WERE THE “ANNALS OF INISFALLEN” WRITTEN AT KILLALOE?

By Aubrey Gwynn, S.J.

The very valuable Old Irish annals which are now preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, as Rawlinson MS. B. 503, have been known as ‘The Annals of Inisfallen’ for more than three hundred years. In 1648 Sir James Ware, who had then been collecting manuscripts in Irish, and of Irish interest, for a quarter of a century, published a catalogue of his manuscripts under the title: Librorum manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca Jacobi Waraei equitis aur. Catalogus. Item XXVI in this catalogue is as follows: ‘Annales coenobii Innisfallensis in agro Kerriano...’. But we can trace the history of this text back to the earliest years of Ware’s activity as a collector. On 21 September 1627 Ware wrote to Archbishop Ussher, then in his residence at Drogheda: ‘I have now a special occasion to use my Ulster Annals and the Annals of Inisfallen: I entreat your Grace to send them me by this bearer’. From an examination of Ware’s notebooks, most of which are now in the British Museum, we can see that he was making extracts from the Annals of Ulster in 1622, and from the Annals of Inisfallen in September 1624. The manuscript which is now Rawlinson MS. B. 503 was thus in Ware’s library at Dublin as early as 1624. Its history after 1648 can be briefly told.

Sir James Ware died in Dublin on 1 December 1666, and his library passed to his son, Robert Ware, who sold it to Lord Clarendon, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in 1686. Clarendon died in 1709, and Ware’s manuscripts were then purchased, with the rest of Clarendon’s collection, by James Brydges, first Duke of Chandos. Dean Swift made an appeal to the Duke, whom he knew personally, to make a gift of these manuscripts to the Library of Trinity College, in 1734 and again in 1736. His appeal was not heeded, and the Duke’s library came up for sale in 1747. An English antiquarian and book-collector, Richard Rawlinson, bought a large number of the manuscripts which had formerly been in Ware’s library. Dr. Best has shown that the Annals of Inisfallen are not among the items marked in the Chandos Sale Catalogue of 1747 as having been bought by Rawlinson. He must have acquired them at some time after the sale, for the volume bears his book-plate. Rawlinson bequeathed all his immense collection of manuscripts of every kind to the Bodleian Library; and Rawlinson B. 503, with many other important Irish manuscripts, came to the great Oxford library.

NOTES

3. Robin Flower has given the main facts concerning the history of Ware’s library in Analecta Hibernica, no. 3 (1931), p.300 f.
4. The Correspondence of Dean Swift, ed. F. E. Ball (1913), vol. v, p.37 f. See also pp. 97 and 110, and vol. vi, p.64.

20
by this bequest on Rawlinson's death in 1755. It has been there ever since; and those who wish to examine its pages will find that it is locked away among the Bodleian Library's most treasured possessions in Duke Humphrey's Reading Room. A facsimile edition, with an Introduction by Dr. R. I. Best and the late Professor Eóin MacNeill, was published by the Royal Irish Academy in 1933. More recently, Seán Mac Airt has given us a fine critical edition of the text, with translation and notes, in a volume published by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies in 1951.

Ware's statement, in his catalogue of 1648, that these annals came from the monastery of Inisfallen in Co. Kerry, has never been questioned. Students of the text are agreed that the series of annalistic entries which follow a major lacuna in the text (from the year 1130 to the middle of the year 1159) are plainly the work of a compiler who made his collections somewhere in Kerry. An entry for the year 1180 is good evidence that the compiler had a special interest in the monastery of Inisfallen: 'There was committed in this year a deed which greatly vexed the clergy of all Ireland, namely, the plundering of Inis Faithlenn by Mael Dúin, son of Dommall Ua Donnchada, and the carrying off by him of all the worldly wealth therein, which was under the protection of its saints, clerics, and consecrated churches. He collected indeed the gold, silver, trappings ('scingeda'), mantles and cloaks of Iarmunu, without any respect for God or man; but the mercy of God did not allow him to kill people or to strip this heavenly place of church furnishings or books'.

The next entry for this same year records the plundering of Ardfort by the Clann Chaithrigh, and the killing of 'many nobles' inside the sanctuary and graveyard. The contemporary compiler of these annals shows very much less interest in this sacrilege. His comment that the plundering of Inisfallen 'vexed the clergy of all Ireland' reads curiously when we remember how many serious troubles had come upon the clergy of Ireland in the ten years from 1170 to 1180. We may at least rejoice that the mercy of God did not allow Mael Dúin to strip 'this heavenly place' of its books; for among these must have been the Annals of Inisfallen.

