Lettermoylan of Clann Bhruaidheadha: 
A résumé of their landholding, 
topography & history

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This paper surveys the landholding of the learned poet-chronicler lineage, Clann Bhruaidheadha of west Co. Clare and touches on the relationship between Clann Bhruaidheadha and their estate at Lettermoylan on Slieve Callan. As members of the Gaelic learned class Clann Bhruaidheadha had extensive landholding in Ibrickan and other parts of Co. Clare, including church land, crannóg and towerhouse settlements.

Confusion appears to exist in Co. Clare as to the whereabouts of Lettermoylan.¹ Lettermoylan, it may be observed, was one of the historical estates of the Meic Bhruaidheadha (viz. Clann Bhruaidheadha), a learned poet-chronicler lineage that was among the literati service families whose chief patrons were the Úi Bhríain of Thomond. Uncertainty over the location of Lettermoylan is compounded by the observation that its location on the eastern slopes of Slieve Callan (Sliabh Calláin) afforded the area little value in agricultural terms. It is deemed an unlikely residence for a high status family of the Gaelic literary class. The land surrounding the slopes of Slieve Callan are characterised as marginal and of low productive value, a fact easily deduced from a walk around the boggy perimeter of its eastern and southern slopes.

This confusion arose from the misleading identification in John O’Donovan’s edited version of the Annals of the Four Masters (1856).³ There it states Lettermoylan lay in Dysert within a subdivision of ‘Glangee’. This identification was appended as a note by O’Donovan accompanying the annalistic recording of the death in 1595 of Maccon Ó Cléirigh ollamh to Ó Domhnaill in history, who died while visiting ‘Leitir-Maclain in Thomond’ (Leitir Maolain i tuadhmuinain).⁴ The error also found its way into Fr. Edmund Hogan’s Onomasticum Goedelicum (1910).⁵ From this point uncertainty has remained as to the actual location of Lettermoylan. It will be ascertained in this article that Lettermoylan situated on the eastern flank of Slieve Callan in the

¹ The author wishes to thank Martin Breen, Prof. Pádraig Ó Riain (UCC), Brian Ó Dálaigh, Dr Katharine Simms (TCD), Kenneth Nicholls (UCC), Prof. Joep Leerssen (Universiteit van Amsterdam) and Jane Tottenham in the preparation of this paper.

² The correct literary form of the name is written thus. See Seachtúin Céitinn, Foras Fórsa or Éirinn, III (London, 1908), pp12-14. Also see James Carney, ‘De Scriptoris Hibernici’, Celtica, vol. 1 (1946) pp 86-103:91 where it is written as ‘Clann Bhruaidheadha’. For literary or phonetic reasons the Meic Bhruaidheadha used the form ‘McBrodyne’ in English and ‘Braodimus’ in Latin sources. The exact reasons for this are unclear but the form appears to have been adopted by successive members of the family in the seventeenth century.

³ See John O’Donovan (ed.), Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, From the Earliest Period to the Year 1616, (second edition, Dublin, 1856).

⁴ Ibid., sub anno 1595.

⁵ See Fr. Edmund Hogan’s Onomasticum Goedelicum: locorum et tribuum Hiberniae et Scottiae: An index, with identifications, to the Gaelic names of places and tribes (Dublin, 1910).
modern parish of Inagh (which once formed part of the Church of Ireland parish of Dysert) and that it encompassed an ancient church associated with Mac Reithe (i.e. Mac Creiche). This church had an important bearing on the status of Lettermoylan and provides one explanation of the link between Lettermoylan and Clann Bhruaidheadh.

In 1912 antiquary Dr George U. Macnamara confirmed O’Donovan’s mistake and added that ‘Glangee cannot be found in the townland list at all, but there is a Glennageer in the adjoining parish of Inagh’. Glennagee does not appear in the 1641 Books of Survey and Distribution, but Lettermoylan does feature in 1641 under the Church of Ireland parish of Dysert. The modern Glennageer sitsuate on the eastern slope of Slieve Callan. It will be shown that Lettermoylan, while no longer designated a townland division, once comprised modern day Glennageer, Knockalassia, Magherabaun and Ballynoe where Mount Callan House now stands. Investigating the link between Clann Bhruaidheadh and Lettermoylan is the key to comprehending the landholding and status of this learned lineage. This paper has two purposes; to unravel the connection between Lettermoylan and Clann Bhruaidheadh, and to survey their landholding. The course taken here demonstrates that their landholding in the seventeenth century is relevant to understanding their origins as a family of the Gaelic learned class.

Clann Bhruaidheadh Origins

It has been speculated that Clann Bhruaidheadh shared genealogical links with the Uí Dheaghaidh and that their remote ancestors held the kingship of Corcomroe. We read in the annals that a Bruided succeeded to the kingship in 871, and he is sometimes identified as a progenitor of the lineage. By the eleventh-century the descendants of Bruided seemed to have been displaced from Corcomroe and instead held the lordship of Ráith Tamlachta. This can tentatively be identified as Toonagh in Dysert parish, from whence may derive the townland Ballybrody, possibly representing the rump survival of Clann Bhruaidheadh’s ancient patrimony. If this was the case, it needs to be reconciled to the fact that Clann Bhruaidheadh’s claim to the ollamh-ship of sceadhchas Uí Bhrain was achieved only in the sixteenth century. Prior to this date Clann Bhruaidheadh’s activity in the learned professions of chronicling and poetry must have enjoyed a more circumstantial regional character, commensurate with their status as a local lineage with local sources of patronage.

Genealogist John O’Hart identified several McEic Bhruaidheadh obits for the years 1427 and 1518 which refer to kinsmen with the appellations ‘chief professor of poetry

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7 Mac Creiche is the form of the name used throughout this paper.


9 Simington, Books of Survey and Distribution, Clare, p. 533.

10 Friar Brudinus sets out the genealogical links of Clann Bhruaidheadh to the Uí Dheaghaidh and their shared descent from the brother of Bluid (a quo Uí Bhlioid) Óengus. Antonio Brudinus, Propugnaculum Cathohicae Verticatis Libris X Constructum, in Duexiae Partes Divisum, Pars Prima Historica in Quinque Libros, (Prague, 1669) pp 771, 851.

11 See Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 871, 899 on his father Flaithbheartach and his own obit.


13 Ibid., pp 123-4. Also see Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1069.


15 Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1563.
and history' and 'chief historian and bard' to the 'O'Quinn of Cineal-Fearn[h]aic'. Whether there is any basis to these claims is uncertain because the supporting annalistic entry or corresponding genealogy has not been located. But as these obits make clear, it is more credible to prior the mid-sixteenth century when learned Meic Brualaidheadha appear in the annals, members of Clann Brualaidheadha were probably attached to local ruling families such as the Ui Chuiin. While Clann Brualaidheadha must have been active as a learned family from the mid-fourteenth century when Seánn Buide Mac Brualaidheadha composed a poem for Mathgamhmhair Ó Briain in c.1365-69, their emergence as the chief poet-chronicler lineage in the sixteenth century owed much to their links with the fourth Earl of Thomond as they graduated from being *ollaimh* to the Ui Chuinn of Inchiquin.

In discussing the origins of Clann Brualaidheadha which Friar Antonius Bruidinus traces to the Dal gCais ancestor-founder and links them to both the Ui Dheaghaidh and the Ui Bhriain, he also says something about the exemptions from tribute and military quartering enjoyed by Clann Brualaidheadha and that they received an income from their patrons.

_Denique notandum est, quo in honore inter Hiberniae Principes semper fuere Chronologi illi, qui diligenter, sincere, & veridice acta Regum, & praecipuarum, Familiarum, earumque Genealogias, observabant. Nam praeterquam quod ipsi antiquissimae erant nobilitatis, ex eodem ordinario stipite originem trahentes, ex quo ij quorum erant Chronologi descenderunt (Bruidini v. g. qui OBrienoram semper fuere Chronologi, originem trahunt, non solum ab Elbemo Mileri primogenito, sed eiam a Cassio, a quo OBrien descenderunt; Brudogia namque a quo Bruidini dicuntur, filius fuit Deaghi, filij Aenea capitosi, filij Cassis, ex cuius primogenito Blad dicto, descendunt OBrien, ut inferius fusius ostendam) sed & emptione plus, quam Ecclesiastica gaudebant. A Principibus enim annuam recipiebant pensionem. In publicis sessionibus, non infimas post Principes sedes occupabant. Tam pacis, quam belli tempore, a Contributionibus, militumque Quartirijis exempti erant. His, alisque privilegijis gaudebant, eo sine, ut diligenter suo insisterent muneri, postpositoque omni respectu, nitidam describerent veritatem._

[Finally it should be noted in what honour those chronologists, who diligently, sincerely and truthfully kept the deeds of kings and of the most important families, and the genealogies of the latter, have always been held among the princes of Ireland. For aside from the fact that they themselves were from very ancient nobility, drawing their origin regularly from the same root of which those descen-

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17 *Annals of the Four Masters*, sub an + 1563.
18 On Seánn Buide Mac Brualaidheadha's poem: *Dlighidh ollamh urrain riogh* ('An ollamh should be respected by his prince') see Lámhbeartach Mac Connaith (ed.), *Dlighidh ollamh urrain riogh*, in *Dioghlain Dána* (Baile Atha Cliath, 1938) pp 252-6. Also see a full translation of the poem in L. McKenna, S.J. 'Poem to Ó Briain', *The Irish Monthly*, vol. 49 (1921) pp 112-17. It appears that Mac Brualaidheadha had caused verbal injury to his patron Mathgamhmhair 'Moanmhaugh' son of Muirbeartach Ó Briain and his poem was offered in the spirit of reconciliation and an eye for the continuance of Ó Briain's patronage.
19 In Bruidinus' work he notes that bards and other learned orders in Ireland traditionally received immunities or privileges for rendering services to ruling dynasties. See Cornel O'Mollony, *Anatonicum Examín Enchiridii Apolettici*, (Pragae, 1671) p. 147.
ded whose chronologists they were (the Bruodini, for example, who have always been the chroniclers of the O’Brien’s, draw their origin not only from Eiberus, the first son of Milerus, but also from Cas, from whom the O’Brien’s descended; for Brudosiga, after whom the Bruodini are named, was the son of Deagh, the son of Aeneas capitonus, the son of Cas, of whose first-born, who was called Bloid, the O’Brien’s descend, as I will show at greater length further below), but they also enjoyed greater exemption than that of the Church. For they used to receive an annual pension from the princes. In public sessions, they did not occupy the lowliest seats after the princes. Both in times of peace and in war, they were exempt from contributions and from the duty of providing quarter. These and other privileges they enjoyed, to this end, to be sure, that they would pursue their duty diligently and, with a disregard for every (other) interest, they would write down the clear truth.]\(^21\)

The elite literate class possessed a degree of wealth and privilege which included immunity from rent and tribute.\(^22\) In the case of the Meic Bhruaideadhach chronicler-poets the immunity which their family enjoyed was that of their chief residence at Knockanalban, to the south of Slieve Callan. It may be significant that the Clann Bhruaideadhach residence at Knockanalban was a crannóg, a fortified settlement that resonated an ancient, if somewhat arcane, tradition of settlement. We know from the fourteenth-century saga-text Caithréim Thoirdeachbhaigh that the masters of learning, the ollaimh, had as their residence the ráth (‘agus gach ollam ina ráith’)\(^23\) while other members of the learned orders such as the ‘noble coarb’ were described as dwelling in their ‘high church’ (‘agus gach uasalchomhara ina dirdreff’).\(^24\) The continued importance of the ráith as a secular residence beyond the medieval period is attested in the Úi Dhubhthadhóireann occupation of Cahermacnaughten in the seventeenth century.\(^25\) The Meic Bhruaideadhach also held a more conventional late medieval Gaelic residence, a tower-house at the imposing vantage point of Doonogan.\(^26\)

In respect to the foregoing it can equally be posited that Clann Bhruaideadhach shared an early connection to a monastic site after being ousted from the kingship of Corcomroe. What may be gathered from these fragmented facts is agreeable with the general view that Clann Bhruaideadhach shared, along with other native literati, a peculiar connection to the monastic church.\(^27\) Such a link probably evolved out of the monastic scriptoria of the

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21 Author’s translation.
24 Ibid.
26 Petworth House Archives, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].
Irish Church and became the preserve of a caste of specialist families who transmitted native learning inherited from the monastic scribes of the twelfth century and earlier. The setting up of learned families on termon lands, along with reconstituting important clerical tenants as airchinigh (crenaghs), sometimes occurred after the reorganisation of the Irish Church in the twelfth century. The process of reconstituting themselves as a learned family and being granted stewardship over certain church lands—perhaps those sites associated with the Corcomroe saint Mac Creiche—had the advantage of allowing Clann Bhruaidheadh to maintain their position, though at the expense of relinquishing political influence to the Úi Dheaghaidh. There are other examples of formerly important lineages being diminished in political terms and adopting ecclesiastical status to ensure their survival. In Co. Clare the best example of this process were the Úi Ghráda of Tuamgraney.

