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TRADITIONS OF GLIN & ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

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Many years ago I was asked by Fr E. Cahill, S.J., to try and record the traditional lore which still survived in Glin parish. He had met some of the last native Irish speakers of that district and was amazed to learn how much they knew about the history and customs of west Limerick and north Kerry. He was not surprised that much of their tradition dealt with the knights of Glin, because Fr Dinneen had told him that the knights were great favourites of the Irish bards and that several Irish poems dealing with that ancient family were still extant. Those old people did not question the knight's right to a high social status, for they knew that in the past his ancestors had sacrificed their lives and fortunes in defence of faith and fatherland. In their eyes the knight of Glin, like the O'Neill or MacCarthy Mór, was a great man and one to be honoured. They still preserved the names which their ancestors gave the knights, such as Éamann na gCath, Tomás Spáinneach, Gearóid na gCapall and Ridire na mBan.

Some of the old folk whom I consulted were born as long ago as 1821. The best known of these were Michael Mulvihill and Rory MacSheehy. Ellen Guiney and Ellen O'Connor were born in the parish of Murher in 1822 and were full of anecdotes about the Kerry faction fighters, whom they referred to as savages and murderers. I soon discovered that remembrance of the past had more to do with one's temperament than with one's actual age. One man who was born in 1830 could tell me all about the local gentry, their horses and hounds and amorous exploits. Nothing else of the past interested him. Another man, known as Pats an Éithigh, well merited his cognomen, for he was a consummate artist, whose gift for plausible explanation was only exceeded by his amazingly subtle mendacity. Patsy Hanrahan, who was born in 1840, was undoubtedly the greatest *seanchaí* in the parish of Glin. He told me that at one time Glin was part of Kerry. This I found hard to believe until I later discovered that the earliest mention of Glin states that it was in 'Críoch Ciarraige'. A branch of the Déise of Clíu an Mhaighe, known as the Corbraighe Luachra had settled in Kerry. They were a vassal people whose district lay about Glin and from them Glin got its name, Gleann Corbraighe.¹ It was also known as Gleann

1. E. Hogan, *Onomasticon goedelicum* (Dublin and London 1910), s.v. glenn corbraighe; *Cork Hist. & Arch. Soc. Jn.* 49 (1944) 109.

Eannaigh, Baile Puirt an Ridire and Gleann an Ridire.

Rory MacSheehy claimed descent from Seán Óg Fitzgerald, dealt with on p. 80 below. Rory was never at fault in genealogical matters. He had a phenomenal memory and could easily go back seven generations. Most of the old people I knew could only trace back to their great-grandparents. This would represent the average limit of human experience. Rory was a relative of James Fitzgerald of Newcastle West, who married Anne Woods. Three of this man's daughters married three Murray brothers of Balliston. One of these women was the grandmother of Professor Gilbert Murray and that great Gael, John M. Murray, the governor of New Guinea, a man who had a passionate love of the Irish language.

Most of my informants referred to those from whom they got their tradition in their young days. They all mentioned Morgan Geoghegan as being the ultimate authority on local tradition beyond whom there was no appeal. Morgan was a meresman and served in that capacity in the Glin manor court. He belonged to the 'Caol' branch of the Geoghegans, who were at one time one of the most famous families in west Limerick. In medieval times that family gave many prominent priests to the Church, one of whom, Fr Philip, was vicar in Glin.² Later we find a Philip Geoghegan practising as a doctor in Kenry. The following epitaph on him has survived:

Ag so an t-inead 'na bhfuil Pilib mac Seáin 'na lui,
fear ná crithfeadh roim dhuine dá ghráinneacht gnaoi.
Ba lia cuir agus clis chun an bháis do chloí;
ach d'imigh sin uile is ní thiocfaidh go brách arís.³

Morgan used to say that at one time his ancestors owned much territory between the Deel and the White River. This was no exaggeration, for the Fiants and other records refer to them as gentlemen and yeomen and large landowners. Many of them played an active part in the Elizabethan and subsequent wars in Ireland. Early in the last century we find Thomas Geoghegan teaching school in Glenduff in the parish of Monagay. He was a well-known Irish scribe and poet and was probably a member of the 'Caol' Geoghegan branch of the family, as he refers to himself as 'Bard caol an

2. *Archivium Hibernicum* 10 (1943) 154 §120 n; for further references to this family see *ibid.*, 117 §38 n.

3. Cf. T. Ó Rathile, *Búrdáin bheaga* (Dublin etc. 1925) no. 186.

Ghleanna Duibh' in one of his manuscripts.⁴

THE KNIGHTS OF GLIN

The earliest tradition I can find about Glin went back to 1569, when the knight, Thomas Fitzgerald, was barbarously executed in Limerick.⁵ His mother, who was present at the execution, seized his head when he was beheaded and drank his blood. She then collected the parts of his dismembered body and put them in a linen sheet. When she set out for home with her precious burden she was followed by an immense concourse, including one hundred keening women. Somewhere east of Foynes some soldiers tried to seize the corpse and in the fight that followed many people were slain. The body was interred later in Lislaughtin Abbey in the tomb of his relative, the O'Connor Kerry.

There was nothing vague, however, in the tradition that was handed down about the massacre that took place in Cloonahard on 12 March 1580.⁶ When Pelham in his pursuit of the earl of Desmond was encamped near Shanid castle, a man named MacShane approached him and said that he would lead him to the Cloonahard woods, where over four hundred people had fled for safety. MacShane, who had been a gallowglass in Desmond's army, was a man of repellent features and revolting habits. He fell in love with a girl named O'Dowd, who refused to have anything to do with him. The O'Dowds were tenants of the Walls of Dunmoylan and lived at Balliston, a townland with an interesting history. They also sought refuge in Cloonahard. When Pelham's troops, led by MacShane, entered the wood they found the people clustered together, kneeling in prayer. When the slaughter began some of the young people fled and escaped. One of these was Philip Geoghegan, the ancestor of Morgan whom I have already mentioned. Philip's sister, who was married to Hugh Cummane, climbed an ivy-clad tree and escaped detection. She witnessed the merciless slaughter of her friends and relatives, which was all over in a short time. Only one person's life was spared. That was the O'Dowd girl, whom MacShane had taken prisoner. Pelham's troops soon vacated the woods and pushed on towards Glin. MacShane returned a little

4. RIA 12 F 3, p. 33. Published references to Geoghegan will be found in the following: *Second report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry* [Parliamentary Papers 1826-7 X11, Dublin 1826] 1076-7; *An Claidheamh Soluis* 16/12/1911; *N. Munster Antiq. Jn.* 2 (1941) 167-9; P. J. Dowling, *The hedge schools of Ireland* (revised ed., Cork 1968) 54.
5. *Cal. State Papers Ire. 1509-73*, 404.
6. *Cal. Carew MSS* ii. 236.

later, accompanied by his prisoner, and began to search the clothes of the dead. While doing so he laid aside his battle-axe. As he was bending down his prisoner seized the weapon and with one swift blow she clove his skull. She later married Dermot Dore, who also escaped from the carnage. She became a legendary figure and many people in that locality were proud to claim descent from her.