The portion of the manuscript (ff. 37-57) which follows the lacuna after f. 36 is quite distinct from the first 36 folios. Dr. Best's very careful description of the various hands which are distinguishable on these last twenty-one folios makes it possible to understand what happened to this venerable book, once it had reached Inisfallen at some date in the middle of the twelfth century. The passage which I have just quoted from the year 1180, with its full account of the plundering of Inisfallen in that year, is written by a hand which covers a period of twenty-seven years (1175-1202) and can be seen in the facsimile on ff. 38c—40c, 41c—42c. There is another lacuna in the manuscript after f. 39, so that we now have only part of the annals written by this hand. His entries are continued by two hands, which show for the first time the influence of Anglo-Norman script: ff. 41c—d (1197—1200), and 42c—44d (1202-1214). These entries are plainly the work of Munster scribes. The long eulogy of Dommall Mac Carthaig, who died in 1206, gives a fair insight into the mind of the compiler at this period. Another eulogy of Gilla Pátraic Ua Imuir, who died in 1197, should be noted. He is described as 'a celibate and noble priest, archdeacon and coarb of Faithlenn, head of a community, chief in piety, charity and wisdom, and founder and assembler of every church property, including an assembly of

6. The Annals of Inisfallen, edited with translation and notes by Seán Mac Airt (Dublin, 1951). Throughout this article I have used Seán Mac Airt's translation when citing the text of various entries from these Annals.
clerics, books and utensils'. The wording of this obit shows us that the scribe who wrote it was as loyal a member of the community of Inisfallen as his predecessor, and that he held the same views as to the value of the community's property. The two men must have worked together, for the hand of the scribe who wrote the entries for 1175-97 appears again in the entries for 1200-1202.

The work of the scribe who wrote ff. 42c—44d (1202-1214) breaks off abruptly at the end of f. 44d. There is here yet another lacuna in the manuscript; and the next two folios (45, 46) have been written by a later scribe who writes in an Irish script, influenced by Anglo-Norman script. Since this hand reappears on f. 51 of the manuscript in entries for the years 1301-1311, it is plain that he lived and worked in the early fourteenth century and that he is here filling a gap in the annals as he found them at that date. The whole manuscript must have been in a very poor condition at that time, and Dr. Best's description of this last section of Rawlinson B. 503 is worth quoting in full: 'Ff. 45-57, A.D. 1216-1321, a patched-up section, formed mainly by two early fourteenth-century scribes, one Anglo-Norman, around a fragment containing the years 1253-1273'. In other words, the scribe whose hand appears on ff. 45 and 46 found a fragment containing entries for the years 1253-1273, and filled the gap from 1214 to 1253 by a series of very short and colourless entries, leaving some years blank for lack of information. The fragment for the years 1253-73 is now on ff. 47-48. It is written according to Dr. Best in 'an Anglo-Norman literary hand'. The last folios of the manuscript (ff. 49-57) are written in a series of Anglo-Norman hands; and the whole appearance of these last leaves is very different indeed from the earlier and in every way finer section of the manuscript.

The material on which these later annalistic entries have been written is also very much poorer in quality than the first thirty-six leaves before the lacuna of 1130-59. Dr. Best describes f. 37 (the first leaf after the lacuna) as 'a single leaf, poor and coarse in texture'. Ff. 38, 39, and ff. 48, 49 are 'of thin vellum'; and the frequent lacunae in this last section of the manuscript suggest that the losses are due to the use of poor materials. None the less, we must be grateful to those scribes of the late twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries who did their best to continue the work under very real difficulties, and who have also preserved the older and nobler portion of the manuscript. The last leaf (f. 57) is badly mutilated and in part illegible owing to damp. How far beyond the year 1321 these annalistic entries were continued we do not know. Seán Mac Airt has printed a few stray entries for the years 1292, 1328, 1359, 1390, 1428 and 1450 which have been written on ff. 46 and 48 of the manuscript.7 It seems probable that the effort to maintain consecutive annalistic entries was abandoned soon after the year 1321; and that the book which we now know as the 'Annals of Inisfallen' lay hidden away in that remote island monastery until the early seventeenth century, when some unknown person brought it to Dublin and either gave it, or sold it, to Sir James Ware, who was then beginning to form his great collection of Irish manuscripts.