We may also deduce a possible connection between the religious epithet of Maoilín (i.e. small tonsured man) and Clann Bhruaidheadh. It is known that learned families often attempted to give themselves a pseudo-ecclesiastical legitimacy by adopting religious epithets. This is evidenced from the Úi Dubhdbhóireann brehons of Corcomroe who retained forenames such as Giolla na Naomh (i.e. devotee of saints) over generations. It may be significant that the forename Maoilín was used over a long period by Clann Bhruaidheadh. A now lost pedigree showed a 'Dermot son of Maoilín, professor of poetry and history to the O'Quinns of Cineal-Fearn[h]aic 1427', and the forename Maoilín carried on over subsequent generations in this line. Other religious forenames can be noted such as Giolla Brighde of Lettermoylan who became òllamh in 1582, and we may also submit the eleventh century Giolla Molua Úa Bruidheadh of Ráith Tamhnaigh (Toonagh?) in Dysert parish, ostensibly an early medieval ancestor-founder and bearer of another pseudo-devotional forename.

Mac Creiche & Clann Bhruaidheadh

A survey of the evidence on Clann Bhruaidheadh suggests a connection of some antiquity with the cult of the Corcomroe saint, Mac Creiche. On the lands of Lettermoylan, near the present day Mount Callan House, exists the remains of a small medieval church or oratory situated next to a flowing stream. The site is known locally as ‘church field’ and was used into modern times as a children’s burial place, though it is now wooded. The dimensions of the structure suggest an early medieval church, akin to proprietary

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28 This process has been observed in Fermannagh where some erenagh families acquired termon lands either through a grant or in piecemeal fashion over the medieval period. See Curran O'Shea, "Erenachs, crenaghships and church landholding in Gaelic Fermannagh, 1270-1609", Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. 112. C (2011) pp 271-300.
30 Ó Searcaigh, 'Erenachs, crenaghships and church landholding in Gaelic Fermannagh', p. 297.
31 See, for example, the obit of Giolla Na Naomh Ó Dubhdbhóireann, a law òllamh, in 1364. Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1364. Also see the Giolla Na Naomh Óg Ó Dubhdbhóireann who featured in a 1606 deed that divided the estate among several brothers in the manner of 'gavelkind' inheritance, including the stone ring-fort residence of the family at Cahermacnaughten in the Burren. See Macnamara, 'The O'Devores of Cahermacnaughten', (1912-13) pp 89-93.
32 O'Hart, Irish Pedigrees, p. 105.
33 Annals of the Four Masters, [s]ub anno 1582.
34 See his obit in Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1069.
36 The site was pointed out to the author by locals in October 2011 as such.
churches that served as a religious establishment for local kin-groups. Westropp provides a description of the site which remains apt today:

On a spur beside a stream, above Mount Callan House; an oblong foundation (about 31 feet by 15 feet inside, the walls 2 feet 8 inches thick) of small flagstone masonry, the wall rarely over a foot high and the whole sheeted with wild hyacinth.

A careful reading of the Life of Mac Creiche reveals that the church at Lettermoylan has ancient origins. In the medieval Life of Mac Creiche it states that he went into the hermitage located between ‘Fomnaoil’ and the river ‘Eidhneach’ which was called ‘Cluain hí’. The Eidhneach (Inagh) river flows through modern day Ballynacoe (i.e. Lettermoylan) which situates west of Formoail (Formoyle). From the context it is apparent that Mac Creiche had his hermitage in this district which was described in his Life as a small stone structure. The ruined foundations of the church near Mount Callan House in Ballynacoe are plausibly the survival of the original hermitage. Other sites situated nearby are reputed to have links to Mac Creiche. To the southwest of Slieve Callan are the townlands Shanavogh East and West which may be the wooded place of Cell Senbotha that was granted to Mac Creiche to build a church. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that Lettermoylan was held by the Meic Bhruaidheadha who, in turn, paid a rent to the Bishop of Killaloe in right of it constituting part of termon Dysert. While caution needs to be exercised in the absence of corroborating evidence, circumstantial evidence links Clann Bhruaidheadha to early saintly veneration sites in west Co. Clare.

Clann Bhruaidheadha’s link to Mac Creiche veneration sites may represent the vestige of a historical connection to the native monastic church, perhaps even suggestive of the lineage’s origins. It is possible that such a link may have been forged by association during the post-Reform medieval period. In a supplication to Rome dated 1419 cleric ‘Thady Ybroydyga’ petitioned for the rectory of ‘Drunkrythe’ (Droim Criche, Drumcreehy). This was Tadhg Ó Bhruaidheadha who was probably akinsman of the Meic Bhruaidheadha of Ibrickan. Drumcreehy rectory was a prebend of the treasurership of

37 Inspection of the site by the author in July 2012 identified possible remains of an enclosure around the site and the presence of a south facing entrance.
38 Thomas J. Westropp, ‘Notes on certain primitive remains (forts and dolmens) in Inagh and Killeimer, Co. Clare’, Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, vol. xlvi, part ii (1916) pp. 97-120:103. Averil Swinfen notes that ‘during the last century this church bore the startling, though not altogether surprising, name of Temple-ee-coffin (church of the Graves), for while there is no conspicuous graveyard in sight it is confirmed locally that there was a burial place nearby’. Averil Swinfen, Forgotten Stones: Ancient Church Sites of the Burren and Environ (Dublin, 1992) p. 126.
39 Charles Plummer, Miscellanea Hagiographica Hibernica (First edition, Brussels, 1925) p. 13 [Batha Meic Creiche].
40 Ibid. Also see Westropp, ‘Notes on certain primitive remains (forts and dolmens) in Inagh and Killeimer, Co. Clare’, p. 103. Mac Creiche is also said to have founded two other churches in the vicinity of Inagh: Tampull na glas Aignhe and Cell Senbotha. Also see Thomas J. Westropp, ‘Ancient Remains Near Lehinch, Co. Clare’ Journal of the Limerick Field Club, iii (1905-08) pp. 193-212.
41 Plummer, Miscellanea Hagiographica Hibernica, p. 53 [Batha Meic Creiche].
43 ASV Registrum Supplicationum, 129f. 18v. This is also excerpted and published in Special List 43 available at the National Library of Ireland Manuscripts Reading Room. This is the only reference to a Mac Bruaidheadha in Papal correspondence for the fifteenth century.
44 Both the Ó and Mac patronymic were interchangeably used by contemporaries. Such interchangeability regarding the name is encountered in the seventeenth century Latin writings of Friar Antonius Bruodinus.
Kilfenora and a townland in the parish is known as ‘Bishopspquarter’. Prebends were
benefices whose revenue from lands was often held by hereditary clergy or erenagh
families. It is likely that Drumcreehy rectory was associated with the coarship of Mac
Creiche. If this was the case then Thady Ybrodyga held the coarship of Mac Creiche in
1419, a position that may have been related to Clann Bhruaidheada’s association with
Mac Creiche sites such as Lettermoylan in Inbrickan. The fact that a kinsman of Clann
Bhruaidheada is found in northern Corcomroe at Drumcreehy is rather conspicuous and
suggestive that the coarship was a titular title attached to the rectorship and not domi-
nated by a hereditary coarb of local provenance.

Clann Bhruaidheada also held land in places associated with Mac Creiche; we find a
pardon issued to ‘Miellen oge McBride of the Synnganagh’ in the parish of Kilma-
creehy near Liscannor in 1585. This is almost certainly Maolín Óg Mac Brauidheada
who at his death in 1602 was recognized as ollamh. Clann Bhruaidheada’s interest in
the cult of Mac Creiche may have extended beyond west Co. Clare. A branch of Clann
Bhruaidheada was settled on Moynoe termon near the monastic site of Inisheerlachra, which
was connected with Mac Creiche in his later life. From these gleanings we may deduce
a link, perhaps one forged by early association, between Mac Creiche foundations and
Clann Bhruaidheada. The form and nature of that association is uncertain but it is
reasonable to suggest that as a learned family Clann Bhruaidheada may once have
graduated from an early medieval monastery.

Lettermoylan & Clann Bhruaidheada: c.1200-c.1650
Lettermoylan (Leitir Maoláin, ‘damp hill-side of Maoláin’) would be rather obscure to
history in the absence of its late medieval association with Clann Bhruaidheada. We are
fortunate that several early references to Lettermoylan survive and in many cases owe
their survival to the penmanship of a Mac Briuaidheada. Slieve Callan is known to history
by the presence of the celebrated Ogham stone found at its southern flank in the
townland of Knockalasssa. Local school master and poet John Lloyd publicized the
Ogham stone in his An Impartial Tour in Clare in 1778, and its apparent inscription
dedicated to Conán, a member of a band of warriors slain on the slopes of Callan in
remote times. On visiting Slieve Callan in 1785 Theophilus O’Flanagan wrote on arriving
at Knockalassa:

45 Rev. Philip Dwyer, The Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the Eighteenth Century (Dublin, 1878) p. 98.
46 The colophon of the Life of Mac Creiche (Beatha Meic Creiche) states that it was copied by Friar Michéal Ó Cléirigh in
the convent of the friars of Donegal on 11 May, 1635 from the copy which he wrote at Ennis Friary in June 1634 from a
book which Maolcholláin Ó Callannáin wrote at Cell Maolodhrain for the coarb of Mac Creiche in 1524. This has been
interpreted by some to be Kilcoran in Castletownarrua in Co. Tipperary. Rather, Cell Maolodhrain was ‘Kilmoylan alias
Kilmalloon’ recorded in 1641 in Abbey parish consisting of abbey land under the proprietorship of ‘Kearwoll Ó Kallinín’ and
other Ó Chailláinráin kinsmen. Drumcreehy situates nearby so it is likely that the coarb of Mac Creiche for whom
Beatha Meic Creiche was written was located at Drumcreehy church. The fact that episcopal land of the See of Kilfenora
situated at Drumcreehy, represented in the townland there called Bishopspquater, strengthens the case that a coarbship
was based at Drumcreehy. Simington, Books of Survey and Distribution, p. 443; Plummer, Miscellanea Hagiographica
Hibernica, [Beatha Meic Creiche].
47 See The Irish Plants of the Tudor Sovereigns During the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip & Mary, and Elizabeth
I, Faint, Eliz., No. 4753 [year 1585].
48 Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1602.
50 The Ogham stone was known as Leac-Conán into the late nineteenth century, a fact recalled by locals living on Slieve
Callan. Sir Samuel Ferguson, ‘On the Alleged Literary Forgery Respecting Sun-worship on Mount-Callan, Proceedings of
the Royal Irish Academy, vol. 1 (1879) pp 315-322:322.
51 John Lloyd, A Short Tour; or, an Impartial and Accurate Description of the County of Clare with Some Particular and
Historical Observations (Ennis, 1780).
...about a mile north east from the high road leading from Ennis to Ibrickan, I
perceived (as I thought) a square rock, which bore the awful appearance of a
monument, on the Leitirmoylan (that is the south east) side of the mountain.52

The publicity gathered by Lloyd's publication provoked academic discussion for over a
century. Slieve Callan is also known for the Knockalassa wedge tomb, a visible reminder
of megalithic occupation of the site. Máire MacNeill, writing on the survival into modern
times of vestiges of the ancient festival of Lughnasa, describes the topography and
environs of Slieve Callan:

In the south-west of the county there are a few low ridges of higher ground and
one considerable hill, Slieve Callan, which rises to 1,282 feet, seven miles in from the
sea. Its situation is a commanding one, giving it wide prospects all around,
framed by the hills of the Burren, Aughty, Slieve Bernagh, the Shannon estuary
and the sea. Its immediate neighborhood is rough and boggy for the most part—
bréan-tir, the sour land, lies north from it—but only seven miles to the east is the
more fertile tract in which Ennis stands.53

Slieve Callan (Sliabh Calláin) enters into pseudo-history in medieval manuscripts such
as the Battle of Gabhra which features the warrior-hero Conán54 and embellished in
Micheál Cofín's 1748 work of fiction Eachra Chloinne Thoirtheadhbaigh mhic Stainn
('Legend of Children of Thoirtadoibh, son of Stann').55 Slieve Callan is recalled in the poem
Duanaire Finn which talks of a Fiath Sleibhe Colláin56 (phantom of Slieve Callan), and
it is also found in the medieval text, Beatha Sheandín, where the monster (Cathach)
of Inis Cathaigh is said to have been banished to Dubhloch (Doolough lake) near Slieve
Callan by Seánain himself.57 According to the lore of placenames, or Dinnsheanchas,
Slieve Callan was once known as 'Sliabh Leitreach'58 and the antiquary T.J Westropp
suggested this name survived on Slieve Callan in the form of Leitir Maoláin.59 Slieve
Callan also occurs in the fifteenth century topographical tract by Ó hUidhirn where it is
written as Colláin and regarded a marker of the territory of the Dál gCais.60

The annals do not furnish us with knowledge as to the history of settlement at the site.
However, 'Sliabh Calige' where the Maitrínigh of the Corca Bhaiscinn battled King Óen-

52 O'Flanagan, 'On the Ogham Inscription stated to have been discovered some years since on the Mountain of
54 O'Flanagan, 'Ogham Inscription...Callan', pp. 134-49; and Siobhan de hÓir, 'The Mount Callan Ogham Stone
55 Padraig Ó Bráin, (ed.), _Eachra Thoirtheadhbaigh mhic Stainn maile ce Eachraith a Thuirid Mhaise le Michéal
Ó Cofín_, _Bliathléig de Mhiseainn na Geige_ (Baile Atha Cliath, 1893). It is mentioned in this work that on Slieve
Callan at a place called Poul Gorm Liath lived a great boar on the north side of the mountain. See William Hackett, 'Folk-
56 MacNeill, _Festival of Lugnasa_ p. 200.
57 Ibid. Doolough is described in the text as 'Nigricentris aquae juncta monte Callain in Tuamonia'. See John Colgan, _Acta Sanctorum Iberniae_ (Dublin, 1848) under March 8th, Section xxxviii.
58 The reference reads: _Is omi conf[ac]e[ol] Aeslar a rath for Sliabh Callan. i. Sliabh Leitreach induv. is de osuerar rath
Cluana Aeslair_. ['Then Aeslar dug his rath on Sliabh Callan now Sliabh Leitreach. Hence it is called the rath of Cian
Aeslair']. Whitley Stokes, 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes Lihdechencas', _Ronne Celtique_, vol. 15 (1894) pp. 272-
336:317.
59 T.J. Westropp, 'Notes on certain primitive remains (forts and doimens) in Inagh and Killimeer, Co. Clare.', p. 104.
60 John O'Donovan (ed.), _The Topographical Poems of John O'Dubhghain and Gliel Na Naoimh O'Huidhirin_ (Dublin,
1862) p. 123.
agus Olmucaidh in the pseudo-mythical past (3790 BC), is thought to be Slieve Callan. The popular festival of Lughnasa was held at Knockalassa until it was suppressed in the mid-nineteenth century and replaced by Garland Sunday. From this it may be gathered that Slieve Callan and surrounds constituted a ritual landscape. Such landscapes were associated with the estates of the Gaelic learned class who were attuned to the significance of veneration sites which helped legitimise their landholding and status.