The tradition about the siege of Glin castle differs in many respects from the facts as given by Carew in *Pacata Hibernia* (pp. 63-6). We do know that tradition can be a completely distorting mirror, but the popular memory of a local event such as a battle, siege or massacre would be more vivid and more lasting and in essence more trustworthy than Carew's narrative, who was prejudiced and gives a complete travesty of the facts.

The garrison of the castle, according to tradition, was divided into two sections, one of which was commanded by Dónall na Searrach Culhane and the other by Tadhg Dore. Before the siege began, Carew, who had the knight's child as hostage, sent an order to the knight to surrender the castle at once or else he would blow the child out of the mouth of the cannon. The knight's answer was remembered but can only be rendered here by algebraic symbols: 'Gread leat. Tá X go meidhreach fós agus Y go briomhar. Is fuiriste leanbh eile do gheiniúint'.

The assault on the castle then began under the command of Capt. Flower but was beaten back with slaughter by the defenders. Three brothers named Giltenan played a heroic part in repulsing the attack and slew some of the best of Flower's men. Carew called up fresh reinforcements, which he placed under the leadership of Turlough Roe MacMahon, who lived at Colmanstown castle, Co. Clare, almost opposite Glin. Turlough was a man of evil reputation who had already committed many dreadful crimes against his own kith and kin and against the Irish people at large. He was the father of the celebrated Máire Ruadh MacMahon. He is referred to in a poem of the time as

Traolach Ruadh an fhíll agus an éithigh
do mhairbh a bhean agus a leanbh in éineacht.⁷

The second assault also failed, but Turlough was determined to carry it through, for he hated with a hatred which evil men are known to feel towards those they have mortally injured. In the meantime

7. Reference mislaid.

the cannonading had played havoc with the defences of the castle. In the third attempt MacMahon was able to move in a large body of men who, after a gallant defence by the garrison, succeeded in capturing the castle. The Giltenans, Tadhg Dore and his brother, and Dónall Culhane and two of his sons were slain in the final defence. Some of the garrison tried to escape by jumping into the water surrounding the castle, but only three men succeeded in getting away. These were Mahon Dillane, Lewy O'Connor and Dónall Beag Culhane (whose father was slain in the last defence of the castle).

Such was the traditional account of the siege as handed down through eight or nine generations. The old people had some vague traditions about Captain Flower, who was one of the ablest and most ruthless of the Elizabethan soldiers who served in Ireland. He tried everything in his power to lay hands on Honora MacCarthy, the wife of the knight, Éamann na gCath. Some time previously he had invaded Carbery, the territory of her brother, Florence MacCarthy Reagh, and few things in the annals of warfare can equal the atrocities he committed there. He slew men, women and children and laid the whole district waste. Returning from this expedition he was severely wounded in an encounter with the followers of MacCarthy. This may account for the terrible scourge of treacherous hatred with which he pursued this helpless woman.

Readers will be surprised to learn that Dr Robin Flower, that redoubtable Gaelic scholar, was a direct descendant of this man: 'mór idir na haimsearaibh'.⁸

After the siege the knight, Éamann na gCath, went north and joined Red Hugh O'Donnell. He took part in the memorable march to Kinsale accompanied by some of his followers from Glin. All took part in the battle that followed. In that encounter the knight was wounded and was only saved from death by Donogh Costello, a member of a remarkable family that fostered the children of the knights of Glin for many generations.

A garrison of twenty-one men was left in the castle after the siege under the command of Nicholas Mordant, a depraved savage whose lust for blood was appalling and insatiable. Mordant first appears in 1580 serving under Sir Nicholas Malby in Connacht. There he was guilty of the most fiendish atrocities. He butchered in cold blood a son of Grace O'Malley and a five-year-old son of Brian na Múrtha O'Rourke. He massacred over two hundred people at Carrick

Molgreny, and two years later we find him in Thomond, where the Four Masters tell us that he put to death in an ignoble manner Donogh, son of the earl of Thomond, and his wife, Eleanor Fitzgerald, daughter of the knight of Glin. He also took part in the murder of the Spaniards in west Clare, some of the survivors of the Armada. At the invitation of Bingham he was back in Connacht in 1586. A colony of Scotch settlers had taken up land in Ardnaree under the leadership of two brothers of Inghean Dubh, the mother of Red Hugh O'Donnell. Bingham and Mordant with a large force surrounded the settlement at night and slew men, women and children.⁹

The old people spoke as if an inhuman and implacable doom overhung Glin parish while Mordant was there, and they told dreadful stories of the satanic violence with which this sadistic monster savaged the whole district. Many of the Giltenans fell victims to his insane and murderous hate and it was said that he used to defecate and micturate on the corpses of those he had slain.

At that time there was living in Glin a famous *bean feasa* named Ellen Dore, a woman of great holiness and remarkable psychic powers. She advised the people not to seek sanctuary in Kilmurrily church, as she had a dream that she saw the church in flames and the people being murdered there. Some, despite her warning, went there and met their deaths at the hands of Mordant.

He was known as An Fámaire Riabhach and became a bogey man. When people wanted to frighten wayward children they used to say 'chút an Fámaire Riabhach'. His tyranny became so unendurable that finally the people were forced to take action against him. He was even more anxious than Flower to capture the knight's wife, and he was told that she used to take refuge at night in a wood near the Glin river. He approached the wood at night with his followers, whom he ordered to enter the wood and search for her. There they were ambushed and cut to pieces. Mordant fled on horseback when he realised what had happened. A few years later we find him in Clare presiding over an inquisition dealing with MacNamara lands. He then disappears from history.

After the battle of Kinsale the knight and his wife and family fled to Kerry and stayed with the Fitzmaurices of Lixnaw. There they were nearly captured by the Listowel garrison. They then retired to the fastnesses of Brosna, where many good friends guarded them

8. *Irish Press*, 23rd Jan. 1946, p. 4.

9. Mordant's career has been traced by P. Walsh, *Irish chiefs and leaders* (Dublin 1960) 292-5. For the Ardnaree massacre see *Éigse* 5 (1947) 149-55.

zealously until the knight's estates were restored to him in 1603.¹⁰

Éamann na gCath was succeeded by his son, Tomás Spáinneach, who with the sons of other Irish chieftains was at school at Compostella. This man played no part in the wars that followed 1641 because of ill-health. There was very little tradition about him, but the state papers and other historical sources tell us a great deal about him and about his nephew, Gearóid na gCapall, who succeeded him. This material will be dealt in a history of Glin parish, as I am only concerned with traditional matter here. Although Tomás Spáinneach was an innocent man his estates were confiscated and given to Barker. Several other claimants tried to get them but they eventually were given to Gearóid na gCapall. This man was the son of John Fitzgerald and Honoria O'Connor, a daughter of Seán Cathach, the O'Connor Kerry, who died in 1640.

Three of Gearóid's brothers perished in the Cromwellian wars. One of them, Seán Óg, married a Miss Hickey of Dunmoylan. His descendants were known as the Ridire Fitzgeralds. The Glin branch of this family became known as the Regan Fitzgeralds, as one of them married a relative of Tim Regan of Ardagh, well-known Irish scribe and teacher.¹¹ Margaret Fitzgerald (Mrs John Dillane) is now the last survivor of this ancient family.