Before we turn back to the earliest and main section of Rawlinson B. 503 (ff. 1-36), it is necessary to say something of the section which immediately follows the hiatus of 1130-59. When that hiatus ends on f. 37a, we find that the entries, which are obviously the work of a contemporary scribe, are being written in a hand which Dr. Best describes as 'a sharp angular current hand, not unlike that of a charter written into the Book of Kells in the year 1160'. This

---

hand covers the years 1159 to 1174, with the exception of a few entries for the years 1168-9, which have been written by two separate contemporary hands. None of these hands is the same as the hand of the scribe who wrote the long entry concerning the sack of Inisfallen in the year 1180; but there are numerous entries of local Kerry interest in this section, and it seems probable that the book—whatever its previous history—was already in Kerry at this time, and very probably at Inisfallen.

There are at present thirty-six folios in the main section of the manuscript, from its earliest and mutilated portion to the beginning of the hiatus at 1130. If this section had suffered no loss of leaves in the course of time it would probably be possible to distinguish the various gatherings which made up the book; and thus determine exactly how much of the whole manuscript was the work of the main scribe, whose work now ends abruptly after the first four entries for the year 1092, almost at the bottom of f. 29c. Dr. Best has shown that there are at least two, perhaps more leaves missing from the beginning of the volume, and two other leaves have been lost after f. 6. Since all this section is the work of a single scribe, we may conclude that he wrote at least thirty-three or thirty-four folios. The first eleven folios, and therefore most probably the first fifteen of the book in its original form, are divided into two columns on each page, four for each folio; but from f. 12 to f. 29c, where his work breaks off, the scribe has copied his entries for each year in three columns for each page. Since he writes (again to quote Dr. Best) in 'an elegant symmetrical book-hand', the effect of this long series of neatly written columns is most impressive. Rawlinson B. 503 will always rank as one of the finest surviving specimens of early medieval Irish calligraphy. When the main scribe's work ends on f. 29c, the entries are continued for a time by scribes who maintain, not only the division into three columns, but also the tradition of fine calligraphy. There is a certain falling-off in this respect after f. 31, but the division into three columns is maintained down to f. 36. It has disappeared, once the hiatus ends on f. 37 in the year 1159. Henceforth the customary division into two columns for each page is followed, and occasionally (ff. 38a and 46b) the entries are made in a single long line across the page.

Who was the main scribe of ff. 1-29, and where did he do his work? That question is not easily answered. In his Introduction, published in 1933, Dr. Best writes as follows:

'It is not improbable that this first portion was produced at Emly (cp. 17b 19, A.D. 946). Emly was famous as a seat of learning, as recorded in the Triads of Ireland: Seanchas Hérenn Imblech Táir, 'The lore of Ireland, Emly'. On first observing the change of hand at this particular point in the middle of A.D. 1092, which had hitherto escaped notice, it struck me, not unnaturally, that Mael Isu, Abbot of Emly, whose obit is the first entry recorded by the new hand, was the scribe and compiler, and this may very well be so, though it seems odd that no mention of a fact so appropriate to record should have been thought necessary.'

That Emly was a monastery at which one might naturally expect Munster Annals of this kind to be compiled, is most certainly true; and it may well be, as Dr. Best suggests, that much of the earlier annalistic text which was afterwards copied by some unknown scribe c. 1092, was first written at Emly. Obit entries of the abbots of Emly (coarbs of Alibe) are recorded faithfully throughout these annals down to the twelfth century; but there are also regular obits of the
abbots of Lismore, Cork, Terryglass and other Munster houses, as well as of Armagh, Clonfert and Clonmacnois. An argument based on obits of this kind is thus far from convincing, though it may be noted that abbots of Ardfort (coarbs of Brendan) are not recorded before the eleventh century. The single entry which Dr. Best cites in support of his suggestion that the main scribe of ff. 1-29c was a monk of Emly, is an entry for the year 947 on f. 17b. It is as follows: ‘A leaf from heaven upon the altar of Imlech Ibur, and a bird spoke to the people; and many other marvels this year’. That entry may very well be copied from a set of annals which were first compiled at Emly in the tenth century; but the problem which we have to solve is concerned with a scribe who was writing at the end of the eleventh century, and who must certainly have used very much earlier materials for the entries which he has copied of events that happened long before his lifetime.