References in Bardic Poetry

Lettermoylan enters the historical record in a late sixteenth century poem. The form and rhyme of the poem is of the classical Dán Direach style, an accomplished metre composed by poet-scholars. The poem was doubtless the work of a Mac Bhruidheadhga and given its context it can be placed in the 1580s. This makes it plausibly the composition of Giolla Brighde Mhic Bhruidheadhga (d.1599) who succeeded his kinsman Maoilín as ollamh seanachai in Thomond in 1582, or Maoilín Óg Mhic Bhruidheadhga (d.1602) who succeeded as ollamh around 1588. Maoilín Óg’s literary activities were considerable, and he assisted in making a translation of the New Testament into Irish when he was based in Dublin in 1602. The most likely author of the poem, however, was Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruidheadhga who appears never to have been recognised as ollamh but instead cultivated a personal relationship with his patron Donough O’Brien, fourth Earl of Thomond.

In practice there may have been overlap between when the title ollamh transferred from Giolla Brighde to Maoilín Óg. Giolla Brighde was still living at Lettermoylan in 1591. This piece of information is evidence that Lettermoylan remained the chief residence of the Mac Bhruidheadhga ollamh in the late sixteenth century. The attribution of the poem is likely Tadhg mac Dáire, owing to a later identification of the poem by Friar Antonius Bruodinus, grand-nephew of Tadhg mac Dáire. The poem was addressed to Ulleog and Seáin, sons of the Earl of Clanrickard (d.1582).

61 Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 3790BC. Also see Westropp, ‘Notes on certain primitive remains (forts and dolmens) in Lough and Killeen', Co. Clare', p. 104.
63 Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1599.
64 [ibid., sub anno 1582. He witnessed a covenant that was written before 1571. Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, p. 67.
65 Maoilín Óg Mac Bhruidheadhga was regarded as the representative of Clann Bhruidheadhga from 1599 when he composed a poetic quainrin to Aodh Ruaadh Ó Domhnaill on the return of his cattle to him that were rustled by Ó Domhnaill’s troops. But his claim to the ollamhship may be traced back to 1585 when he signed as a witness to the Composition of Connacht. Certainly from around 1588 he is credited with writing a pedigree for Clann O Tirchinigh. See Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1599. Also see RIA MS 23 H.22, p. 11.
68 Maoilín Óg is described by Bruodinus as ‘in Elogiis Obrienorum’ (Eulogist of O’Brien). See Bruodinus, Propugnaculam Catholicae Veritatis, p. 974.
70 Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1592.
The poem conjecturally envisages Ireland being divided between the poet and his patrons, the Clannrickard Bourkes. Relating to Lettermoylan are several verses of topographical interest:

Do nim leath do Leitrí Mholáin
Nach min muighe
Tir ar a gcéiltear néall nimhe
Fán tréan tuile
Tir e Leaghan sneachta ag snighhe
Dearca dtuine
Do nim leath mar eín-eing oile
d’Éirinn uile
[one half I count from / rough-fielded Leitrí Mholáin / where sky is overcast / and torrent heavy, / and where falling snow / blinds men’s eyes; / all the rest of Éire / I count as the other half]^{71}

The poem continues with references to Slieve Callan, leaving us in little doubt that the Meic Bhruaideadhach chronicler-poets^{72} had their estate at Leitrí Mholáin on Slieve Callan. Characteristically, the poet underplays the value of his land,^{73} while employing hyperbolic language to describe the virtues of the territory that he wished to assign his patron through his poetical partition of Ireland:

Óthá Éighneach go hucht gCollán
Mar chuid tire
Beag nach bhfuilid i gclo a chéile
[umun] mó mile
Nior ghab duine iadh budh fhuaire
Riamh is righe
[from Éighneach [Inagh] / to Collán’s slope / lands with most game[?] /are mostly alike / no one ever got poorer / land and realm as share]^{74}

In this stanza Mac Bruaideadhach is indicating that his patrimony included the land between Éighneach (river Inagh) and Slieve Callan. This sweep of territory includes the townlands Formoyle Eighteragh and Formoyle Oughteragh which are located on the eastern slopes of Slieve Callan and adjacent to Lettermoylan. These lands were under Clann Bhruaideadhach proprietorship in 1641.^{75}

Other references abound in the poem, including an allusion which imagines the poet standing on a ‘stream-wasted’ mountain. The context implies that the mountain in question is that of ‘rough-fielded Leitrí Mholáin’ referred to earlier in the poem and where the form Leitrí, (damp, wet hill-side) creates a toponymic association with the poet’s metaphorical territory:

^{73} Elsewhere in the poem Mac Bruaideadhach refers to his land as, ‘is léigid dambh-sa an eang (an shaidhthiir) [eascadhail] anshochair iomchumhhand id’, [‘and they leave to me the poor, unattractive, miserable, narrow district I spoke of’].
Is gidh tromdha tathaoreach tarchuisneach atáim-se ar an dtúlán sruthmheir-geach sléibhe so, ni mó ná meanna is mór-aigeadh cloimne [ionsaighthigh] éicht-bheodha oirdhearea (urrnghanta) an lár.

[however rough, insulting and vituperative I am, standing on this stream-wasted(?) mountain-height, not greater is the spirit and pride of the impetuous, vigorous, famous, respected race of the Earl].

Mac Bruaidheadha goes on to describe the common folk, casting light on the living conditions of those at the bottom of the social milieu, in contradistinction to Clann Bhruaidheadha as members of the learned class:

ná móir-aigeadh na muinntreí-se an uair shuidhich i n-a mboithógaibh crom-líobánacha creat-lomnachta ag comhóil ar a chéile dá gcuithinbh béil-fhiltúcha blaidhche is dá dtobannaisb mór-chluasachta meidhge bruidhearnaigh, 7 ag éisteacht ër hagallaimh is re holl-ghlór a n-aímnil teadh n-éigiallaidh 'na nuirthimneach is gach [aon acra] ag labhhair aithne go hurlmhindsneach ar uraghall is ar fhoirbhéicigh gacha hainmhdhíse seach ar oile.

[nor (is) the commonfolk’s spirit and pride (greater) when they sit in their crooked, bare-walled cottages, drinking against each other from their overflowing bowls of buttermilk and their big-handled vessels of bubbling whey, listening to the chattering and uproar of the senseless beasts about them, each of them cleverly distinguishing the chatter and roaring of each beast].

The rest of the poem establishes the noble credentials of the Clannrickard Bourkes whose warriors listen to bardic poetry and drink strong, fermented drinks. In writing about his great-uncle, Friar Antonius Bruodinus relates how Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaidheadha composed poems in Latin and Irish. Bruodinus refers to one poem which light-heartedly divided Ireland between Tadhg mac Dáire and the sons of John de Burgo. We can probably take this as an error in the name of patron for the poem was dedicated to a Seaán (John) son of ‘Ricaird’. Bruodinus remarks:

Nobis qui Domini Thaddaei Bruodini scripta, & poëmata praemanibus habemus, praesertim jocosos illos Rithmos Latino-Hibernicos, quibus Hiberniam inter se, & Illustrissimi Domini Joannis de Burgo filios, jucunde disvisit (ex quibus abunde constat illum in lingua latina fuisse fundatissimum... [To us, who have before our very hands Master Thaddaeus Bruodin’s writings and poems, especially those playful Latin-Irish Verses, in which he delightfully divided Ireland between himself and the sons of the most illustrious Sir John de Burgo (from which it is abundantly proved that he was most thoroughly instructed in the Latin language...]

Friar Bruodinus possessed considerable authority on the matter and it is conceivable that some poems were entrusted to him as a learned clerical kinsman of the family. He may

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77 Ibid., pp 368-9.
79 Author’s translation.
have had family documents in his possession when he was guardian of the friary of Our Lady of the Snows in Prague in the 1660s and 1670s. Bruodínus' identification of Tadhg mac Daire as the author of this poem which places Lettermoylan and Slieve Callan at the centre of the poet's allegorical territory, supports the view that Lettermoylan of Clann Bhruaidheadhá was situated on the slopes of Slieve Callan.

A reference also exists to Slieve Callan ('Sléibhe Collán') in a poetic elugue of uncertain attribution. Slieve Callan is referred to among the poetical exchange between Tadhg mac Daire and the Ulster poets known as lomarbhgh na bhfíleadh ('Contention of the Bards') about whether the Ó Briain or the Ó Domhnaill had the best right to consider themselves heirs to the high kingship of Ireland. The exchange was instigated in c.1616 when Tadhg mac Daire became involved in a poetic contention with the poets of Ulster. In a poem critical of Tadhg mac Daire's learning, Roibeard Mac Artúir belittles Tadhg mac Daire's acquisition of knowledge, and refers to Slieve Callan:

_Daoine eile dá rádhris; go bhfuair seisean an t-eo fis ó Aoibhill ban-sháidh síl mBloid; atá aige na caraí._
_Muna gcreididh-se a n-eabhairt; tigidh ar gach aird d'fheachain iongantair mhór seachach soin; rein-Shiabhl Callain re n-iodhnaibh._
[Others say of him (Tadhg mac Daire) that he got the knowledge-salmon from Aoibheall who is his friend, the prophetess of Blod's race. If you do not believe him, come from all parts to see a greater marvel still, old Slieve Callan in travail!]

He continues:

_Dá bhfiafraighidh cia an torrchear; ó Shiabhl Callain do coimpreadh aithchim ar bhar n-eigse sibh; gabháil díbh ar bhar ngáiribh an uair do mheas gach Muimhneach; do chonnaic méad a bhuiilgsean gein an-mhór uaidhe do bheith; acht lucht féir uaidh níor tuasmhadh._
[If you ask what was the progeny conceived by Slieve Callan I implore of you by your poetic profession to restrain your laughter, for when every man of Mumha who saw the great swelling imagined that an enormous progeny was being brought forth there was born — only a field mouse!] 83

Clearly the intended meaning of the 'progeny' conceived by Slieve Callan was Tadhg mac Daire and his lack of skill in the art of poetic knowledge. In another poem composed by Roibeard Mac Artúir mention is made to _Leitir Maoláin_. The poem refers to Tadhg mac Daire's poem to the Clanrickard Bourkes in c.1580 and leaves little ambiguity as to _Leitir Maoláin_ being in the hands of Tadhg mac Daire at that time:

80 See _Port oireachtais Ara Chliach_ in _RIA MS 3_ (23/L/17), 141b. Also see Damian McManus & Eoghan Ó Raghailligh (eds), _A Bardic Miscellany_ (Dublin, 2010) pp 541-4. The poetic eulogy to Toirdhealbhach Ó Briain Ará (d.1400) is attributed to both Domhnall Ó Maolchonaire and Tadhg mac Daire Mhic Bhruaidheadhá.