The only tradition I could find about Gearóid na gCapall was very meagre. That referred to his exploits as a horseman and a duellist. He married Joan O'Brien of Carrigogunnell, a daughter of Donogh O'Brien, whose vast estates, including thirty castles, were siezed by the Cromwellians. Some of this property was restored to Donogh's son, but that man's son, Dónall Óg, who played a prominent part in the Williamite wars, was finally dispossessed and the lands of his ancestors passed into alien hands. He then settled in Glin with his aunt, Joan O'Brien, the wife of Gearóid na gCapall. Some of his descendants still reside in Glin parish.

The knight Gearóid had two sons, Tomás Geanncach, who succeeded him, and Seán na gComhrac, a man whose fame as a duellist was even greater than that of Centy O'Rourke or the intrepid Baron Keating of Nicholastown.

The new knight married Mary Fitzgerald, a woman who was known as the 'Baintiarna' and who played a great part in the affections and memory of the people. She was a daughter of Éamann Fitzgerald of Castlemartyr, who belonged to a junior branch of the Seneschals of Imokilly. Her mother, Cathleen Bourke, was a

10. S. Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Ireland* I (London 1837) 663.

11. *Cat. Ir. MSS in Royal Irish Academy* vii (1932) 888-90, 902.

daughter of John Bourke of Cahermoyle. Dáibhi Ó Bruadair wrote Cathleen's elegy. John Bourke gave Mary Fitzgerald a substantial dowry and some time after 1701 she married Tomás Geanncach. She and her husband were noted for their hospitality and generosity and it was said that in their time no one knew hunger and poverty in Glin parish. Their home was also a meeting place for the bards. Aogán Ó Rathaille wrote one of his best known elegies for the knight's son, Gerald. When Tomás Geanncach died in 1732, Aindrias Mac Cruitin, Dónall Ahern and other poets bewailed him in verse.¹²

The Baintiarna's son, John, became a Protestant in 1730. His mother knew nothing of his perversion, but at the time she went to the priest and told him of a remarkable dream she had. Here are her words as given to me by Patsy Hanrahan: 'Deineadh taibhreamh dom trí oícheanta i ndiaidh a chéile. Cheapas go rabhas ag Aifreannach go raibh an altóir iompaithe agus a cúl leis an bpobal'. The priest answered 'Tá an creideamh díolta'. Patsy, however, 'D'iompaigh sé a chasóg ach iompó bréige ab ea é, mar d'fhaidilís don tsean-chreideamh go bhfuair sé bás'. This John was a poet and has left a fine poem which he addressed to Eleanor, the daughter of Seán Láidir O'Connor Kerry. He knew many of the Munster poets of his day and seems to have befriended them all. He died on 10 August 1737. Several poets, including Mícheál (mac Peadair) Ó Longáin, Éamann de Bháil, Ióseph Ó Caoimh, Liam Inglis, Dónall Ahern and Séamas Fitzgerald, wrote elegies on him.¹³

His mother, the Baintiarna, had settled some of her Fitzgerald relatives in Glin parish, where many of their descendants reside today. One of these, named Muiris na Fallainghe, was a native of Gortroe near Rathcormack. He was a brother of the poet James Fitzgerald who wrote an elegy on John Fitzgerald. Some time earlier we find James asking protection from the knight of Glin:

Tabhair cúntas nó cúinse dam féin
do spiúnfas na néalta so im cheann,
an bhfuil cumhdach id dhún dam nó réim
nó an bhfionntar gan bhaol dam dul ann.¹⁴

12. *Ibid.*, general index, s.n. FitzGerald (Thomas Geange).

13. *Ibid.*, s.n. Mac Gearailt (Seán †1737) and Mac Gearailt (Sir Seán); R. Ó Foghludha, *Cois na Brlde* (Baile Átha Cliath 1937) xii; idem, *Cois Caoimh-reath-aighe* (Baile Átha Cliath 1946) 14; see also T. C. Croker, *The keen of the south of Ireland* (London 1844) 43-5. He conformed on 23 August 1730 (M. Lenihan, *Limerick; its history and antiquities* . . . (Dublin 1866) 373).

14. P. Ua Duinnín, *Anhráin Eoghain Ruaidh Ul Shúilleabháin* (Baile Átha Cliath 1907) 163.

Another poem dealing with the abduction of the knight John by Cliodna, the famous Munster fairy, has been attributed to James Fitzgerald. This poem has been studied by Brian Ó Cuiv.¹⁵ Some verses of it were remembered in Glin parish.

After the death of the knight John in 1737, he was succeeded by his brother, Edmund, who was a Catholic. A younger brother, Richard, became a Protestant and tried to oust Edmund, but the latter, in order to save the estate, also conformed. It was at this time Mícheál (mac Peadair) Ó Longáin, who was the knight's agent, left Glin.¹⁶

The last of the Baintiarna's sons to become knight of Glin was Thomas, who married in 1755, Mary Bateman, 'a charming young lady with a fortune of £3,000'.^{16a} There was not much tradition about this man as he led a quiet life and devoted much of his time to the welfare of his people.

As the Geraldine blood of the knights of Glin became diluted through marriages with planter stock, they inevitably tended to become progressively more and more loyal and to abandon the ways of their fathers. The knight John Bateman, who succeeded his father, Thomas, was intensely loyal and from what I could gather he considered that failure to feel loyal towards England was a crime which merited the direst penalties and eternal damnation. He played an important part in the Volunteer movement of his time and was held in high esteem by the leaders of that movement.

The knight John Bateman was succeeded by his son, John Fraunceis, who was known as Ridire na mBan. This man was the subject of many an anecdote, some of which were doubtless apocryphal. He was fostered by the Costellos of Killeany and attended a famous classical school which was conducted by Éamann Kiely in Glin. Later the young knight graduated with honours in Cambridge University, but he was not, as Dr Johnson said of a Scottish laird 'tamed into insignificance by an English education'. He never lost that fine patriarchal courtesy, generosity and good manners so well exemplified by his ancestors. Like his father he was loyal and an upholder of law and order. Notwithstanding that he was the darling of the local bards, and one of these, Muiris Ó

15. *Béaloides* 22 (1953) 102-111.

16. T. Ó Murchadha, *Féilscribhinn Torna* (ed. S. Pender, Cork 1947) 11. Richard and Edmund conformed on 17 July 1740 and 18 October 1741 respectively (Lenihan, *op. cit.*, 374).

16a. *Cork Journal*, 6 Jan. 1755.