Eóin MacNeill, unfortunately, did little more than write a formal historical Introduction to the facsimile edition of these Annals in 1933. His division of the subject-matter into four main sections takes no account of the various scribes whose hands have been distinguished with such painstaking care by Dr. Best; but it is a convenient division for more general discussion. The first section, now badly mutilated in the surviving leaves (ff. 1-9), is written in Latin for the most part and deals with the traditional story of Irish pre-history before the mission of Palladius in 431. The entry concerning that mission is on f. 9c, and is followed immediately by the entry concerning Patrick’s mission to Ireland. MacNeill’s second section covers the period from 431 to the middle of the seventh century, and corresponds closely with the parallel portions of the Annals of Ulster, Chronicum Scotorum and the so-called ‘Annals of Tigernach’. Eóin MacNeill was indeed the first to demonstrate the existence of a (lost) common source, from which all our surviving Old Irish chronicles are derived. MacNeill placed the end of this common source in the year 712 or thereabouts. More recently T. F. O’Rahilly has argued that this lost text ended c. 740, and was most probably written at Bangor, certainly in N.E. Ulster.

MacNeill’s third section, from the middle of the seventh century to the middle of the tenth century, is of greater interest for our purpose. The entries now become more plainly a Munster chronicle, as compared with the definitely northern quality of the corresponding portion of the Annals of Ulster or the parallel entries in Chronicum Scotorum and the ‘Annals of Tigernach’. But it is not possible to be more definite and say that these Munster annals were written at Emly or Lismore or any other Munster abbey. Here the comparison with the Annals of Ulster is instructive. No reader of these Annals can doubt that they were, from a very early date, compiled at Armagh, but with constant influence from Iona and Derry. Emly is as likely a place as any other abbey for the corresponding Munster annals; and the entry which Dr. Best has cited from the year 947 is suggestive of an Emly origin. Seán Mac Airt has examined the evidence in greater detail, and his summary statement of the evidence deserves to be cited in full:

‘Prior to 800 Emly is mentioned less frequently than Clonmacnois, Armagh, Lismore and Clonfert, but from 800 to 1010 or thereabouts it tops the list. In the remaining eighty years (1010-1092) it allows

9. MacNeill in Eriu vol. 7 (1914), pp. 73-93; O’Rahilly in Early Irish History and Mythology (1946), p.293.
only slight precedence to Cork and Killaloe over short periods. In the more abbreviated part, up to 969, it is the Munster monastery most often referred to, and from 972 to 1092 it receives more frequent mention than any other Irish monastery. In the whole compilation (433-1092) it also predominates, being referred to fifty-seven times, and having as its nearest rivals Armagh (56), Clonmacnois (44), Lismore (44), Clonfert (40). Among dynasties over the same period, Cashel (49) is next after Laigin (83) and Connachta (63), receiving the most notice between 800 and 969 when it is mentioned twenty-five times as against sixteen notices of Laigin and fourteen of Connachta'.

These figures are noteworthy, and I think that there can be little doubt that the main substance of the Annals which we now know as the Annals of Innisfallen (but which would be more suitably termed Annals of Munster) comes from the great Munster monastery of Emly. But it will be seen that Seán Mac Airt is careful to stress the fact that mention of Emly is more frequent in the period before 969, whilst Cork and Killaloe are more frequently mentioned in the eighty years after 1010, that is to say in the period closest to the lifetime of the unknown scribe who wrote ff. 1-29c of our text. We must look more closely at the structure of our Annals from c. 969 to 1092.

Brian son of Cennétig, the future high king of Ireland, is mentioned for the first time under the year 977, when he is avenging the recent murder of his brother Mathgamain. Cennétig, the father of Mathgamain and Brian, is mentioned only once in these Annals, under the year 951: ‘Death of Cennétig son of Lorcán, royal heir (rigdamna) of Cashel’. Two years later (953) a son of Cennétig, Lachtna (who was perhaps half-brother of Mathgamain and Brian) was killed. Mathgamain appears for the first time in 967, when he defeats the foreigners of Limerick at Sulchuit, ‘and Luimnach was burned by him before noon on the following day’. In 968 he raids Ui Enna Aine in the neighbourhood of Knockainy; and in 969 he takes hostages of Mael Muad son of Bran, who was Mathgamain’s chief rival for the kingship of Cashel in these years. The year 972 is marked by a long entry in which we read that (Norse) officials were banished from Munster, and of three ‘ordinances’: ‘Namely the banishment of the officials, the banishment of the foreigners from Luimnach, and the burning of the fortress (dún)’. These ordinances were enacted ‘by the counsel of the nobles of Mumu, namely Mathgamain and Faelán and the son of Bran and others’.