83 Ibid. The last line could be an allusion to Horace, the classical lyric poet, who satirically wrote 'purtientur monies, nascitur ridicusus mus' ('the mountains go into labour and give birth to a ridiculous mouse'). I thank Prof. Jep Leernessen for this reference.
An file d'fhuíil Éibhir Fiann,
thagras go beocht dá thaoibh rinn
isé go glic do rinne
roinn na tire adeirimid-ne.
Leitr Mhaoldín, gidh nach mín,
a chuid ronna fé[1]n don tir;
Inis Fóidla ó soin amach
fágbhuidh fa chlannuích Búrcach.²⁴

[The poet of Éibhear Finn's blood who argues his side perfectly with me;
we (I) say he cleverly divided the country.
Leitr Mhaoldín,
though not smooth, is his own share of the country;
he will leave Inis Fóidla (Ireland) from that out to the Bourkes.]²⁵

Slieve Callan and district was forefront in the minds of Meic Bhruaideadha poets. As demonstrated by the references to Slieve Callan by poets supporting the Ulster side of the 'Contention', the area was known to have an association with Clann Bhruaideadha. This is because Slieve Callan was the residence of cognate branches of Clann Bhruaideadha: Lettermoylan and Formoyle, and slightly further afield, Knockanalban and Doonogan; the latter two places contained a crannóg and a towerhouse residence.²⁶

Tadhg mac Daíre & Lettermoylan
In identifying the status of Lettermoylan it is useful to look at the known facts of the Meic Bhruaideadha and their proprietorial arrangements. There is evidence suggesting that Tadhg mac Daíre Mhic Bhruaideadha had landed interests at Lettermoylan, despite recent scholarship on the issue.²⁷ Tadhg mac Daíre's principal residence was at Knockanalban (Mount Scott, Mons Scoti), according to the writings Friar Antonius Brudinus:

Momonium partis scriptis, & verbis tuebatur patruus meus magnus, bonae memoriae, Dominus Thaddaeus mac Brudin, seu de Brudin, Darij filius, Dominus de Monte Scoti.²⁸

[The cause of the people of Munster was defended through writings and (spoken) words by my great uncle of good memory, master Thaddaeus Mac Brudin, or the Brudin, son of Darius, (and) proprietor of Mount Scott]²⁹

We read in a Latin deed of 1606 that Tadhg mac Daíre was a ‘feofee for uses’ on three and a half quarters of land in Clondagad parish in the Barony of Islands, and he gave his residence as ‘Thadeus McBruidine de Corkanalabuna’ (Knockanalban).³⁰ While not in actual possession of this land which was owned by Clann Mhic Mhathghamhna but

²⁵ I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Dr Michelle O Riordan of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) in the translation of these passages.
²⁶ Carol Gleeson, 'Knockanalban Crannog(e), Co. Clare', The Other Clare, vol. 13 (1989) pp 32-4. The author visited the site of Knockanalban crannóg in September and notes that a levelled stone structure can still be discerned in the centre of the surrounding marshy land and wooded thicket.
²⁸ Brudinus, Propugnaculum Catholicae Veritatis, p. 851.
²⁹ Author's translation.
³⁰ National Library of Ireland: MS 45,669/2 (dated 1606). The identifiable land denominations in Clondagad parish include Knockalshid, Ballycloghessy and Dehomed.
rather acting as a trustee, Tadhg mac Dáire’s interest was probably on account of his marriage to Aine, daughter of Tadhg Mac Mathghamhna.91

The five quarters of land in the barony of Ibrickan which Tadhg mac Dáire possessed in 1615 made him a substantial landholder.92 As Tadhg mac Dáire held his estate at Knockanalban rent free93 the implication that he had an interest in Lettermoylan suggests that it was collective family property with proprietorship vested in the agnatic dearthfhine of Clann Bhruaidheada. Tadhg mac Dáire also appears in the Great Office inquisition taken in 1618 for Inchiquin barony; there he appears holding ‘Lettermollan’ while also holding lesser interests in Racahaine, Foroiluoughtare, Kurragh, Foroiluoughtare, Rolloduff, Cloonahaha along with other kinsmen.94 In the Great Office inquisition of 1621 he was a juror and of ‘Lettermollan’ but also held Ballidubeg, indicating that his landholding was dispersed but interwined with other members of Clann Bhruaidheada.95

Some scholars have pointed out that Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaidheada was a minor figure before 1615.96 While he was never recognised as the Mac Bruaideada ollamh the fact that he held Knockanalban free from rent implies his literary activities were rewarded by the Earl of Thomond. Tadhg mac Dáire arbitrated a deed in 1606 for the Earl though it is clear from this deed that he was not the Mac Bruaideada.97 That title was held by Connor the son of Maoillin Óg as can be discerned from the Mac Bruaideada signatories of the deed; ‘Connor Brodogh otherwise McBrody and Teig McBrody’. Tadhg mac Dáire served as a juror on an inquisition into the lands of the Earl of Thomond in 1619 where he gave his residence as ‘Lettermollan’98 and he turns up in other contemporary deeds written in Irish, indicating that his signature was sought after.99

Tadhg mac Dáire’s fosterage connection with the Earl of Thomond placed the poet as a leading kinsman of Clann Bhruaidheada, despite him not holding the ollamh-ship:

\[
\text{Cathalico ritu Baptizatius, as tandem delicate lactatus, nutritus per annos 7 in} \]
\[
\text{Domo viri illustris, Dominii Corneliij Clanchi, Domini de Inse & Finola Bruadin} \]
\[
ejus uxoris. Crescente aetate Principis pueri, parentis jussu, Dominus Thadeus} \]

91 Brudininus notes that ‘Thadduinus Bruaduinis, Deiri de Monte Scotti filius, in exorem habit Amnon Mahuny seu Matheui Illustris viri D[ominus] Theadui de Tunaferia filiam’ [Tadhg Bruadin, the son of Darius of Mount Scott, took a wife Anna Mahuny or Matheui i.e. McMahon who was the daughter of the illustrious master Thady of Tunafera]. Tunafera can be identified as Thadd na Feachra which corresponded to the parish of Killadyseert, and was under the lordship of Clann Mhic Mathghamhna. It also appears that Tadhg mac Dáire’s sister Bridget married into Clann Mhic Mathghamhna of Tunafera, her husband being Cornelius MacMhcony (seu Matheui). O’Molloy, Anamisicon Examen Erchiriìi Æpoteletii, pp 124, 129.

92 Petworth House Archive, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].


94 Petworth House Archive, MS 16.B.E, [Great Office of Inchiquin Barony taken 1 September, 1618]. Landholding of other kinsmen in 1618 may be abstracted thus: Connor McBrroin of Kilky; Shane McBrroin of Kilky; Cosyn McBrroin of Balligore; Curri McBrroin of Balligore; Dary McBrroin and Doiril McBrroin of Formoil lightare; and Dary McBrroin of Ballakinnish and Cloonanale. A reference exists to a Teig McBrroin of Cloonanguy, and who held a parcel of the two quarters of Formoil. This may in fact be Tadhg mac Dáire. The fragmented landholdings in the 1618 and 1621 Great Offices supports the view that the property of the family was held by partial inheritance among the dearthfhine of Clann Bhruaidheada. I thank Kenneth Nicholls for this reference.


96 Leerssen, Coniunctio of the Bards, p. 33.


99 See Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’ p. 60 (undated); p. 81 (1592); p. 84 (1594) along with Dermot McBrody.
Broduinus Finola frater, curam illius accepit, illumque sub sua disciplina in diversis hiberniae locis, in quibus studuit, per annos 14 habuit, tandem mortuo Catholico suo parente, Juvenis Comes 21 circiter tunc agens annum, in Angliam, cum suo Praefecto Brudino navigavit; ubi perswasione Thomas Butler, Ormaniae tune potentissimi Comitis (ut Reginae favores sibi concilitore) a fide defectat Catholica. Post dies utriusque annos in Hibernia Comes una Thadeo Brudino, Catholico suo Praefecto venit; ubi Thadæus ex illustrissima Mohuniorum familia uxorem duxit.100

[(Donough O’Brien was) Baptized under the Catholic rite, delicately nursed, nurtured for seven years in the house of that illustrious man, Master Cornelius Clanchi, master of Én尼斯, and Finola Brudin, his wife. Over the course of the boy prince’s years, master Thady Brudin, the brother of Finola, received the care of him by order of his parents, and kept him for fourteen years under his tutorage at diverse places in Ireland, where he studied; when at last his own Catholic parent died, the young earl, at about the age of 21 years, sailed for England with his guardian Brudin; whereupon through the persuasion of Thomas Butler, at that time the powerful Earl of Ormond, he forsook the Catholic faith (in order to commend himself to the Queen’s favours). Finally after two years [back] to Ireland the Earl, together with Thady Brudin, his Catholic guardian arrived; whereupon Thady Brudin took a wife from the most illustrious family of the Mahons.]101

The claim that the Earl was fostered by Tadhg mac Daire’s sister Finola who was the wife of Conchubhar Mac Fhlanchnachda (Cornelius Clanchi) of Én尼斯 for seven years before being placed under the tutelage of Tadhg mac Daire, confirms Tadhg’s standing. As Tadhg mac Daire died in 1625-26 and not the mid-seventeenth century as O’Flanagan implausibly relates,102 it is necessary to reconsider an earlier birthdate of c.1550103 which reconcile these claims set out by Broduinus. An earlier birthdate would account for the fact that the Earl was in England in 1577.104

Such affinity between Tadhg mac Daire and the Earl may account for the direct personal poems that he addressed to the Earl.105 This, despite the title ollamh seanachais was held by Maoilín Óg.106 The poems composed by Maoilín Óg, the official ollamh seanachais of Thomond, were formulaic and in a prescribed style, fitting for an official poet to Ó Briain. Maoilín Óg followed the traditional occupation of compiling annals, that is, chronicling events for his Úi Bhiriaí patrons, a point confirmed by Antonius

101 Author’s translation.
105 Tadhg mac Daire addressed five poems to his patron Donough O’Brien, fourth Earl of Thomond. In particular see Móraing ar theadga: fiautha (‘a major task to instruct a prince’) which was probably written in c.1599. His other notable poem was the eulogy on the death of the Earl in 1624 titled Eascar Gaedheal dán aothair (‘The death of one man entails the overthrow of the Gæl’). On the dating of the former see Leeser, Contention of the Bardis, p. 43 and on the latter see Ó Cúis, ‘An elegy on Donnchadh Ó Briain’, pp 87-105. Several of Tadhg mac Daire’s poems have been preserved in the Duasaire Úi Bhriain (‘Poem book of the Ó Briains’). See Maynooth MS M 107, [Duasaire Úi Bhriain].
106 See Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1599, 1602. The annals confirm that Maoilín Óg held the position of ollamh.
Maolín Óg’s poems tended to focus on genealogical themes such as *Cuireadh comacain ar Chlanna Tail* (‘I will lay an obligation on the descendants of Tál’) along with themes concerning enumeration of lordship. By contrast, Tadhg mac Dáire cultivated a personal relationship with the Earl which is marked by his direct advice-poem to the Earl, *Mór atá ar theagasc flatha* (‘A major task to instruct a prince’). Tadhg mac Dáire’s elegy on the death of the Earl illustrates his personal attachment to his patron and his direct personal style leaves us in little doubt that he saw himself as the pre-eminent poet of the Earl of Thomond’s household. In a prophetic remark in his poem *Eascar Gaoidheal éag aoinshir* (‘The death of one man entails the overthrow of the Gael’) composed on the death of the Earl, Tadhg mac Dáire laments:

_a Dhé, dá diagraadh tusa_
_budh furtagch é dom urcra-sa_
_m’iog ina ghoire go grod_
_an t-iog roimhe ó nach ránag_
 [O God, since I did not attain death before him it would be a help for my grief if you would ordain that I should die near him shortly]\

This proved to be prophetic as Tadhg mac Dáire was dead by 1626, two years after writing the verse. Despite being what can only be described as a political functionary in his role as a poetic apologist for the Earl of Thomond, Tadhg mac Dáire’s learning and literary achievements were considerable. Friar Antonius Broudinw wrote that he was a multilingual *literatus*; no doubt a product of the native schools of *filidheach* and *seanchas*:

**Dominus Thaddeaus mac Bruodin, seu de Bruodin, Darij filius, Dominus de Monte Scoti…** (qui Familiae suae senior, seu caput erat, & Excellentissimi, Illustissimotum Domini, Donati Magni o Brien; Tuomoniae Comitis, & Momoniae tunc Praesidiis, Aulae Praefectus) ut erat in Graecia, Latinis, Anglica, & Hibernico litteris apprime doctus, & in antiquitatis Regni, praedecessorum more, versatissimus…\[^{111}\]

[Master Thaddeaus MacBruodin, or the Bruodin, the son of Darius, of Mount Scott [Knockanalan] (who was the ‘senior’, or head, of his family, and prefect of the court of the most excellent and most illustrious Master Donatus the Great O’Brien, Earl of Thomond, and then President of Munster), being exceedingly learned in Greek, Latin, English and Irish literature and in the manner of his predecessors, extremely well-versed in the antiquities of the realm.\[^{112}\]

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[^107]: Broudinw writes: ‘*Donatus O Brien Caribrae dicitus Limericensi & Tuononia, piiiissimus simul, & potentissimi Princeps: Qui (ut legitur in Bruoedorum Chronicis, & rejet Millerus juvenis mac Bruodin, seu de Bruodine, in Elogiosis O Briomniorum per varias altas Hiberniae partes, fundavit, & dotavit 80 monastiri, parochiales ecclesiasec & secella* [*Donatus O Brien known as Caribrae of Limerick and Thomond, both a most pious and powerful prince: Who (as we read in the Bruodin chronicles, and Millerus the younger [Maolín Óg] mac Bruodin, or the Bruodin, mentions him in the Eulogies of the O Briens) founded and endowed 80 monasteries, parish churches and shrines through various other parts of Ireland*]. These annals, or the ‘Book of Millerus Óg Mac Bruodendha’, covered the period 1588-1603 and was used in the compilation of the *Annals of the Four Masters* (Annála Ríogahta Éireann). See Bernadette Cunningham, ‘The Historical Annals of Maolín Óg Mac Bruodendha, 1588-1603’, *The Other Clare*, vol. 13 (1989) pp 21-4, and Broudinw, *Propagacuam Catholicae Veritatis*, p. 967.