Céirín, a Kerry poet, has left us some interesting poetry on him. In one of his poems Muiris refers to the knight as:

Fear croí, fear tapa, fear calma tréan,
fear claiomh nó bata in am catha nár staon,
fear caoin, fear cneasta, gan ghangaid 'na mhéin;
do bhochtaibh do réifeadh gach géibhinn is daoirse,
is go dtabharfadh súd saor iad gan bhaochas ón mbinse.¹⁷

Glin always seems to have cast a spell over Kerry men and Muiris Ó Céirín was no exception, as can be seen from the following verse:

A Ghleann úd do-bheirim an barr duit
thar a bhfeaca ná ar tharlaidh liom fós,
is ann atá na comharsain ba shoineanta grámhar
is ba mhaith os cionn cláir i dtí' an óil.¹⁸

The knight's generous impulses, his kindly and sympathetic nature, endeared him to the people and were long remembered with gratitude. His weakness for the fair sex got him into trouble with Fr Daniel O'Sullivan, a great priest who took an active part in everything that concerned the welfare of his people. Although these men were at first bosom friends, Fr Daniel did not hesitate to denounce the knight's amorous exploits, which were causing grave scandal in the parish. This led to a lawsuit which is described by Archdeacon Begley in his history of Limerick.¹⁹ The knight was not the only culprit. Two catholic middlemen seem to have been the worst offenders. The posturings and posings and pathetic attempts of those men to be accepted as gentry were remembered and made fun of. The knight suffered from alternating moods of hilarity and moroseness and for that reason Fr Daniel called him Seón Gruama. Some time after the law-case the knight had installed a new lover, known as the 'caillichín', in a lodge he had built for her near the catholic church. On the following Sunday he was parading this girl in front of the lodge within full view of the people, who were awaiting Fr Daniel's arrival from Loghill. The people were eager to see the priest's reaction to the knight's behaviour. When he arrived he said nothing at first. He had a habit of saying a line of poetry to one he addressed and expecting the other man to finish the verse. Turning to Tim Costello he said:

17. National Library of Ireland ms G 494, p. [85].

18. Irish Folklore Commission school ms 432, p. 300.

19. J. Begley, *The diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the present time* (Dublin etc. 1938) 496-8.

Sin é an tigh a thóg Seáinín
and Tim replied

mar áras geal don chaillichín,
suite go deas fé scáth na gcrann,
déanta go beacht, go láidir teann.

Fr Daniel then turned to Tomás Culhane and said:

Sin é an tigh a thóg Seón Gruama
Tomás answered

Tré ain-mhian chun cailín stuama.
Go saoraidh Dia is Muire Ógh
an chaillichín ón olc go deo.

The priest evidently did not like their efforts, for he said:

Cáinte ar na filí ach ní hiad a bhíonn ciontach,
mar ní thálann na barrailli ach an méid a bhíonn iontu.

There was more in the barrel, however, than Tim cared to take out of it, because he was a foster-brother of the knight.

DÓNALL Ó BRIAIN (AN ROINNTEOIR)

I have already referred to Daniel O'Brien of Carrigogunnel, who settled in Glin. He had only one son, Murrogh, who married Helen O'Shaughnessy. Murrogh made several vain attempts to get back his ancestral lands in Pubblebrien. He had many influential friends, including his cousin the earl of Thomond, who took him to see King George. The king promised to restore him to his patrimony if he became a Protestant. This he refused to do. Shortly after his death in 1747, his posthumous son, Dónall, was born. Dónall was variously known as Dónall an Rainneoir and Dónall an Roinnteoir. When he was a boy a bitter dispute broke out in France between the descendants of Lord Clare and those of Murchadh an Phíce, who claimed, as head of the Carrigogunnel O'Briens, to be the senior of all the O'Briens. Many people, including Bishop de Burgo and Bishop O'Brien of Cloyne took part in the controversy. Finally it was discovered that Dónall Ó Briain of Glin was the head of the O'Briens of Pubblebrien.²⁰

20. M. A. Hickson, *Selections from old Kerry records* 2nd series (London 1874) 263 ff.; J. Ainsworth (ed.), *The Inchiquin manuscripts* (Irish MSS Comm., 1961) §§570 ff. Domhnall an Roinnteoir was 74 years old in 1821, according to the census of that year (now destroyed).

Every year Dónall used to attend a pattern held at a holy well near Carrigogunnel. This incensed the local gentry who lorded it in stolen lands, for they knew that he was an object of peculiar affection, amounting almost to veneration, and that he retained a firm hold on the hearts of the people, who regarded him as the rightful owner. Those gentry threatened to flog Dónall if he did not stay away. When his cousin, Richard the knight of Glin, heard this he was determined to teach these people a lesson. He sent them all an invitation to attend the next pattern as he wanted to see them flog young O'Brien. Richard was a powerful, agile man who had a reputation as a deadly duellist. He gave his adversary an embarrassing choice of weapons, pistols at twenty paces or the short sword in a ten-foot ring. Needless to say, Dónall O'Brien's enemies stayed away from the pattern. Some of them later offered him leases of their estates, but he refused to act as a middleman.

Dónall married a Miss Cuffe, by whom he had no issue. At death he married Mary Culhane, the daughter of Mortimer C. and Mary Moore. By her he had four sons, two of whom died in infancy. One of the survivors, Patrick, had a daughter, Ellen O'Brien, who married Synan McAuliffe of Knock, Co. Clare. Several of their descendants are alive. Patrick's brother, Dónall Óg, used to say that when Ireland got her freedom the O'Briens would get back their land. There is no likelihood of that now. His grandsons do not own 'tachtadh na duirbe' (what would choke a worm) of their ancestral lands. It is still a case of 'bíodh an ruadhán agatsa agus bíodh an t-oileán agamsa'.

Before Dónall an Roinnteoir's death (in 1833) the 'gártha na laochra' was heard along the valley of the Shannon. This always heralded the death of a Carrigogunnel chieftain. His elegy was written by his brother-in-law, the present writer's ancestor, who with 'lámh chrúbach agus peann lúbach scriobh le dúthracht véarsa tútach'. Only a few verses of this poem survive. These I got from my father and are given here:

Tá Gleann an Ridire go dubhach fé mhéala
agus Pobal Uí Bhriain go huaigheach déarach
ó d'éag an faraire cumasach tréitheach,
Dónall Ó Briain d'fhuil Dáil gCais éachtaigh.
Ba chlos fén dtír gártha na laochra
agus Aoibheall ag gol go cráite céasta.
Do ghoil Ciabhán an ghrianbhean mhaordha
agus Órla mhíonla ó Chluain na Péiste.

Do ghoil an tSionainn go nimhneach fraochmhar,
 cualadh a huaill in iarthar Bhéara.
 Do ghoil an Mháigh, an Daoil agus an Sméarla,
 an Gháile gharbh agus abha na Féile.
 Tá Cnoc na Slinne fé bhrón le tréimhse
 agus Tulach glas mar a bhfuilid a ghaolta.
 Tá brata dubha ar Chnoc an Aonaigh
 agus ar Cheann Ard na seana-stoc nGaelach.

(The Órla mentioned here was the *bean sí* of the O'Shaughnessys.)

THE RISING OF 1798

The knight John Bateman was on terms of intimacy with many of the officers of the Irish Brigade in France and especially with Count Daniel O'Connell. When the Brigade was moved to England he promised Count Daniel that he would raise a regiment of men in his own district to fight the revolutionaries in France. He tried to do so but met with opposition from many quarters, especially from his brother, Gerald, who told him bluntly that England and not France was the enemy.

Later Gerald became the most prominent United Irishman in west Limerick and worked with Nicholas Sandes of Listowel in enrolling members into that society. Afterwards when the knight John Bateman heard of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's death he assembled his tenantry at Cnoc an Aonaigh and started to preach war and revolution. Fr MacDonnell intervened and told the people to go home. He told them that not long since the knight had wanted them to fight the French and now he wanted them to go unarmed and unprepared to fight the English. The meeting broke up in confusion.

When the knight Edmund became a Protestant in 1741 Micheál (mac Peadair) Ó Longáin, who had been the knight's agent, left Glin. Thirty years later, however, we find Micheál's brother, Seán, acting as agent for the knight Thomas Fitzgerald.²¹ Seán Ó Longáin (of Glenagragara) was the father of the celebrated Tom Langan, one of the best known '98 men in Munster.