It will be seen that the history of these years, so far as these Annals are concerned, centres round the city of Limerick, then a fortress of the foreigners which the Irishmen of Dál Cais and Ui Fidgente were seeking to overthrow. This is history very much as we might expect to read it in annals written in Emly; the absence of any interest in other regions of Munster is not surprising at such a time of crisis. Mathgamain’s successes are chronicled for the next three years; one entry for 973 is of special significance. Dubdaltieth, coarb of Patrick, had come south to make his visitation of Munster. We read in these Annals that ‘he and the coarb of Albbe quarrelled regarding the levy, and Mathgamain, king of Mumu, made peace between them, and they agreed upon the perpetual right of Patrick’. This entry is of interest, not only for its obvious connection with Emly, but also because it shows us that Brian’s elder brother had already begun that policy of supporting the coarb of Patrick in Armagh which was to yield such important political advantages to Brian in later life.

In 976 fortune deserted Mathgamain. He was taken prisoner by Donnubán, king of Ui Fidgente, who handed him over to his enemy, Mael Muad son of
Bran. Mael Muad lost no time in putting Mathgamain to death. The entry which records this event insists that Donnubán acted 'in violation of the guarantee and despite the interdiction of the elders of Munu'. From this time onwards it becomes increasingly plain that whoever was making these entries was a firm supporter of the two sons of Cennétig: first of Mathgamain, and then (even more plainly) of Brian.

There is no need to recite the long series of entries, which run from 977 to Brian's death in 1014, from which it is plain that, for this Munster chronicler, Brian is the hero of the story. The bias of these Annals in favour of Brian is all the more obvious if we compare the history of contemporary events as given either in the Annals of Ulster, written at Armagh, or in the two Clonmacnois chronicles, the 'Annals of Tigernach' and 'Chronicon Scotorum.' The Annals of Ulster record the burning of Limerick by Mathgamain in 987, and all three chronicles record Mathgamain's death and the treachery of his enemies in 976. The two Clonmacnois chronicles add an unfriendly comment on Brian's first success at Inis Cathaig (977). The Annals of Inisfallen here record simply that Imar, king of the foreigners (of Limerick) and his two sons were killed on Inis Cathaig by Brian son of Cennétig. The 'Chronicon Scotorum' and 'Annals of Tigernach' tell the story as follows: 'Inis Cathaig was profaned by Brian son of Cennétig against the foreigners of Limerick, that is against Imar and his two sons, Amhaith and Dubheccn'. In the Annals of Ulster Brian is not mentioned by name from 976 to 998. In 992 'Chronicon Scotorum' tells the story of his invasion of Meath as follows: 'A hosting by Maelsechlainn into Connacht, and he brought with him from thence a great prey of cows. It was after this that Brian, with the men of Munster and Connacht, came into Meath as far as Loch Aininne, and he took neither cows nor men, but went off stealthily'. Little credit is given to Brian in the Annals of Ulster for the events which led up to the battle of Clontarf. Maelsechlainn, not Brian, is here the central figure. The men of Leth Cuinn and Munster plainly viewed history with very different eyes.

Apart from the deeds of Brian and his army, the Annals of Inisfallen show special interest from c. 1000 in the history of Corcomroe and Corcu Baiscinn, and in the fortunes of Inis Cathaig, Mungret and Tuaim Gréine, as well as in Emily and Armagh, Clonfert and Clonmacnois. Local interest in Corcomroe and Corcu Baiscinn, and more particularly in the monastery of Tuaim Gréine, becomes very much more marked after the death of Brian at Clontarf. Conchobar son of Mael Sechnaill, king of Corcomroe, had already figured in the Annals of 993, when he inflicted great slaughter on the men of Connacht; and in 996, when the men of Corcomroe were slaughtered by the men of Connacht. He was slain in Connacht in 1003. His son Cathal was slain in 1015, and his kinsman Lochlann, who had succeeded him in the kingship, was also killed in the same year. In 1016 Ua Lochlann, rigidman of Corcomroe, was killed at Port Ciaráin on the Aran islands; and in 1027 yet another (unnamed) son of Conchobar died as king of Corcomroe. These frequent entries concerning so small a kingdom are significant; and they are supported by other entries of local interest, notably concerning the monastery of Tuaim Gréine.