[^108]: See RIA MS 1080 (Br/v/2). Also see McManus & Ó Raibhleagh (eds), *A Bardic Miscellany*, pp 175-9.

[^109]: Ó Flannagan, ‘Advice to a Prince’, pp 31-34.


Evidence suggests that Tadhg mac Daire was in Dublin in 1617 probably as part of Earl of Thomond’s retinue. However, little evidence exists that he travelled to the continent in the 1620s despite his name somewhat ambiguously appearing in a list of Irish poets compiled by O’Sullivan Beare. The inclusion of his name under a list of Irish physicians on the continent in the 1620s is no real proof that Tadhg mac Daire travelled abroad, despite his renown.

**Lettermoylan termonland**

In fully grasping the history of Clann Bhruaideadh is it necessary to consider the significance of Lettermoylan. Our most definitive record of Lettermoylan and its connection with Clann Bhruaideadh occurs in the notebook of Bishop Worth (1660-1669), Protestant Bishop of Killaloe. In the notebook of Bishop Worth, proof may be obtained that Lettermoylan was ecclesiastical property held by the Meic Bhruaideadh, and that in 1617 kinsmen of the family were disputing the right of Bishop John Rider in leasing Lettermoylan to new tenants:

Lettermoylan: Arable & pasture 333a; pasture & mountain 1,232a; pasture & bog 147a in ye survey profitable 463a, unprofitable 1,249a. The release hereof to ye Bishop challenged by virtue of an old lease by heirs of Teige McBroodie and Gillibrode McBroodie but set by me to Mr Hobson...Teige McBroody and Gillibrade McBroodyn released to ye Bishop of Killaloe the half quarter of Lettermoylan 6 Martii 1617.

This passage is an unmistakable reference to Lettermoylan being situated on Slieve Callan. The fact that it appeared under the termon of Dysert confounded scholars in assuming that Lettermoylan belonged in the modern parish of Dysert and subsumed under an alias land division. In 1614 the Protestant Bishop of Killaloe, John Rider, wrote to the Lord Deputy seeking assistance in recovering church lands. In respect to Lettermoylan Bishop Rider wrote:

...and also Teig McBroodie gent., denyth to yield the like possession of the houses and mancows [sic] within the half quarter of land called Lettermolane within the parish of Dysert although the said Sheriff hath given your petitioner [i.e. Bishop of Killaloe] possession of the said half quarter at which persons still remain in the said houses, plough and pasture upon the said lands and take the rents thereof to their own use to the great damage and impoverishing of your petitioner...to call the said parties being now in town...and give directions to the right honourable Earl of Thomond or the Sheriff of Co. Clare to take [...] that your petitioner may quietly enjoy such lands...

Lord Baron Inchiquin
William Nelan
John O’Griffa Gents.
Teig McBrody

---

112 Author’s translation.
113 Leeserse, *Contention of the Bards*, p. 65.
115 MS 1777, *Typescript copy of a survey of lands in the diocese of Killaloe made for Bishop Worth*, 1661, pp 31-2.
It is apparent from this document that the lands around Lettermoylan were of mixed economic activity; ploughland and pasture, and that there were different types of dwellings that may cautiously be interpreted as ‘houses’ (i.e. cabins and lesser quality dwellings) and ‘mansions’ (i.e. substantial dwellings). As we have seen earlier the Meic Bhruaidheadha released Lettermoylan to the bishop on 6 March 1617. The lease was taken over by William Hobson who was recorded as a ‘tituladoe’ of the former Clann Bhruaidheadha property at Knockanbalban in 1659.\textsuperscript{117}

Moynoe termonland
A branch of Clann Bhruaidheadha was based at Moynoe in east Co. Clare where they were hereditary keepers of the eleventh-century manuscript \textit{Salair Chaimin}.\textsuperscript{118} The manuscript was presented to Friar Micheál Ó Cléirigh in the 1630s when he was seeking material for his compilation, \textit{Annálí Rioghachta Éireann}.\textsuperscript{119} The nature of Clann Bhruaidheadha’s land holding on church lands at \textit{Tearmonn Chaimin} at Moynoe\textsuperscript{120} is uncertain, but it does suggest a medieval (erenagh?) connection with the church and termon:

4 q[uarters] of Moynoe were claimed by the possessors as their fee. [On] 6 Jan[uary] 1617 flan McBroodyn, Charles al[a]s Callogh Mac Broodyn, Donogh O Cormochan and David Mac Cormochan surrendered and released all their interests therein [spelling modernised].\textsuperscript{121}

From 1638 the Meic Bhruaidheadha of Moynoe entered into a series of leases on the church land with New English settlers.\textsuperscript{122} They also appear to have held lands on termon Tulla where, in 1627, Constance Brody of Tyredagh testified at an inquisition into the historical extent of termon Tulla and where the reliquary known as ‘Moghully’s black book’ (i.e. St Mochuilla) was produced as evidence.\textsuperscript{123} The Meic Bhruaidheadha still held land in Inishcaltra parish in 1641 where they were said to have had a burial cypyt.\textsuperscript{124} Further, we read the remark by Friar Antonius Bruodinus confirming that Clann Bhruaidheadha had hereditary lands in the vicinity of Lough Derg.\textsuperscript{125} His remark clearly meant the Meic Bhruaidheadha branches at Inishcaltra and Clonrush, of which Flann McBroodyn was head in the 1630s.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{117} Séamus Pender (ed.), \textit{Census of Ireland circa 1659} (Dublin, 1939) Kilmore parish. Also see MS 1777, \textit{Typescript copy of a survey of lands in the diocese of Killaloe made for Bishop Worth, 1661}, pp 33-4.

\textsuperscript{118} McGrath, ‘Materials for a History of Clann Bhruaidheadha’, p. 51.


\textsuperscript{120} A land denomination there was known as Knockbrodty at the time of the Tithe Applotment Books in 1825. The denomination was not subsequently recorded in Griffith Valuation of the 1850s. \textit{Tithe Applotment Books}: Moynoe parish.

\textsuperscript{121} [20th November 1825].

\textsuperscript{122} MS 1777, \textit{Typescript copy of a survey of lands in the diocese of Killaloe made for Bishop Worth, 1661}, pp 7-8.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., pp 8-9.

\textsuperscript{124} RIA MS 24 D 17, pp 45-46. The inquisition stated that Constance Brody of Tyredagh in Tulla parish was aged 80 when he testified at the inquisition in 1627 and that he had dwelt at Tyredagh for 54 years.

\textsuperscript{125} Bruodinus, \textit{Propugnaculum Catholicae Veritatis}, p. 968.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p. 77. Friar Antonius Bruodinus was well acquainted with Clann Bhruaidheadha of Moynoe as he writes that he saw there the library of Flann Mac Bruaidheadha. This must have occurred sometime in the 1630s, see ibid., p. 770.

\textsuperscript{127} On Flann Mac Bruaidheadha (\textit{alias} Florentius) and that he was regarded as the \textit{Mac Bruaidheadha} at this time, see ibid., p. 770.
We are told by Friar Antonius Bruodinus that a library existed at Moynoe in the 1630s.\footnote{127} The library was in the possession of Flann Mac Bruaidheadh. Flann Mac Bruaidheadh is first recorded as dwelling on the termon of Moynoe in 1621 when he occupied one quarter of Aughrim in Tuamgraney parish on the border with Moynoe parish.\footnote{128} It would appear that at this library Micheál Ó Cléirigh saw a copy of Sallair Chaimhin in 1636, but that Flann was already dead by the time Ó Cléirigh arrived at Tearnomm Chaimhin.\footnote{129} It is worth quoting Bruodinus’ description of the library and its ancient texts at length:

\textit{vidi insuper ego non semel in Bibliotheca minimae meae familiae Senioris (vulgo mac Bruodin) nobilis viri, D. Florentii mac Bruodin, Domini de Moynoe, antiquissimas Regni Hiberniae historias, ante tot saecula a Bruodinis in membrana mundissime exaratas, et doctus Tomis (quorum unus Rufus, et alter Ruber dicitur) contentas. In Rufo omnia facta Regum et Principum Familiarum (praesertim vero earum quae ex Ebiero, Mileri Hispani, pimique ex illa stirpe Regis Hiberniae, descenderunt) continebantur. In Rubro vero libro, inter alia arbores genealogicae, non solum Regiae O Brienorum Familiae, sed et praecipuarum omnium Hiberniarum familiarum artificiosae collocatae videntur.}\footnote{130} [Moreover, I myself have seen not [just] once in the library of the Senior (Mac Bruodin) of my very humble family, [i.e.,] of the noble Master Florence Mac Bruodin, Master of Moynoe, the most ancient histories of the Kingdom of Ireland, set down on parchment by the Mac Bruodins very neatly so many centuries ago, and contained within two volumes (of which one is called \textit{Rufus} ['Reddish'] and the other \textit{Ruber} ['Red']). In \textit{Rufus} were contained all the deeds of the families of kings and princes (but especially of those that have descended from Ebire [i.e. \textit{Éibeart Fionn}], the son of Milerus the Spaniard [i.e. \textit{Mil Espáine}], and of the first King of Ireland from that branch). In the book \textit{Ruber}, however, there can be seen, skillfully put together, among other things, genealogical trees, not only of the royal family of the O'Briens, but also of all the principal Irish families.]ootnote{131}

The book \textit{Rubro vero libro}, (‘the Red Book’) which contained genealogical tracts of some antiquity might be a reference to the \textit{Leabhar Ruadh Muihnneach} that was penned by Murchadadh Riabhach Ó Cuinnlis in c.1400 and was preserved at Quin Friary when Ó Cléirigh visited.\footnote{132} Clearly Clann Bhruaidheadh at Moynoe also followed the profession of chronicling in the same manner as the Lettermoylan and Ibrickian branches. A

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{127} The location of the Clann Bhruaidheadh residence and library at Moynoe is not known. However, a castle-like structure situated next to Moynoe church may in fact have served as a \textit{scripторium} and a safe place for the storage of manuscripts. A similar situation may also have transpired at Urlanbeg in Kilmaley parish where a small castle-like structure may represent a place for the production of manuscripts for the brehon Meic Fhliannachd lineages, rather than being a towerhouse. On the castles of Co. Clare see R.W. Twigge, ‘Edward White’s Description of Thomond in 1574’, \textit{North Munster Archaeological Society Journal}, vol. 1. no. 2. (1910) pp 75-85.


\footnote{129} McGrath, ‘Materials for a History of Clann Bhruaidheadh’, p. 51.

\footnote{130} Bruodinus, \textit{Propugnaculum Catholicae Veritatis}, p. 770.

\footnote{131} Author’s translation.

\end{footnotesize}
connection between Clann Bhruaidheadha and the library of Quin Friary is plausible given
the attraction of learned families to mendicant orders in the later medieval period.

Friar Antonius Brudinus is silent regarding Lettermoylan. Rather, Brudinus is
prolific when it comes to identifying Meic Bhruaidheadha kinsmen at Slieve Callan (viz.
Mons Callani).\textsuperscript{133} Although Brudinus should be read with caution and the usual caveats
apply to this first-class propagandist for Clann Bhruaidheadha, he is an important witness
to the genealogy and landholding of the family. Brudinus’ father was Milerus (Maolín)
of the Ballyogan branch of Clann Bhruaidheadha in Kilraghtis parish (and which had land
in adjoining Inchiconran).\textsuperscript{134} His line of the family can be traced to the mid-sixteenth
century Dáire, father of poet Tadhg, and who had land at Ballyogan as well as at
Knockanalan in Ibrickan.\textsuperscript{135} Brudinus must have had access to family manuscripts
when he compiled his work Anatomicum Examen Enchiridii Apologeticci and he possibly
benefited from the assistance of clerical cousins for specific facts.\textsuperscript{136} It is known that
six of the family became Franciscans in the seventeenth century,\textsuperscript{137} several of whom were
appointed guardians of Ennis Friary.\textsuperscript{138} From Brudinus we can grasp certain facts
concerning Clann Bhruaidheadha and their ecclesiastical connections. According to
Brudinus the Meic Bhruaidheadha residence at Mons Scoti (Knockanalan) never paid
rent to the Bishop of Killaloe as it was not designated ecclesiastical land and that it was
hereditary property:

\textit{Mons Scoti... in baronia est de Ibrickan, in qua nec Abbas, nec Episcopus uillos
pedem terrae unquam habuit. Dominum Thaddeus Brudinum ac post illius
obitum, Dominum Jacobum, Thadei filium, montis Scoti fuisse Dominum nobis
Tuomoniensibus notum est.}\textsuperscript{139}

[Mount Scott is in the barony of Ibrickan, in which neither any abbot, nor any
bishop ever held a foot of land. It is known to us Tuomoniensibus [i.e. ‘Thomond-
men’] that master Thaddeus Brudinus and, after his death, master Jacobus, the
son of Thad[d]eus, had been the proprietor of Mount Scott]\textsuperscript{140}

His statement here was factually correct but deliberately partial in its purpose. As his
work was generated in response to an attack from fellow Franciscan Thomas Carew\textsuperscript{141}
which admonished Brudinus’ prior writings on Clann Bhruaidheadha, Brudinus omitted
the fact that rather it was Lettermoylan that paid a rent to the Bishop of Killaloe. The
1641 Books of Survey and Distribution confirm that Lettermoylan remained in the hands