Gerald Fitzgerald and Sandes had appointed Phil Cunningham of Gleann Liath, Moyvane, Bill Leonard of Aghanagan, Marcus Sheehy of Duagh and Pat Galvin as leaders in their respective parishes. Tom Langan (Captain Steel) had charge of Glin parish

21. Traditional information from Seán Ó Longáin's son, Peadar Ruadh (died 1856), who was a noted *seanchul*.

and surrounding districts. This man was of course a first cousin of Micheál Ó Longáin, who has written some poems on him.²² His father was John Langan, as already mentioned, and his mother was Ellen Culhane of Meanus.

Eventually all these men were arrested and sent to Botany Bay. Langan had narrowly escaped hanging because he refused to spy on his comrades. It was only the intervention of the knight that saved him from the gallows and got the sentence commuted to seven years' transportation in Botany Bay. He with other prisoners was put on board the convict ship *Anne*, which did not leave Cork until much later.

It took the *Anne* two hundred and forty days to reach Australia. Three of Langan's companions, Phil Cunningham, Marcus Sheehy and Bill Leonard, were also on board, as well as Fr Peter O'Neill of Ballymacoda, who had been flogged almost to evisceration in Youghal. The conditions in the ship were so appalling that a mutiny broke out. This was soon quelled by the crew, who quickly mastered the ship's guns. Marcus Sheehy, the ringleader, was shot. Langan and Cunningham were two of the most active mutineers on the *Anne*, but Fr O'Neill interceded on their behalf with the captain, who spared their lives.

All were sent to Norfolk Island, 'the hell of the doubly damned', where prisoners were flogged and dehumanised under circumstances so revolting and barbarous that many went mad and nearly all craved for death. Fr O'Neill was set free and returned to Ireland. His story has been often told and need not be repeated here.²³

A few facts about Phil Cunningham will suffice here, as I will deal with him more fully in a future issue of this journal. He was a man of great stature and commanding appearance. His whole demeanour so impressed the authorities that they took him from Norfolk Island and placed him as overseer over gangs of convicts working in Sydney. He built a house of considerable value for himself and so great was his influence over his convict workers that the authorities decided that Phil and these men should get a free pardon.

Before this was finalised, however, the convict gangs in the outer settlements, who were treated with the most fiendish brutality, had decided on an insurrection as the only means of ending their misery. They asked Cunningham to lead them, as he was a born leader of men and a man who commanded loyalty and got it. He agreed to

22. *Cat. Ir. MSS in Royal Irish Academy general index*, s.n. Ó Longáin (Tomás).

23. *Cork Hist. & Arch. Soc. Jn.* 55 (1950) 52-4.

this, for he had known some of them. (After the rising in Kerry failed he, Bill Leonard and others had gone south and with William Treacy they succeeded in rescuing prisoners who were being taken to Clonmel for execution. Later he was captured.) His plan for an insurrection in Sydney failed because the greater party of his followers did not arrive in time. Many were loaded with irons and the others lost their way in the dense forest at night. Cunningham with only a small body of men took up his position in Castle Hill, awaiting the attack of the government troops. Fr Dixon, a convict priest, arranged a truce and while parleying with the military commander, Phil Cunningham was treacherously shot from the back by Lieutenant Laycock. Many of his followers were executed later. (These events occurred in March 1804.)

Tom Langan was kept in Norfolk Island for some years, but at the request of Major Finucane he was taken to Sydney and assigned as the major's servant. Finucane, who was the governor's secretary, had some relatives in north Kerry, where some of that family had settled when the O'Briens owned the manor of Tarbert. I have seen it stated that the Finucanes were of Norman descent. That is sheer nonsense; they are Gaelic. Their stronghold was at Moy in west Clare, where the name is still common. The family came into great prominence in the eighteenth century when Judge Mathias Finucane was one of the most influential men in Ireland. This man's daughter married Major Finucane. The major and his wife treated Tom Langan with courtesy and kindness. He saved one of their children, Susan, from drowning. This girl later married Captain Hayes O'Grady and became the mother of that renowned Irish scholar, the great Standish Hayes O'Grady.

The knight of Glin had been urging the Limerick grand jury to secure the release of Tom Langan. In the Australian National Archives there are three important documents dealing with Langan's release. One of these is from Sir Robert Peel, ordering the governor of New South Wales to return Langan to his homeland. His final release came in 1817 and was secured by Captain Terence Murray of Balliston near Shanagolden, the son of a United Irishman who lost a leg in an encounter with George Leake's notorious yeomanry near Shanid.

There was great jubilation when he returned to Glin and people showered gifts on him. Shortly afterwards he got involved in a fight with a press-gang, where he lost an eye. Micheál Óg Ó Longáin refers to this in a poem he addressed to Tom Langan and says 'Do bhain Sasanach súil as i gcomhrac aonfhíor iar dteacht abhaile dhó sa

bhliain 1817'.²⁴ Rory MacSheehy and other old people remembered him and from him learned much of the information I have given here.

FACTION FIGHTING

When Fr Daniel O'Sullivan arrived in Glin in 1816 he found the parish very disturbed. Faction fights were numerous and many people were seriously injured in these encounters. This, he was informed, was due to the fact that a man named Séamas Ó Síoda had a school where he taught the art of stick-fighting and what he called the 'seven guards'. The priest was determined to put an end to this and to restore peace in the parish. Séamas had an immensely long beard and wore coarse canvas breeches. When the priest met him he asked him his name and Séamas replied 'Séamas Ó Síoda'. Fr Daniel looked him up and down, saying:

Dar t'fhéasóg fhada, a Shéamais Uí Shíoda,
is min é t'ainm ach is garbh do bhríste.

At that time many Glin people used get badly mauled and beaten on their return from Ballylongford fairs. The so-called Orangemen of that district and their catholic tenants were the aggressors. Ballylongford had the reputation of being a storm-centre, as it proved to be in the faction fights. That reputation was known far and wide. The vigorous Brosna poet, Séamas Ó Catháin, says:

Bígídh múinte i mBéal Átha Longphuirt—
tá droch-chriú ann d'réir mar chloisim—
is suarach an chúis d'iarrfaidís siúd
chun sibh do rúscadh leis na clochaibh.²⁵

William Sandes of Pymont, who was a great friend of Fr Daniel, suggested to the priest that the two factions should have one good fight in Tarbert and finish the quarrel once and for all. This was agreed on and at an appointed date both parties met in Tarbert.

24. RIA 23 C 8, p. 404.

25. From 'Barántas na casóige'; see *Studia Hibernica* 4 (1964) 200 n. 24; cf. *Gaelic Journal* 10 (1899) 21, where an apparently oral version from Ballyvourney reads 'Bídídh múinte i mBaile Mhúirne'. The present writer took down a version of this warrant in 1914 from a man named Bresnihan, who said he learned it from an Irish manuscript.

Just as the fight was going to begin, Seán Hayes of Ballynaneen left the Kerry ranks and joined the Glin side. As he did so his wife, Cáit Silvy O'Connor, 'wheeled' for the Glinsters and shouted her husband's war cry:

Seán Thaidhg láidir ó Bhaile Nóinín,
ball nár chothaigh fear meata riamh.