Here the entries are so frequent, and deal with matters of such purely local interest, that it is difficult not to conclude that this short section of the Annals is based on local annals of Tuaim Gréine, a monastery which had not been mentioned more than three times in the whole chronicle before 1000. The obits of two abbots in the eighth century, and of one in the tenth, make the sum total of entries concerning Tuaim Gréine for all those centuries. Things are very different in the years 1003-1042. Dongal son of Beoan, abbot of Tuaim Gréine, dies in 1003. Cenn Faelad Ua Connáin, fer légind of Tuaim Gréine, dies
Two other lectors of Tuaim Gréine die within the next fifteen years: Muireadhach Ua hAillillein in 1020, and Niall Ua Cellaig in 1024. Conall Ua Cillín dies as coarb of Tuaim Gréine in 1025; and Mac Delbalach dies as coarb of Cronán in 1032. Loingsge Úa Fhaththóin, who seems to have been abbot of both Clonmacnois and Tuaim Gréine, died as coarb of Ciarán and Cronán in 1042. Moreover, the neighbouring monastery of Killaloe, which had so far been mentioned only once in these Annals (991: the obit of an erenagh of Cell na Lua) appears more frequently in these same years. Cathal son of Máine dies as coarb of Flannán in 1013: his title may suggest Brian’s influence in promoting the cult of a saint who was his collateral ancestor. Tadgh son of Ógach dies as abbot of Killaloe in 1027; the son of Enna as coarb of Flannán in 1030; and Coscrach son of Aingid, who was bishop as well as abbot of Clonfert and Killaloe, in 1040.

This series of local entries, many of which can have had little interest outside a narrow circle, suggests some local centre at which these contemporary annalistic entries were made. If we take a wider view of the entries in this section of our Annals, we shall find, I venture to think, that the most natural centre is to be found in the modern Co. Clare. Apart from the frequent entries concerning Core Úa Baiscein and Corcomroe, there are numerous entries concerning Core Úa Duibné on the opposite side of the Shannon: 1013, 1027, 1040, 1063, 1096. Yet the chronicle as a whole has not the character of a Kerry chronicle, as can be seen by comparing this portion of the text with the later portion after 1180. On the other hand, there is also a noteworthy series of entries concerning the Arada in the neighbourhood of Emly: 1031, 1043, 1045, 1096. If we take these two districts as outlying portions of the area which seems to be the main centre of interest at this period, the centre for which we are seeking would appear to lie most probably in the Dalassenian territory of Co. Clare.

We shall see that Killaloe is mentioned very much more frequently in the last thirty years of the eleventh century, and I believe that the scribe who made the fair copy of all these earlier entries c. 1092 was most probably a monk or perhaps a fer légend of Killaloe. But there is an interval of some thirty years (1032-60) during which these local entries largely cease, and I do not think that continuity can be established between the entries for the years 1000-32, and the later entries at the end of this century. The fact that Tuaim Gréine is mentioned so frequently, and that no less than three fer légend of this monastery are recorded within the space of fifteen years, seems to point clearly to Tuaim Gréine as the most probable home of the chronicler whose work has been preserved in this section of our Annals. It may be added that entries concerning Emly are very much less frequent in this period. Apart from the obit of an abbot of Emly in 1025, there is only one other entry concerning a member of this great community. In 1024 Mael Mórdha Ua hArrochtain died as fer légend of Ímlech Íbair. Of him it is said that he was ‘the most notable in Mumu for almsgiving and largesse’. A man with such a reputation could count on a favourable obit, no matter where the chronicle might be compiled.

One last point may be mentioned concerning this section of our Annals. Whoever made the entries after Brian’s death shows marked sympathy for Donnchad, who survived as king of Munster until his expulsion and pilgrimage to Rome in 1064. Donnchad was never without his enemies. The compiler of ‘Chronicon Scotorum’ makes it plain (1023) that the murder of his brother Tadgh was thought by many to have been instigated by Donnchad. Our Annals are content to record that Tadgh son of Brian was treacherously slain; there is no word of Donnchad’s possible share in the plot. Hardly a year goes by at this time without some mention of his name; and we owe to these same Annals our
knowledge of Donnchad’s work as law-giver and peace-maker. In 1040 we read that ‘a law and ordinance such as was not enacted in Ireland from Patrick’s time was made by Brian’s son; to the effect that none should dare to steal or do feats of arms on Sunday, or go out on Sunday carrying any load; and furthermore that none should dare to fetch cattle within doors’. This long entry is exceptional in character, and may well be derived from a different source. In 1050 we read again that ‘a great law was enacted by Brian’s son’. No further details are given; but the Four Masters in their entry for this year, which is derived from an older source now lost, give some curious details: ‘Much inclement weather happened in the land of Ireland, which carried away corn, milk, fruit and fish from the people, so that there grew up great dishonesty among all, and no protection was extended to church or fortress, gossiped or mutual oath: until the clergy and laity of Munster assembled with their chieftains under Donnchad, son of Brian, that is the son of the king of Ireland, at Killelloe, where they enacted a law and a restraint upon every injustice, from small to great; and God gave peace and favourable weather in consequence of this law.’