\textsuperscript{133} O’Mullony, \textit{Anatomicum Examen Enchiridii Apologeticci}, pp 44-5, 123-32.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., pp 42, 126.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 124. On Dáire it reads: ‘Darius Brudinus, Dominus Montis Scoti, Bolliscalan, Ballyogan, etc., Finolam
Grajan, Donnai de Boll An Cre filiam in xoxem habuit’. [Darius Brudin, master of Mount Scott, Ballyscalan,
Ballyogan, etc, had as a wife Finola Grajan, the daughter of Donough of Ballycargue].
\textsuperscript{136} Perhaps Bonaventura Brudinus, a professor of philosophy and theology in Prague, was at his side when he compiled his
works in the 1660s and early 1670s. On Bonaventura see Alice Stopford Green, \textit{The making of Ireland and its
\textsuperscript{137} McGrath, ‘Materials for a History of Clann Bhruaidheadha’, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{138} Patrick Conlan, \textit{Franciscan Ennis} (Athlone, 1984) pp 64-5.
\textsuperscript{139} O’Mullony, \textit{Anatomicum Examen Enchiridii Apologeticci}, p. 109.
\textsuperscript{140} Author’s translation.
\textsuperscript{141} Carew’s (or Carves as it is written) main work refuting Brudinus was Thomas Carves, \textit{Responso Veridica Ad Iloctan
Libellum Cui Nomen Anatomicum Examen P. Antonii Brudini Hiberni... Sub Emendio Nomine P. Cornelli O Molloni
Edition, Sultbach, 1872.}
of the Established Church and later was leased to the Synge family into the nineteenth century. A letter from 1689 by John Roane, Bishop of Killaloe, reveals that Lettermoynan remained episcopal mensal land at that later date.\textsuperscript{142}

**Lettermoynan in other records**

We find from placenames on Slieve Callan that the mountain was used for transhumance grazing and it is likely that the Meic Bhruaidheadha had herds of cattle which grazed on the summer pastures of Slieve Callan. Placenames such as Boolydugh (Buaidh Dhubh, ‘dark pasture’) and Boolynagreana (Loch Buaidh na Gréine, ‘lake of the sunny pasture’) serve as a reminder of transhumance activity on Slieve Callan. Such places were established ‘boolying’ sites from at least the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{143}

Sources of income for learned lineages included fees for serving as public notaries and acting as scribes of legal documents.\textsuperscript{144} In Gaelic lordships wealth was measured both in the amount of cattle one possessed and the amount of retainers attached to a lineage. The Gaelic learned class were noted to have been endowed with great herds of cattle. This point is attested in the 1599 raid into Cínéal Fearmaic by Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill who plundered the cattle of Maolín Óg Mac Bruiadheal, only to restore the cattle to the poet and receive, in return, a favourable poetic quatrains.\textsuperscript{145} Ó Domhnaill also rustled the cattle of Tadhg mac Daire, though the raid received a more condemnatory reception from the poet,\textsuperscript{146} probably on account of Tadhg mac Daire’s personal closeness to the Earl of Thomond.

Signatures in documents from the late sixteenth century confirm Lettermoynan as one of the chief residences of Clann Bhruaidheal. We read in an indenture to the Composition of Connacht in 1585 that Teige McRory of ‘Lettermaelin’ signed as a witness.\textsuperscript{147} No original version of the Composition manuscript survives, only an imperfect copy made in 1700.\textsuperscript{148} In all probability Teige McRory is a scribal error, the original reading being ‘Teige mcDory’ or ‘Teige McBrody’; as the original is now lost this cannot be established beyond doubt. Lettermoynan is also recorded in an inquisition in 1619 where ‘Thady MacBrody’ (Tadhg mac Daire) was empanelled as a juror.\textsuperscript{149}

**Clann Bhruaidheal estate**

**Landholding in 1615**

A study of the landholding of Clann Bhruaidheal holds clues to their historical status and position in Ibrickan. For example, the spatial relationship between Doonogan as their

\textsuperscript{142} Ainsworth (ed.), *Inchiquin Manuscripts*, p. 24. [no. 71].

\textsuperscript{143} Simington, *Books of Survey and Distribution*, pp 541-2.

\textsuperscript{144} Literate members of Clann Bhruaidheal are frequently found in legal instruments in both the *Inchiquin Manuscripts* and also in the collection of Irish deeds printed by James Hardiman. See Ainsworth (ed.), *Inchiquin Manuscript* [nos. 890; 920; 930; 936; 937; 964; 975; 952; 980; 981; 984; 955; 999; 1003; 1008; 1011; 1018; 1021; 1025; 1029; 1030; 1044; 1318; 1321; 1344; 1483]; and Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish Deeds’, pp 61, 67, 80, 81, 84.

\textsuperscript{145} *Annals of the Four Masters*, sub anno 1599. Mac Bruiadheal attributed Ó Domhnaill’s incursion as revenge for the demolition of Grianán Alligh by the grandson of Brian Borúinbe, and thereby ancestor of Donnchadh Ó Briain, Raurth Earl of Thomond, whose territory Ó Domhnaill raided.

\textsuperscript{146} Leerssen, *Contention of the Bands*, p. 45. See Tadhg mac Daire’s poem Fóiridh mo leigse, a Leith Chaimin in L. Cionnaith, (ed.), *Disgútháim Déarmh* (Dublin, 1938) no. 95.

\textsuperscript{147} A. Martin Freeman, (ed.), *The Composicion Booke of Conought* (Dublin, 1936) p. 7.

\textsuperscript{148} The author inspected this copy at the British Library and found the 1936 printed version an accurate transcription of the c.1700 handwritten copy.

\textsuperscript{149} Cf. Lettermoelene in Petworth House Archive, MS B.26.T.16, [1 April 1619].
towerhouse residence and the more ancient dwelling at Knockanalban on a crannóg, is yet to be determined. The occupation of crannóg sites by learned families into early modern times is well known, as are the occupation of other traditional sites such as the caiseal residence of the Úi Dhuibhdábhóireann broughs at Cahermacnaughten in Burren, and the Meic Fhlanchnach broughs at Cahearmaclanchy in Corcomroe. In some cases crannóg sites were re-used early medieval royal residences and dynastic sites which had become re-occupied by learned families in the later medieval period. Crannóg sites often represented symbolic, though archaic residences, relegating them to a secondary use by the early modern period. Their sequestered nature made them ideal for the storage of documents and as schools and guest-houses rather than permanent residences. At this period the ollamh of the lineage occupied towerhouse residences in the manner of the ruling Gaelic class.\textsuperscript{150}

Around Slieve Callan various branches of Clann Bhruaidheadha held land into the seventeenth century. According to the 1615 ‘Survey of Ibrickan’\textsuperscript{151} and the 1626 rental of the fifth Earl of Thomond’s estates,\textsuperscript{152} identification of Meic Bhruaidheadha proprietors shows that they had a strong presence in the barony. In 1615 Clann Bhruaidheadha occupied over 9,500 acres or around a fifth of Ibrickan barony.\textsuperscript{153} Their chief landholdings in 1615 included: Donnsallagh, Shanavogh, Doonogan and surrounding five quarters,\textsuperscript{154} Shandrum and Moyglass, Cloghaunmatinny, and Knockanalban.\textsuperscript{155} In 1626 it included: Lackamore, Kildeema,\textsuperscript{156} Shannaglas, Cahircolgan, Annagh, Knockanalban, Carrowlag and Ballymackea.\textsuperscript{157} It can be seen that their landholding coalesced around Knockanalban and Doonogan in Ibrickan and on Slieve Callan at Lettermoylean.

The association between Clann Bhruaidheadha and Slieve Callan can also be found in a letter in Irish by Conchubhar Mac Bruaidheadha and dated January 1631, written as an introduction for the German settler Matthew de Renzy.\textsuperscript{158} The letter relates that when de Renzy arrived in Ireland in 1606 he sought to learn Irish and, ‘in his journeying he came across the family of Mac Bruaidheadha, in particular Conchubhar Mac Bruaidheadha, and Tadhg mac Dáire, who were knowledgeable and very learned in Irish’.\textsuperscript{159} The letter is headed, ‘K1 Januair for Satharn 1631 Callainn (The Kalends of January on Saturday 1631, Callan).’\textsuperscript{160} We may posit that Callainn is Stiabh Callain, identifying Conchubhar Mac Bruaidheadha’s residence at the time of writing. In 1636 Franciscan friar and scholar, Micheál Ó Cléirigh, travelled throughout Ireland seeking approbations for his work

\begin{itemize}
\item See, for example, the learned families of Co. Clare who possessed towerhouses in the sixteenth century such as the Ó Cathaín of Inis Cathaín and Ballykelt. Martin Breen, ‘A 1570 List of Castles in County Clare’, \textit{North Munster Antiquarian Journal}, vol. xxxvi (1995) pp 130-8 and Twigg, ‘Edward White’s Description of Thomond in 1574’, pp 75-85.
\item Petworth House Archive, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].
\item Petworth House Archive, ‘An abstract of such rents and renounes as doe belong to the right Hon. Henry Earle of Thomond [1626]’, Petworth House Archives, Chichester, MS No. C.227/A.39.
\item Computed using modern townland approximations of 1615 denominations. Also see Petworth House Archives, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].
\item According to the 1615 survey these included the five quarters of Carrowalad, Kildeema, Finnor More and Killargayne (Kilmarn?) (all spellings modernized). See Petworth House Archives, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].
\item Petworth House Archive, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].
\item The 1626 rental records that the five quarters of Kildeema and Finnor More were held by ‘Teig he Brodie’s sons’.
\item Ibid.
\item Conchubhar did not inherit his father Maolín Óg’s poetic mastery as can be seen in the short poem he included in the letter to de Renzy which was not composed in the accomplished Dás Daoine style, characteristic of a bardic poet. Brian Mac Cúarta, ‘Conchubhar Mac Bruaidheadha and Sir Matthew de Renzy (1577-1634)’, \textit{Éige}, vol. 27 (1993) pp122-6:125
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., p. 123.
\end{itemize}
Annála Rioghachta Éireann, during the course of which he obtained the signature of Conchubhar Mac Bruaideadha. Conchubhar's testimonium read:

Táinig an brathair bocht Michel O Cléirigh (amaillé le humhla a uachdaráin an tathair Josep Euerard prouinsial uird S. Fr.) dom láthair do léechadh 7 do thais-béadh an leabhair airis 7 annaladha 5 do sgríobhdha lais 7 lasan aos ealadhna oile is na lámha atá air 7 tar na fhéachtaí 7 tar na bhreathnúchadh dhamh, atúsa Mac Bruaideadha (Conchubhar mac Maolín Óic) Chill Chaoi(h)de 7 o Leitир Mhaoláin i ccontae an Chlár aga thadhnaigh go bhfóil an leabar iomhniolta 7 nach cumhán linn lebar airis, no annaladha dfaisin as mo, as fearr 7 as lionnhaire choitcheinne ar Erin uile in a an leabar so 7 gurab doiligh tobhéim, locdughadh, na increachadh do dhéanamh air. Do derbhadh ar a ndubharta atáim ace cur mo lámhhe air so i cCill Chaoi(h)de 11 November 1636.

Connar Mac Brody da ngoirtr Mac Bruaideadha.

[Whereas the poor Friar Michel O Cléirigh came into my presence (in obedience of his superior, Father Joseph Everard, Provincial of the Order of St Francis) to show me this book, together with other books; I am Mac Bruaideadha, Conchubhar son of Maolín Óg of Cill Chaoi(h)de [Kilkee] and Leitir Mhaoláin [Lettermoylean] in the county of Clare, testifies that I have seen many books relating to the festivals of the Irish saints, but never did see any one book of them so full, eminently clear, and arranged in better order, and so worthy of praise as the Festival and Martyrology which are in this book; and to attest this, I put my hand upon it in Cill Chaoi(h)de [Kilkee], 11 November 1636. Connar Mac Brody, who was proclaimed Mac Bruaideadha]¹⁶¹

Conchubhar’s residence can be identified as Cill Chaoi(h)de (Kilkee in Dysert parish) and Leitir Mhaoláin (Lettermoylean, in Inagh parish). His proprietorship of Lettermoylean descended to him from his father, Maolín Óg. This was the same Conchubhar Mac Bruaideadha who wrote the letter in 1631 in favour of Matthew de Renzy.

Conchubhar must have gained the appellation Mac Bruaideadha in the intervening years after the death of his father Maolín Óg in 1602, and when he helped arbitrate an agreement between members of Clann Uí Mhaoil Dhomhnaigh and the Earl of Thomond in 1605 for lands near Killaloe.¹⁶² The indenture to the agreement mentioned ‘Connor McBrodyn otherwise McBrodye and Teig McBrodyn’ suggesting that Conchubhar was the McBrodyn/Mac Bruaideadha by that stage.¹⁶³ Conchubhar apparently died in 1642 and, we are informed, was in possession of Lettermoylean at the time of his death.¹⁶⁴


¹⁶² See Petworth House Archive, MS C.13/34a, [23 September 1606]. The full indenture is printed in Melnerney, ‘Documents from the Thomond Papers at Petworth House Archive’, p. 42.