When Fr O'Sullivan saw one of his troops being badly beaten in the fight he rushed to his assistance and got a blow which knocked him and put a deep gash in his forehead, or as Johnny Hayes expressed it, a 'ceirí draighin', a blackthorn poultice. The matter was reported to his bishop, who turned up in Glin church on the following Sunday just as Fr Daniel was finishing Mass. The bishop said to him: 'Father O'Sullivan what cut your forehead? Have you been fighting?' He did not reply but turned his back to the bishop and asked him if he saw any cuts in the back of his head. When the bishop replied 'no', Fr Daniel turned quickly around and said in Irish 'Is fíor é sin, a Thiarna Easpaig, mar níor thugas mo chúil riamh le haon ropaire gallda'. The whole congregation applauded their beloved pastor.

The Kerry faction fighters also had poets to sing their praises and to incite them on to victory. The 'Cooleens' had a *bainfhile* named Kate Flavin who was not nearly as poetic as Nancy Keane, who sang the glories of the 'Black Mulvihills', or 'Bald Mulvihills' as their enemies derisively called them. The origin of this quarrel is unknown, but Ellen O'Connor told me that there was an ancient feud going back to the O'Brien lordship of the manor of Tarbert. The O'Briens, she said, settled many Clare families in north Kerry in lands belonging to Kerry people. This, she said, created great envy and led to many bloody fights, especially with the 'Báiní' O'Connors.

The Mulvihills originally came from the banks of the Arigna and their patrimony included Corca Eachlann, a territory much coveted by the O'Connors of Connacht. After several invasions of their territory by the O'Connors they were expelled and sought refuge in Thomond. Early in the eighteenth century the earl of Thomond gave them a lease of Knockanira, where they soon acquired wealth and influence. We find Micheál Coimin, the Clare poet, addressing a poem to Cathy Mulvihill of Knockanira in 1742, but Coimin was a noted philanderer. He tells us that Cathy sprang 'ó na curadhaibh tréana, Uí Mhaolmhichíl' and that she was 'chomh binn le smólach

nó le ceol na mban leasa sí'.²⁶

The Knockanira family had the reputation of being great fighters and men of splendid physique. One of them, Barnaby who died in 1819, settled at Shrone near Listowel.²⁷ This man was a relative of Gearóid Mulvihill, who led the Black Mulvihills in many a bloody contest. Gearóid used to stuff his hat with hay so as to lessen the impact of the blows on his head. This was well known and one day as he marched at the head of his followers in Listowel, Kate Flavin stood out and shouted:

So chúinn Gearóid an buaileam sciath
agus coca féir ar bharr a chinn.
Féach ar an ngandal ag iarraidh troda,
éist leis a' béice 'míle murdar'.

As the Cooleens advanced led by Seán Sheehy, who was known as the 'Dailc', Nancy Keane came to Gearóid's relief, saying:

Cé hé an spriósán suarach críonna
le scata dúradán 'na thimpeall?
Nach é Seán salach ó Chúil an Aoiligh,
Seán bundúndach an chinn mhóir mhiolaigh?
Go mbuaidh Dia leat, a Ghearóid ghroí,
is tusa togha agus rogha den bhuín.
Níor staon tú riamh i mbruíon, a chroí.
Buail an diabhal is gach Cúilín.

The Dailc was a formidable fighter and in the battle between the leaders Gearóid lost his hat, which was seized by Kate Flavin, who, adding insult to injury, put a hen hatching in it.

These facts as well as the little verses I got from Ellen Sheehy (Mrs Padden Mulvihill) of Scart, a woman of great natural refinement and courtesy of manners.

Gearóid Mulvihill had many notable victories and was held in high esteem even by his enemies. At that time the champions of different factions used to challenge each other to fight in order to see who was the better man, and they remind one of the Irish duellists of the last century, who believed that to engage one in single combat

26. RIA 24 B 11, p. 238. Further information on the Mulvihill family will be found in E. MacLysaght, *Irish families* (Dublin 1957) 234 and *More Irish families* (Galway & Dublin 1960) 271.

27. J. O'Hart, *Irish pedigrees* II (5th ed., Dublin 1892) 560.

was a mark not only of esteem but of affection as well. Big Jim Hartnett of Abbeyfeale sent a challenge to Gearóid, which he accepted. He took none of his followers with him.

It was a long hard fight which Gearóid eventually won. When the Abbeyfeale men saw their leader stretched on the ground they rushed at Gearóid and almost killed him. The Daile and his followers, who were present, went to his rescue and beat back his attackers. The Daile took him to his own home and got two doctors to attend him. After a long illness Gearóid recovered, but he fought no more.

The Daile's act of kindness did much to end faction fighting in the area.

POETS AND VERSIFIERS

A number of poets have been mentioned in various connections above. Some more remain to be dealt with.

The knight Thomas Fitzgerald, who married in 1755 as already stated, employed the poet Seán Bán Aerach²⁸ as his children's tutor. Seán was wayward and unpredictable and became a legendary figure in his lifetime, and that legend was still alive and vigorous when Irish was spoken in Glin parish.

He was known throughout Munster for his playing of the *ceol sí*, which it was said he learned from the fairies, whom he heard playing it in Tinnakilla fort near Ballyhahill. It seems that he attended the wedding of Seán Ruadh O'Shaughnessy and Joan Enright and on his way home he fell into a drunken sleep in the fort. This was prior to 1760, as Joan O'Shaughnessy, the eldest child of that marriage was born in that year. (Joan married in 1779 Dennis Houlihan of Flean. Pádraig Ó Cearbhaill of Abbeyfeale is the great-great-grandson of Joan and Dennis.)

Seán was a native of Tulla, Co. Clare, where his people were extensive landowners. In the following verse he refers to relatives in Cluain na Cille:

Dá mbeinnsa i dTairbeart le Seán Ó Laoghair
nó le Liam de Búrca in Áth an tSléibhe
nó i gCluain na Cille i measc mo ghaolta,
do dhéanfainn gáire a chloisfeadh an saoghal.
Is mó óigbhean bhéasach mhánla
a chuirfeadh fáilte romham is céad,

28. There is some doubt about this man's surname. O'Curry called him Ó Seanacháin (G. Petrie, *The Petrie collection of the ancient music of Ireland* I (Dublin 1855) 21), but the old people in Glin said his name was Ó Flannagáin.

is a Ridire ghlécal, do chraithfinn lámh leat
agus d'ólfaínn do shláinte gan focal bréig.

His best known song, *Seán Aerach agus an bás*, I got from Johnny Hayes of Glin. This I published subsequently in a little magazine which Archbishop Sheahan established in Sydney. Another version of the song was published by Michael Timony, who attributed it to Pádraig Daeid of Achill, a man whom he considered as superior to any of the Munster poets. Michael spent many years in Australia and on his way home to Ireland he stayed with me for some time. I finally convinced him that Pádraig Daeid was not the author of the poem.²⁹

Seán Aerach's Aisling was also known in Connacht. Professor Ó Máille got a version of it in Galway.³⁰ Only some jumbled verses of it were known in Glin. One of these is as follows:

Tamall dá rabhas sar d'iompaigh an má orm,
do gheobhainn bean i Magh an Iubhair nó i Neanntanán álainn,
bean cheanamhail cheansa, bean mhín tais gan táire,
is bean do raghadh anonn liom go Londain má ba ghá é.
Tá bean i nGleann álainn, bean bhéasach mhín,
agus in Áth an tSléibhe tá grá geal mo chroí.
Tá bean i nEascéitin is deirim gan bréag
go dtugas di taitheamh i dtosach mo shaoil.
Is go brách an fhaid a mhairfeadh ní bhacfad le héinne
ach mé fhéin is mo leanbh i bhfochair a chéile.