Dr. Best has noted a curious feature which occurs towards the end of this section of our Annals. Down to the year 431 the Calends of each year are indicated by a bare K; from 431 to 930 by KI, and occasionally by K. The ferial and lunar days are given for the first time at 798, but are not regularly indicated before 831. At 963 the Anno Domini is given for the first time, in bare Roman numerals; and again at 978. At 1032 the year is written out in Irish for the first time ‘ó ichollugd Crist’; that is to say, ‘ab incarnatione Christi’. This style recurs constantly down to 1092, where the main hand stops.

These are significant facts. The change in the method of indicating the year from 1032 onwards corresponds with the change which we have noted in the nature of the entries copied. The exceedingly local character of these entries ends at 1031. Henceforward for the next thirty years the entries range widely over the kingdoms and chief monasteries of Ireland, and Munster entries no longer predominate. This twofold change is noteworthy. Dr. Best has commented at this point that ‘in all probability the original compilation came to an end’ after 1031; and I feel sure that this acute suggestion is correct. The nature of the whole text before 1032 is most easily explained if we assume (as seems to me most probable) that some scribe of Tuaim Gréine had access to an Emly Chronicle, which he copied down to the year 1000 or thereabouts; and that he continued this chronicle on a very much more strictly local basis down to the year 1031. This chronicle was in turn used and copied by the scribe whose work ends at 1092.

The entries for the next thirty years are so varied in character that it is impossible to suggest any single centre for their place of origin. Local incidents concerning Corcomroe and Corcu Baiscinn still occur occasionally (1045, 1049, 1054, 1055). Tuaim Gréine is mentioned only once; in the obit of an abbot who was also abbot of Clonmacnoise (1042), and who was thus an exceptionally important personage. The deeds of Donnchad are duly recorded; his marriage to the daughter of Raghnall (1032); his victory at Clonfert (1035); his good laws (1040 and 1050); the hostages which he took from Leinster and Osusory (1049). But a new note comes inevitably with the rise to power of Toirdelbach, Donnchad’s nephew and rival. The nephew lays siege to upper Dál Cais (1053), and defeats Donnchad’s son Murchad (1055). In 1058 Toirdelbach attacks and defeats Donnchad himself. In 1059 Donnchad makes his submission to Ruaidhri

Ua Conchobair; and he goes to Rome in 1064. In 1063 there is a brief entry that Toirdelbach has taken the kingship of Munster. From that year to the year 1086, when Toirdelbach died at Kinvara, these Annals are largely a chronicle of the new king's high deeds. 12

One entry for the year 1068 is of special significance—though, strangely enough, it has been printed without comment by Seán Mac Airt. In that year Murchad Ua Briain, son of Dommchad son of Brian, was slain by the men of Tethba. Murcad (who was commonly known as Murchad 'in saith gair') had been named in three earlier entries. In 1051 he slew his cousin, Diarmait son of Domnall son of Brian. In 1054 he was most probably one of the three sons of Dornchad who 'took a great prey in Corcu Modruad'. In 1055 he was attacked in Corcu Modruad by Toirdelbach, the future king, and was heavily defeated. In 1062 Murchad slew Corrad mac Nechtain. Two years later his father Dornchad left Ireland for Rome, never to return. We hear no more of Murchad until the entry which records his death in 1068. Yet in this obit our annalist styles him 'rigdamna Hérend 7 mac rig Hérend'. Plainly we have here the entry of an annalist for whom clann Briain was the greatest family in Ireland. Murchad's position, even in the southern kingdom of Munster, must have been precarious after his father's death in exile; and Dornchad, during his lifetime, had never been able to do more than hold his own against many enemies as king of Munster. Yet in this obit our annalist commemorates Dornchad in retrospect as king of Ireland, and his son as rigdamna Hérend.

The same tendency to glorify clann Briain as a whole, without regard to any struggle for power within the family, is shown elsewhere by the scribe who copied these annals down to the year 1092. He has placed a cross (in this earlier portion of the text, a mark of unusual honour) opposite the first mention of Brian in his Annals (977), and opposite the entry which records Brian's death at Clontarf (1014); and again opposite the entries which record Toirdelbach's assumption of the kingship (1063) and Dornchad's journey to Rome (1064).