¹⁶³ This may have been a nominal title and it appears not linked to the ollamh-ship. That position effectively falling into disuse on the death of Conchubhar’s father Maolín Óg in 1602. Conchubhar also arbitrated a deed written in Irish in 1614. Gearóid Mac Nicaoill, ‘Seven Irish Documents from the Inchiquin Archives’, *Analecta Hibernica*, no. 26 (1970) pp 47-69:55.

Leading kinsmen of Clann Bhruaidheadh

Diarmaid

Maolín (ollamh to the Uí Chuinn of Cínéal Fearnhaic)

Diarmaid (d.1427)

Diarmaid

Maolín (d.1438)

Seán (d.1518)

Diarmaid

Conchobhar (d.1531; ollamh to the Uí Chuinn)

Daire Mac Bhruaidheadh + Finola Grajam

Maolín (ollamh) (d.1582)

Diarmaid (d.1563)

Gilla-Brighde (ollamh)

Lettermoylan, 1591

Milerus

Friar Antonio

James/Teob (Knockanalban) (d.1602)

Daniel (c.1641)

Fadi Griffin

Bernard, Constantinus, Tadhg mac Daire, Donnall, Diarmuid, Bridget, Finola

(Prague, 1606-70s)

165 The names presented here are derived from O’Hart, Irish Pedigrees, pp 104-05 and references in Friar Antonius Bruidius’ work, written under pseudonym, O’Mollony, Anatomicum Examen Erarchidii Apologetici.

166 Read: ‘Darius Bruidius, Domnus Montis Scotti, Balliscalan, Balllineg, etc., Finulam Grajam, Donall de Ball An Crow filiam in arcem habuit, ex quibus multis egregii virt. & foeminæ descenderant’ [Darius Bruidius, master of Mount Scott, Balliscalan, Ballloghan, etc., took Finula Grajam, daughter of Donough of Ballyloherow, as a wife, and from them descended numerous remarkable men and women’, Ibid., p. 124].

167 See Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno 1563.


169 Tadhg mac Daire wife was Anna Mhoiny of Tuamfarna, she being of Clann Mhil Mhaolghamhna, ibid., p. 124.

170 Donnall mac Daire composed the poem Ceoichuir sin a chrúit an riogh which was dedicated to the fourth Earl of Thomond Walsh, Gleanings from Irish Manuscripts, p. 111. Also see the ‘Daniel Bruidius Darij secundus filius’ in O’Mollony, Anatomicum Examen Erarchidii Apologetici, p. 124.

171 See a deed in Irish dated 1592 and written at Maithail in Rath parish, Inchiquin, where one of the witnesses was ‘Diamoid mac Daire Mc Bhruaidheadh’. The scribe of the deed was Uaithghac Mac Bruaidheadh who is an otherwise unknown kinsman. Mac Nioeall, ‘Seven Irish Documents from the Inchiquin Archives’, p. 33.


173 Ibid.

174 Conchobhar’s daughter Elenor of ‘Kilky’ (Kilkee in Dysert) married Thadeus Mohony of Tuamfarna, ibid., p. 132

175 Ibid., pp 43, 125.

176 Several of Tadhg mac Daire’s sons held the five quarters of Kilkeena and Finnor More in 1626. See Petworth House Archive, An abstract of such rents and rentevers as doe belonge to the right Hon. Henrye Earle of Thomond [1626], Petworth House Archives, Chichester, MS No. C27/A 39.
Landholding, 1641

Various branches of Clann Bhruaideadh are recorded in the 1641 Books of Survey and Distribution in Co. Clare. Meic Bhruaideadh kinsmen can be found holding land at Inishcaitra, Dysert, Kilraghtis and Inchieroman parishes.\(^\text{177}\) Examining landholding around Slieve Callan can ascertain Lettermoylan’s position as an estate of a leading branch of Clann Bhruaideadh. In 1641 Meic Bhruaideadh kinsmen in Dysert parish (now Inagh) held Cloonanaha to the north of Slieve Callan, and at Formoyle Upper and Lower bordering Lettermoylan to the east.\(^\text{178}\) The cluster of kinsmen at Formoyle included the sons of Macolin Óg and Tadhg mac Daire Mhic Bhruaideadh, strongly intimating that in Inagh parish was domiciled the leading branch of Clann Bhruaideadh.\(^\text{179}\) All these lands were forfeited to the Earl of Inchiquin\(^\text{180}\) and in the words of antiquarian Dr George Macnamara, the Meic Bhruaideadh proprietors were ‘unceremoniously evicted, and their lands, though poor and unproductive, helped to fill the hungry maw of Morough the Burner.\(^\text{181}\)

In 1641 other lands held by Meic Bhruaideadh included the townlands of Kilkee and Lisheenrahanick and Lisheencreevy in Dysert parish.\(^\text{182}\) The former of which was the property of Conchobhar son of Macolin Óg. As we have shown Kilkee (Cill Chaoidhe) was where Conchobhar signed his approbation of Ó Cleirigh’s work in 1636; his other property being Lettermoylan. This serves to highlight that the Clann Bhruaideadh branch at Dysert had intertwined interests in Inagh parish. This rather innocuous point owes itself to the fact that modern day Inagh parish once formed part of Dysert parish and included Lettermoylan on its far western border.

In 1641 Lettermoylan was in the hands of the Bishop of Killaloe, undoubtedly because the oratory church of Mae Creiche designated it as church land. On Petty’s County Map of 1685 Lettermoylan is marked to the west of ‘Formoylegetheragh’ (Formoyle Lower) and next to a mountain, presumably Slieve Callan.

Petty’s Hiberniae Delineatio County Map (1685)

\(^{177}\) See proprietors listed under these parishes in Simington, Books of Survey and Distribution.

\(^{178}\) Ibid., pp 533-5.


\(^{180}\) Ibid., pp 534-5.

\(^{181}\) Macnamara, ‘The O’Davoren of Cahermacnaughten, Burren, Co. Clare’, p. 75.

\(^{182}\) Simington, Books of Survey and Distribution, pp 553-4.
Knockanalban estate

Knockanalban was one of the chief residences of Clann Bhruaideadh. The fact that Tadhg mac Dáire McBreathaideadh occupied it since at least 1586 confirms this view. Tadhg mac Dáire appears at Knockanalban again in 1602 when he was noted as a ‘gent’ in the same fiant that recorded a Shane McBryan McBroe, yeoman of ‘Littermoylan’. Clearly this is a reference to Lettermoylan though Shane McBryan is an otherwise obscure kinsman. The 1615 survey of Ibrickan records Knockanalban rent free and that ‘Teig McBroyd holdeth for which he payeth not rent’. Knockanalban was one of eight quarters of Ibrickan that was exempt from paying [either] ‘hogggs nor muttions’. Knockanalban was still rent free in 1626 when the fifth Earl of Thomond’s rental listed its occupant as ‘Teig mc Brodies widowe’. This fact places Tadhg mac Dáire’s death between 1624, when he composed an elegy on the death of the Earl of Thomond, and 1626. The legend that Tadhg mac Dáire was slung from the heights of Doonogan castle by a rabacous Cromwellian in the 1650s is demonstrably untrue. Perhaps the myth had its roots in Tadhg mac Dáire’s proprietorship of Doonogan instead; the story possibly serving as an analogy of the dispossession of Clann Bhruaideadh in the Cromwellian settlement or of some other violence directed against them.

Around Knockanalban and Doonogan Clann Bhruaideadh held their largest estates in the early seventeenth-century. Knockanalban’s exemption from rent signified the status of the Meic Bhruaideadh as official poet-chroniclers. According to Friar Antonius Bruodinus, the professional reputation of Clann Bhruaideadh rested on several functions including chronicling events and maintaining the genealogies of the nobility:

Inter Hibernos... (more omnium per Europam Nationum) sunt nobiles, nobiliores, nobilissimi; divites, ditiiores, ditiissimi. Bruodinus non negavit; sed palam confessus est, suam familia esse tantum nobilem, ex qua semper unus fuit familiae capit, seu senior (vulgo MacBruodin dictus) cujus erat prisci Regnani, Hibernis, inter alios Chronologos historiam Regni scribere, genealogias, et facta notabilia Principum O Brien et antarum certarum magnatum familiarum observare. [Among the Irish...(by the custom of Nations all through Europe) Bruodin did not deny this [i.e. that there are several grades of nobility]; instead, he openly confessed that his family, which always brought forth one head of the family, or the

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183 See The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns During the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip & Mary, and Elizabeth I, Fiant, Eliz., No. 4860 [year 1586]. The reference reads ‘Teig Me Brodie, of Knocknalinbe’.
184 Ibid, Fiant No. 6615 [year 1602].
185 Petworth House Archive, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].
186 Ibid.
187 Petworth House Archive, ‘An abstract of such rents and reneuws as doe belonge to the right Hon. Henrye Earle of Thomond [1626]’, Petworth House Archives, Chichester, MS No. C27/A 99.
188 See Ó Cuív, ‘An elegy on Donnchadh Ó Bráin, fourth earl of Thomond’, pp 87-105.
189 Petworth House Archive, ‘An abstract of such rents and reneuws as doe belonge to the right Hon. Henrye Earle of Thomond [1626]’, Petworth House Archives, Chichester, MS No. C27/A 39. The documentary evidence puts to rest the remark by Theophilus O’Flanagan that Tadhg mac Dáire was hurled down from the summit of Doonogan to his death by a Cromwellian in the 1650s. If it were true, he would have been very old at that time if we consider that he is recorded as witnessing documents in the 1580s. See Theophilus O’Flanagan, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin, vol. 1 (1808) p. 27. O’Flanagan does relate that Tadhg mac Dáire, ‘possessed a fine appenage, as the hereditary PHILOSOPHIC [sic] BARD of Thomond (even in the decline of such establishments)—the castle of Dunogan, and its appurtenances’.
190 Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaideadh may be considered a substantial landholder as his total landholding in 1615 was in excess of seven quarters. See Petworth House Archives, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].
191 O’Mollony, Anatomicon Examen Enechiridii Apologetici, pp 40-1.
senior (generally called MacBruodin), whose [task] it was when the Irish of old reigned, to write, among other chroniclers of the realm, the history of the realm, and to observe the genealogies, and the remarkable deeds of the O’Brien princes and those of other certain great families.\(^2\)

The fourth Earl of Thomond’s patronage of Clann Bhruaidheadha extended to other learned members such as Teig McBroody who was the rector of Bunratty (Tradey) prior to 1612,\(^3\) and to Friar Dermot Bruodin, a member of the Slieve Callan branch and educated in Spain.\(^4\) Friar Dermot Bruodin served as the guardian of Ennis Friary until his death in 1617 and was accorded protection by the Earl (under the guise of being ‘mad’) and permitted to preach publicly in Ennis.\(^5\) He was also a recipient of a Spanish pension in 1605 and was a follower of the Baron of Lixnaw during the Nine Years War.\(^6\) We may place some credence in Bruodin’s writings and his authority extends to unraveling the landholding of Meic Bhruaidheadha kinsmen. While too complicated to detail here, aspects of his writing can be used to determine that the chief branches of the family were located around Slieve Callan and Ibrickan.\(^7\)

It is not known what purpose Knockanalan crannóg\(^8\) served but its sequestered location and its symbolic reminder as an ‘antique residence’ may have been the reason of its appeal for a learned family eager to impress their status and ancient credentials. Alternatively, the defensive feature of a crannóg may have proven useful for the practical purpose of storing documents and manuscripts. It is conceivable that Knockanalan had several purposes, one of which was that of a manuscript library or archive. Its location on an island surrounded by a watery marsh\(^9\) would also have made it an ideal venue in which to conduct a school (sgoilteach) or keep a guest-house (teach n-oiged).

There are no contemporary references to a Meic Bhruaidheadha school unlike the Ui Dhuibhdábhóireann law school at Cahermacnaughten\(^10\) or the Ui Mhaoilchóirne.
school at Ardkyle near Bunratty. But it can be surmised that a school existed and it was attended by Matthew de Renzy in the 1610s when he began to study Irish. Evidence also exists that the Meic Bhruidheadha maintained links to other learned families who ran schools, whether through their marriage ties with the Meic Fhlanachdha for example, or Tadhg mac Daire Mhic Bhruidheadha’s poetic address to Clann Dhubhbadhboireann where he describes the ‘limestone los’ of Cahermacnaughten. The literary network of Clann Bhruidheadha was extensive and connections were maintained as far afield as Donegal from where a member of the learned Uí Chléirigh died while visiting Lettermoyle in 1595. Such allusions imply familiarity with the schools and residences of other learned families. Residences of the Gaelic learned class served several purposes: a storage place for official documents; a defensive residence for the ollamh and his kin; a display of prestige; and in the case of residences attached to a school, a solitary place in which to produce manuscripts.

One of the last known connections between Knockanalban and the Meic Bhruidheadha occurs at the time of the Irish Confederacy when ‘Gillebriddy mc Brody’ (Giolla Brighde) of Knockanalban was involved in an attack on English settler John Ward in 1642. By the mid-seventeenth century aristocratic patronage had almost disappeared and few of the professional families continued to maintain schools and learning. From around this time Clann Bhruidheadha virtually disappear from the historical record.