The course of true love did not run too smoothly for Seán in Listowel, where he describes

An bhean tí is maide aici 'om leadhbhadh sa chúl
agus an cailín deas álainn 'om ghreadadh le tlú.

In the verse quoted he refers to Magh an Iubhair, the ancient name of the parish of Kilnaughtin (Tarbert). The form given

29. M. Ó Tiománaidhe (M. Timony), *Targaireacht Bhriain Ruaidh Uí Chearbhaí . . . : Red Brian Carabine's prophecy . . .* (Dublin 1906) 69-71. For other versions see R. de Haie, *Clár litridheacht na Nua-Ghaedhíle 1850-1936* 11 (Baile Átha Cliath 1939) nos 603b, 1107, 1114, 2801; *Béalóideas* 11 (1941) 58, 17 (1947) 65-6; the version collected by the present writer was published in the *Gael* (Sydney) in 1928.

30. Unpublished. A good version of the poem was published in *An Lóchrann* Abán 1911.

by Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin in some of his manuscripts³¹ is 'paróiste Mháinníreach' which seems to be a corruption of the name.

Johnny Hayes told me that Seán Bán Aerach married a Miss Kennedy from Nantinan and that she was a relative of the Ó Longáin family, as Peadar Ó Longáin, the grandfather of Mícheál Óg, married a woman of the same name. That makes it all the more surprising that Mícheál Óg in his numerous manuscripts never left us one line of Seán Aerach's poetry.

In a poem, *An chúirt seo Sheáin Aeraigh*, our poet describes the mansion he built for himself at the point in the Clare coast, where he fled from the wrath of the Glin parish priest. Seán was supposed to have written a poem dealing with man's waning powers and the decrepitude of old age. He protested that he was not the author, but he was not believed. Later it was discovered that Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín was the author.³² The poem begins 'Is trua liom do bhás, a bhoill' and deals with a theme that is as old as literature. If we can believe that rascal Procopius, the silentaries in the court of Justinian were writing songs on the same subject for the delectation of the Empress Theodora. The poem *An chúirt seo Sheáin Aeraigh* was remembered in Glin, but nearly all had different versions of it. The best of these I got from Michael Mulvihill (Mick Mull), a man of great natural ability. Here is a verse of it:

Tá an chúirt seo Sheáin Aeraigh déanta ar an bpointe,
dhá story fé thalamh, trí scafall ar aoirde.
Níl long ag Rí Scoirse a thagann i radharc de
ná leagann a seolta le mórtas dom theaghlach.

His poem *An buachaill caol dubh* has been published by that great lover of Gaelic song, Donal O'Sullivan, who first drew my attention to O'Curry's remarks on Seán Bán Aerach.³³ His poems were known throughout Munster and were plagiarized by many dishonest versifiers. The worst of these offenders was Seán Bán Fitzgerald, who belonged to the Fitzgeralds of Crann Réidh in Pobal Uí Chaoimh. He at one time lived near Kingwilliamstown (Bally-

desmond) or Tuairín Réidh (which is the correct name of the place).³⁴

Seán Bán Aerach's restless and curious temperament prompted him to wander far and wide through Munster and he tells us of his stay in Co. Cork:

Do chaitheas seal fada i gCill Bhríde is in Eóchaill
agus deamhan beán ar an imtheacht san ná siúlfaidh an ród liom.

His playing of the *ceol sí* was long remembered and is brilliantly described by Canon Sheahan in one of his novels and by Canon O'Leary in *Séadna*. As he grew older he abandoned the playing of this music, as it had a bad effect on his health and caused him to fall into cataleptic fits. He spent the end of his life with Liam Dillane in Kinard, who was known as 'fear mór leabhar agus togha scoláire'.

Seán Bán Aerach was long remembered as the stock type of merryman and philanderer, but his mask of bohemian recklessness was mere camouflage, for beneath it all there was a loyal soul, a deep and fervent faith and an ardent love of prayer.

On the night before he died he took his bagpipes and went to the fort where he first heard the fairy music. There he played it for the last time. It was heard for miles around and as Mick Mull told me it seemed as if all the choirs of angels were playing with him. He died next day.

His funeral was the largest ever seen in the parish. It was headed by several priests and by the knight of Glin and other gentry. When the grave was closed, Fr Morgan O'Brien, who was also a poet, spoke highly of the dead man and said 'Ní fheicimid a leithéid arís'.³⁵ Years later (about 1845) another famous man, the great rebel Tom Langan (Captain Steel), was interred in the same grave in Kilfergus. When I last saw it there was neither stone nor cross to mark the last resting place of two men who brought great honour to Glin parish, nothing except a slight depression over which the winds of heaven sing a perpetual requiem.

Fr Daniel O'Sullivan was poetic and seemed to be more fluent in verse than in prose. One day he heard a woman named Brídín Neamhiúntach scolding Máire O'Sullivan, whose brother, Stephen,

31. RIA 23 G 21, p. 477; 23 N 14, p. 138; National Library G 95, p. 307; British Museum Eg. 210, f. 51.

32. This is the usual ascription in the manuscripts, but O'Grady (*Cat. Ir. MSS in British Museum* i, 606) attributes the poem to Aindrias Mac Cruitín, possibly by mistake.

33. D. O'Sullivan, *Songs of the Irish* (Dublin 1960) 126-7.

34. Information from the late Risteard Ó Foghludha (Fiachra Éilgeach). Some account of Seán Bán Fitzgerald will be found in the *Irish Echo* (Boston) June 1889.

35. Seán Bán Aerach's death must have occurred in or before the year 1796, as Fr Morgan O'Brien died in July of that year (*Freeman's Journal* 27 July 1796; *Archivium Hibernicum* 20 (1957) suppl., 300).

was hanged for the murder of the Cailín Bán. Máire's mother was insane and was found drowned in the Glin river. Both her children were mentally deficient. Turning to Brídín he said as follows:

A Bhrídín searbh dúr na mborbráite,
is náir duit masla ' thabhairt don mhnaoi bhocht chráite
atá go léanmhar dubhach ó bhuaire is náire
ó dhein an gealt coiriúil an marú gránna.
Is maith is eol duit féin nach ceart í ' cháineadh
ná í ' chiontú sa choir a dhein Stiofáinín,
nár agraídh Dia air riamh an gníomh uafásach,
mar thug sé gealtacht leis ó bhroinn a mháthar.

Fr O'Sullivan's method of recording church offerings was long remembered. This is how he announced the gifts he got towards the payment of his teachers:

Deich bpúnt is teastún ón Ridire bhfiúntach
agus dhá phingin rua ó Bhrídín neamhiúntach,
cúig gini buí ó Dhónall na féile—
ní ón ngaoith ná ón ngréin a thóg sé na tréithre—
dhá phúnt is coróin ó Liam geal de Brún,
ach dada ní bhfuairéas ó Sheáinín Gióbúin.

