list, as far as I could make out, of the Macnamara tombs and inscriptions in the Friary of Quin. It is hard to believe that no suitable memorials were erected over the greater number of the many men of note belonging to the sept who must have found a last resting place from time to time within its venerable walls, yet, except we assume that they were destroyed wholesale, such a conclusion is irresistibly forced upon us, for none are to be seen at this day except the few described in this paper.