**Doonogan estate**

In 1615 Doonogan was owned by Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruidheadha. Doonogan probably can be regarded as primus inter pares among Clann Bhruidheadha residences, serving as a more conventional residence for Tadhg mac Daire, although uncertainty exists as to how long he held it. In 1835 Eugene Curry observed that the castle stood as a ruin and local memory identified it as a Clann Bhruidheadha possession:

> Dun Ógán: castle partly ruined stands convenient to Milltown Malbay. It with its appurtences was the patrimony of the celebrated McBrodins. The last I believe [of] whom was thrown down the steep precipice on which the castle stands, by one of Cromwell’s soldiers.

Today only scattered masonry abounds the site which commands an impressive view over west Clare. Tadhg mac Daire’s ownership of Doonogan, and the five quarters of land in the surrounding vicinity along with a rent free estate at Knockanalban, unequivocally

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201 On this family see Brian Ó Dálaigh, ‘The Uí Mhaolchornaí of Thomond’, *Studia Hibernica*, xxxv (2009/2010), pp 45-68.


203 Various reference may be found in O’Mollony, *Anam Charaí: Examined Apologetici*, pp 124-132. Brodins lists their marriage alliances with notable lineages such as the Meic Comma, Meic Fhlanachdha and Uí Chriád, among others.


205 *Annals of the Four Masters, sub anno* 1595.


207 Petworth House Archives, MS C.27.A.60, Ibrickan Survey [1615].

208 Extract of a letter from Mr E. Curry to George Smith Esq, College Green, Dublin, dated at Limerick 8 July 1835 (RIA, ‘Ordnance Survey Ireland: Co Clare Extracts’, vol 2, pp 510-11). I wish to thank Brian Ó Dálaigh for supplying this reference.
demonstrates his high status. We may therefore observe Lettermoylan as one linchpin in a wider network of landholding that included Knockanalban and Doonogan, all of which were corporate to the lineage.

**Slieve Callan: a ritual landscape**

There is little doubt that Slieve Callan and its environs constituted a ritual landscape that extended north to the Burren. This landscape which has traces of human occupation that stretch back to the megalithic also contains important medieval sites. These sites would have served as ‘antique identifiers’ that help justify the landholding claims of members of the learned class, including rent free lands. As Katherine Simms has pointed out, the estates of the bardic poets were often located in areas with symbolic meaning, and that sequestered sites were especially sought to convey a sense of retreat from the world and where learning could be pursued. These sites were integrated into a territorial matrix that often encompassed wilderness and natural beauty, along with productive grazing and pasture land.

Often the estates of the learned class were arranged near or on inauguration sites and the mensal land of local dynasties. Such sites often coincided with anciently used places of burial, monastic foundations and megalithic tombs. Many of these features are found around Slieve Callan suggesting that the Clann Bhruaideadhna estates were arranged similarly. The solitary Ogham inscription of unknown antiquity on the southern slope of Slieve Callan, and the now destroyed cromlech that situated next to Lough Boolynagreana, along with a megalithic tomb at Knockalassa, serve as examples. It might also be relevant to note the folklore tradition that links the Ogham stone to the key of the submerged city of Kilstophen (Cill Stíopháin) which was reputedly hidden at the bottom of Lough Boolynagreana, other variants place the key under the Ogham stone and buried with Conán. Other ritual markers that are found on the Meic Bhruaideadhna estate include the oratory church at Lettermoylan near the present Mount Callan House, and the status of the church land there constituting part of Dysert termon. The occupation of Knockanalban crannóg may also be seen in the same context; reoccupation of a site of considerable antiquity would be congruent with a learned family wanting a symbolic link with a territory's antiquities.

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210 MacNeill, *Festival of Lughnasa*, p. 197. The presence of the cromlech was recalled by Prof. Brian O’Looney who visited the site in 1859.

211 According to Lewis’s Topographical Dictionary there existed two small wedge tombs in proximity to the one seen today at Knockalassa and also the remains of a stone *rath*. Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (second edition, London, 1837) p. 90.

212 Macnamara, ‘The O’Douveres of Cahernacnaughten, Burren, Co. Clare’, (1912-13), p. 153. Macnamara cogently noted that the Ogham stone was close to where the ‘McGrodin family’ once lived and may be attributed to them as a scholastic exercise, perhaps erected in commemoration of Conán. He considered that if such a tradition existed it was likely they who were acquainted with early manuscripts and histories and had the wherewithal to inscribe archaic Ogham characters. Ibid., p. 186.

213 On this view of the tradition see the letter written by F.W. Burton Esq., Clifden, dated April 1785 which relates local traditions about an ‘enchanted key’ interred with Conán. *The Dublin Philosophical Journal, and Scientific Review*, May 1826, p. 144.

214 Edward Worth, Bishop of Killaloe (1660-1669), groups Lettermoylan as part of the termon of Dysert. See ‘MS 1777, Typescript copy of a survey of lands in the diocese of Killaloe made for Bishop Worth, 1661’, transcribed by (Rev) James D. Leslie, National Library of Ireland, 1936, pp 31-3.
It may be significant that the Meic Bhruaidheadh estate around Doonogan in Ibrickan situated close to the medieval territorial boundary with Uí Chormaic, the demarcation of which lay just east of Doolough. The allocation of lands to the professional class often comprised boundary lands, a point that can also be seen in the location of church sites and high status residences. Lettermoylan was located on the farthest western reaches of termon Dysert bordering Kilmurry-Ibrickan parish. Estates located on the boundary between territories served various functions including barriers of sanctuary and places of assembly; and as can be observed with Lettermoylan were usually coterminal with parochial and termon divisions. From this view the location of estates of the learned class which often comprised termon land frequently coincided with territorial boundaries. These factors cannot be discounted when considering Clann Bhruaidheadh’s landholding.

**Lettermoylan’s division into townlands**

Little primary material is available for Lettermoylan during the eighteenth century; only from the early nineteenth century does sufficient material exist. Slieve Callan is mentioned only in passing in a letter dating from around c.1699-1703 by Sir Donough O’Brien of Dromoland regarding allegations that he was a Jacobite sympathizer. Records are silent on further references to the district until the mid-eighteenth century when Lettermoylan was let by the Right Rev. Nicholas Synge, Bishop of Killaloe, (1746-1771) to his grandson George Synge of Rathmore in King’s County. In 1844 George Synge’s son Lt. Col. Charles Synge, built a small house known as the ‘The Court’ at Lettermoylan (now Ballynoe). According to the will of Lt. Col. Charles Synge who died in 1854, Lettermoylan passed into the proprietorship of the Synge family sometime before that time:

I own and am possessed of the four known [sic] as the four plough lands of Lettermoylan Mount Callan in the barony of Inchiquin and Co. Clare held under lease from the Bishop of Killaloe and the inheritance having been purchased and from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of Ireland.

Mount Callan House was built on the site of ‘The Court’ in 1874 by a relative also named Col. George Charles Synge. The house and property went to the inheritance of the Tottenham family in 1891, and has remained in the possession of that family to the present day. The division of Lettermoylan into townlands occurred after it was surveyed and mapped in July 1842. The map shows how Lettermoylan was divided and parcelled, and assigned to smaller denominations.

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214 The letter mentions Cloonanaha: ‘Clonchaha...there is a little patch of mountain near Shiewecallane’, see Ainsworth, *Inchiquin Manuscripts*, p. 270 [no. 882].

215 After 1634 the leasing of church lands was restricted to 21 years at not less than half ‘the true value’ (i.e. the market rent). Many bishops circumvented this restriction by issuing a new lease every year at a renewal fine, resulting in much of the bishops’ income being derived from renewal fines. Examples exist of Church of Ireland bishops making long term leases of church land to their children, such as Archbishop Charles Agar of Cashel. I thank Kenneth Nicholls for his advice on this point.


217 The author wishes to thank Jane Tottenham of Mount Callan House for providing the will for inspection.

218 Map and survey of Lettermoylan as now divided for the Messrs. Synge... situate in the barony of Inchiquin, Co. Clare. Surveyed by Michael and Peter O’Loghlin. Folio sheet vellum, coloured, July, 1842” (National Library of Ireland, Manuscript Map. 21 F. 75 (1)).
‘Map and survey of Lettermoylan as now divided for the Messrs. Synge’..., July, 1842

From this map it can be seen that Lettermoylan comprised 1,833 acres and, judging from the townlands that bounded the area, it encompassed much of present day Ballynoe, Glennageer, Magherabaun and Knockalassa. Further proof that Lettermoylan was originally joined with Glennageer and neighbouring townlands may be obtained in the *Ordnance Survey Name Books*, (1840-42) which categorically show that Lettermoylan and Glennageer constituted one land unit, though the former was by that time part of an enlarged Glennageer:

Glannager (*Gleann na g-caor*, valley of the berries) townland property of Edward Synge Esq. It consists chiefly of mountain pasture and bog with different stripes of arable and tillage interspersed there throughout. A road also runs along its S.E boundary. Names in this townland – Subdivision Lettermoylan, Lough Boolynagreena, Lackcommane, Commanes, Knock[?], Cullane, Mount Callan or Slieve Callane. 222

221 The modern size of these townlands is: Ballynoe (524 acres); Glennageer (844 acres); Magherabaun (624 acres) and Knockalassa (935 acres). In total these townlands comprise 2,927 acres.

Lettermoylan does not feature by the time of the Griffith Valuation in 1855. By the 1870s the Synge estate at Slieve Callan consisted of 2,940 acres, much of it comprised the divisions of Lettermoylan: i.e. Ballynoe, Glennageer, Magherabaun and Knockalassa.

Concluding Remarks
Lettermoylan of Clann Bhrauaideadhacha was located on the eastern slope of Slieve Callan. Encompassing much of modern-day Ballynoe and Glennageer, as well as Knockalassa and Magherabaun, Lettermoylan existed as a townland until the 1840s. Historically Lettermoylan constituted episcopal mensal land and was located on the western border of termon Dysert. It is curious that Clann Bhrauaideadhacha were ecclesiastical tenants both at Lettermoylan and at Moynoe in east Co. Clare where a branch of the family pursued native learning. These facts may support the view that Clann Bhrauaideadhacha shared, along with other members of the Gaelic learned orders, a pre-reform connection to the Irish monastic church. This would account for them being settled on church land and being a literati lineage.

The Meic Bhrauaideadhacha chronicler-poets did not leave us with a genealogy documenting their history; instead we are left with the imprint of their literature in bardic poetry and the physical remains of their residences at Knockanlban crannóg and Doonoghan towerhouse. We are also reminded of their former presence by the ruined foundation of the oratory church of Mac Creiche, which can be seen perched above the stream that flows down the Leitir of Slieve Callan.

Appendix One
Calendar of entries relating to Lettermoylan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1580</td>
<td>Tadhg mac Daire McHic Bhrauaideadhacha's poem to the Clanrickard Bourkes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1585</td>
<td>Teige McRory [recte McDary/macDaire?] of ‘Littermaelin’ witness to the Composition of Connacht.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1591</td>
<td>Pardon issued to ‘Gilabride Mc Brodyne, of Letter Mellen’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Macon Ó Cléirigh, ollamh to Ó Domhnull died while visiting ‘Leitir-Maelain’ in Thomond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Pardon issued to ‘Shane mcBrien Mc Brody, of Litternewlan yeoman’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1614</td>
<td>Bishop of Killaloe’s petition to the Lord Deputy mentions ‘houses and mancons [sic] within the half quarter of land called Littermolane within the parish of Dysert’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>Teige McBroodyn and Gillibride McBroodyn released to the Bishop of Killaloe Lettermoylan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>Great Office Inquisition for Inchiquin records Teig McBrodin of ‘Lettermollan’ and Bernard McBrodin of ‘Lettermollan’ (with a strike through it and substitutes ‘Sonagh’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>‘Thady Mac Brody de Lettermoeolane’ in the inquisition into the lands of Donough O’Brien, fourth Earl of Thomond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>Great Office Inquisition for Inchiquin, Teig McBrodin as a juror and of ‘Lettermollan’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1636</td>
<td>Conchohar Mac Bruaideadhcha, son of Maoilín Óg of Chill Chaoid[h]e and Leitir Mheaolain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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223 Griffith Valuation of Ireland, 1855, Parish of Inagh.
Littermoylan recorded as bishopric land in the *Books of Survey and Distribution*.

1685 Lettermoelane appears on Petty’s County Map of 1685.

1689 John Roane, Bishop of Killaloe’s letter to Sir Donat O’Brien which mentions ‘Lyttermoylane’.

1740s-50s Littermoylan let on a 999 years lease by the Right Rev. Nicholas Synge, Bishop of Killaloe, (1746-1752) to his grandson, George Synge.

1842 Littermoylan mapped for Lt. Col. Charles Synge and surveyed as consisting 1,833 acres.

1843 Littermoylan appears in the Tithe Applotment Books for Inagh parish under the designation ‘Littermoylan Glumageer’ (*recte* Glanagee).

1844 Lt. Col. Charles Synge, erected a house known as the ‘The Court’ with a slate roof at Littermoylan.

1855 Littermoylan falls into disuse as a land denomination and is subsumed by the denominations Glennageer and Ballynoe which are instead recorded in the Griffith Valuation.

1874 Colonel George Charles Synge builds Mount Callan House on the site of ‘The Court’.

### Appendix Two

**Parishes associated with Clann Bhruaideadh**

Inagh Parish

Kilmurry-Ibrickan Parish

Dysert Parish

Moynoe parish