At that time the knight and the priest were on very friendly terms. Dónall na féile was Dónall Ó Briain and Liam de Brún was a member of the famous Camas family that gave so many brilliant soldiers to continental armies. Giobúineach used to say that it was only ignorant people who had to learn to read. One day when he saw Liam Dillane of Kinard putting his books in order he said to Liam 'Dob fhearr liom cliabh prátaí ná iad'. Liam quietly replied 'Do bheadh muc ar aon intinn leat, a Sheáin'.

Bridín could afford to have been more liberal in her contribution, but it was open warfare between herself and the priest at the time. Some time previously he had stopped Biddy Giltenan, a well-known *bean chaointe*, from keening at gravesides, but Brídín defied the priest and took the other woman's place. One day at a burial when she started her keen Fr Daniel said 'Druid siar, a chaile' and told her to shut up. She did not like to be called a *caile*, so she turned furiously on him, saying:

Éist leis an sagart aitinn,
Dónall gan léann gan Laidin

and the rest of her verse was not too complimentary.

Soon after that a man named Tadhg — was being buried. Tadhg and his sister, Máirín Scéipeach, were the illegitimate offspring of a Clare landlord. It was said of such children 'Thánadar le teas na gréine'. At the graveside of her brother Máirín was foolish enough to call Brídín a *caile*. The latter replied:

Éist le Máirín Scéipeach a tháinig le teas na gréine.
Ní caile mise ná crúnca, ach óigbhean bhéasach mhúinte.
Is trua ná fuil sí traochta anso le Tadhg an éithigh,
Taidhgín an éadain tairbh a gheineadh i ndíg fé scairtibh.

Possibly there was a modicum of truth for some of her disparaging criticisms. After all, as A. J. Symons points out, 'To say nothing but good of the dead is a pious convention which reduces biography to the level of memorial sculpture'.

Bridín appeared later in quite a different role, which earned for her the praise and gratitude of Fr O'Sullivan. The Sheehy brothers of Newcastle West had farmed the tithes of Glin parish and appointed as proctor a member of the 'Prisbíní', a family noted for oppression and plunder. This man, named Dónall, had been in the English navy, where at that time unnatural vice and debauchery raged like a pestilence. Dónall acquired nasty habits while serving before the mast and these together with his foul language shocked even the most hardened of his acquaintances. When approaching a property owner for tithes he used to say 'Ceannaigh an prócadóir agus ní baol duit an Chlann tSithigh'. One day he made some very vile suggestions to Brídín, who answered him by giving him a heavy blow on the head with a spade. The blow felled him and as he lay on the ground unconscious she read the following psalm over him:

Mallacht mo chléibh ort, a Dhónaill,
bascadh is léan agus sceimhle dóite,
scrios is máchail ort, masla is brón
agus píce saíte go daingean id thóin.

In the next lines she subjected him to even worse indignities and she finished in this manner:

Nár chuiridh Dia thú ar a dheis
is go mbeiridh an diabhal t'anam leis.

Nearly every parish in north Kerry had its poets in those days, but the local scribes went on transcribing the work of the older poets and ignored their contemporaries. I was able to collect a few of these neglected verses, some of which should interest Kerry readers.

Seán 'ac Pheadair MacMahon, who lived at Toberatooreen in the parish of Murher, was the most versatile of these minor poets. Some of his poetry I have given to Pádraig de Brún, who will publish it in a forthcoming work.³⁶ MacMahon was a cross-grained, choleric man and there is no doubt that some of his poems must have given much offence to his neighbours. He said of one family:

Níor óladar scilling agus níor chaitheadar réal,
ach a mbróga fíorchaite is a sála ar a dtaoibh,
do bhochtaibh na tíre níor thugadar déirc,
mar nil croí na spideoige ag éinne den *bhreed*.

In a poetic dialogue with Pádraig Histon, one of his workmen, he met his match. Histon's brother, Diarmaid, had lost his health because of hard work and ill-treatment by MacMahon. The dialogue is given here, as it illustrates the conditions of the time:

MacMahon: Is eol díbh na *carmen* a tháinig sa tír seo,
Diarmaid is Pádraig an dá sheirbhíseach,
teastún mar phá dhóibh aon lá ná beadh saoire
agus ag diúgadh biotáille i sibín gach oíche.

Histon: Má thuillim mo phá uait ní gá dhuit bheith 'maíomh as,
mar ní fheicim go brách tú gan spleáchas le daoineibh.
Bhí Jerry go láidir, ach ní sceimhle go dtí thú—
do bhris a shláinte agus ní bhfuighidh sé aon díol
uait.

MacMahon: Cuir uait an cáineadh agus éist liom go cruinn,
Má bhris sé a shláinte, an cladhrae díomhaoin,
níorbh é le sclábhaíocht nó le haon easpa bídh,
ach le réic is le hól, drochiompar is bruíon.

Histon: Má chaill sé a shláinte níorbh é leis an ól,
agus ní bhfuair sé riamh uaitse arán, im ná feoil,

36. It is hoped to produce a volume containing most of the later poetry of the barony of Iraghticonnor.—ED.

ach prátaí agus sciodar nó praiseach uair sa ló
agus obair chruaidh dhian a bhaint as ag rómhar.

Fuair sé a thuiscint i dtosach an fhómhair
agus d'fhág sé do mheitheal go dealamh fé bhrón.
Tá a mháthair go cráite ag síleadh na ndeor,
mar is gearr uainn anois go mbeidh sé fén bhfód.

Poems on the Tithe War are less numerous than one would expect. Histon has left us a few verses on a tithe affray in Athea, where one man was slain and several wounded on both sides. Councillor John Evans, a brother of General de Lacy Evans, got together a considerable force of minions of law and order and, accompanied by Joe Sargent, they marched towards Athea. Sargent was mayor of Limerick in 1803. He passed an address to George III that year, congratulating him on the suppression of Emmet's rebellion.³⁷

Evans and his party were met at Direen by a large gathering of the people, armed with missiles and weapons of various kinds. The people were led by Páid Liston (Páid na Speile), the ancestor of Senator Kit Ahern. Some time previously Páid, who was a very courageous man, nearly succeeded in drowning the tithe proctor, who was saved through the intercession of the priest. Armed with his favourite weapon, a scythe, he led the people to the fray, and as Jim McElligott told me, he did 'réabadh reilige' with it. The version of Histon's poem I got from Jim McElligott is very corrupt and is given here exactly as I got it:

Do tháinig chúinn na *peelers* le hordú ó Sheón Evans,
go namhadmhar feargach bhíodar, ach níor éirigh sin leo.
Siúd abhaile le Sargent agus é go millte gearrtha—
do baineadh smut den láimh de le speil a bhí sa ngleo.

D'fhúig an minister ar a charáiste agus níor stad sé riamh den
stáir sin
ach ag lorg cuid dá chairde chun Áth an tSléibhe do dhó.
Bhí Dia go mór 'na bhfábhhar nár thánadar an lá úd,
mar go ndéanfaí snaois dá gcánhaibh ann, i nglaise Dóirín
Nua.

37. Lenihan, *op. cit.*, 413.