In these same years Killaloe becomes a centre of special interest. In 1061 we read: 'Cell Da Lua was burned by Aed Ua Conchobuir, and God and Flannán laid hold of him'. In 1071, a year filled with the record of Toirdelbach's victories, we read in the last entry: 'A muster of the Munstermen by Toirdelbach Ua Briain, king of Muth, and in a fortnight they built the bridge of Ath Caille and the bridge of Cell Da Lua'. Flann Ua hAingeda died at Killaloe in 1074; Toirdelbach's wife Gormlaith, daughter of Ua Fodairt, died at Killaloe in 1076, and was buried in Inis Celtra; Mac Maith Ua Lachtnain, an anchorite, and Loingsceth Ua Conaire, noble priest, venerable senior and celibate, died at Killaloe in 1077; Cork, Killaloe, Mungret and other churches were burned in 1081; Killaloe, Tuaim Gréine and Mayno were burned by the son of Ua Ruairc in 1084; Tadhg Ua Taide, coarb of Flannán, died in 1083. It will be seen that, with the exception of the last item, none of these entries is the official obit of an abbot of Killaloe. Their interest for our purpose is precisely that they deal with events which have none but local, and indeed domestic interest. They suggest very strongly that the scribe who was copying these entries, or perhaps who was making them himself year by year in a chronicle of his own compilation, was personally interested in the fortunes of Killaloe. He may well have been a member of the Killaloe community.

This suggestion is bound to surprise students of Irish history, for Killaloe had not been a centre of learning in the early centuries of Irish monastic life.

12. Father John Ryan, S.J., has given a full account of these years in this Journal, vol. 11 (1941) pp. 141-52.
But the question to which we are seeking an answer in this discussion is not whether there was an ancient and venerable school of Killaloe that might be compared with such famous Munster seats of learning as Emily or Cork or Lismore. We are concerned with a very much simpler question. Was Killaloe a centre of learning or literary activity in the reigns of Toirdelbach Ua Briain and of his son and successor, Muirechertach mór Ua Briain? To that question a more definite answer may be given. Among the letters which Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury and one of the greatest scholars of his day, wrote to various Irish kings and princes between 1074 and his death in 1089 is a letter addressed to 'Domnaldus bishop of Ireland'.\(^3\) In this letter Lanfranc states that Domnaldus had sent him a letter by a messenger who was pressing for an immediate reply. Domnaldus had asked Lanfranc to give his opinion on certain theological questions concerning the administration of the Eucharist to those who are dying, and the possibility of salvation for those who have not received the Lord's Body in their last illness. Having answered these questions, Lanfranc ends his letter by saying that he does not think it suitable for him as bishop to deal with questions of worldly learning ('questiones secularium literarum'), which Domnaldus had propounded in his letter. Lanfranc admits that he had spent much of his youth in these studies, but he has abandoned them since he undertook the pastoral care of souls.

Scholars are agreed that the 'Domnaldus' to whom this letter is addressed is Domnall Ua hEanna, the Bishop of Déil Cais who died in 1098. The Annals of Inisfallen call him in their obit 'chief master in wisdom, eminent bishop of Ireland, and the most hospitable and charitable man in western Europe'. The Annals of Ulster lay greater stress on the bishop's eminence as a scholar: 'Domnall Ua hEanna, eminent bishop of western Europe, and fount of the generosity of the world, doctor of either law, namely of the Romans and the Gaedhil, after most excellent penance finished his life felicitously on the tenth of the Kalends on December 22 Nov. 1098'. The name Ua hEanna has long associations with the medieval diocese of Killaloe.\(^4\) These associations begin in the eleventh century. In 1030, as we have seen, the son of Enna (Mac Enda) died as coarb of Flannán, that is to say as abbot of Killaloe. In 1095, in a long list of those who died during the great mortality of that year, two members of the community of Killaloe are mentioned. One of them was the priest Ua Gerruidhir, the other was Gillan Naem Ua hEanna. The coincidence can hardly be accidental. The family of Ua hEanna was plainly associated with the monastery of Killaloe in the eleventh century. Domnall Ua hEanna 'chief master in wisdom' and 'doctor of either law, of the Romans and the Gaedhil', may very well have been a monk of Killaloe before he became bishop of Déil Cais. He was certainly the man who gave a lead to all Ireland in the first stages of a reform that changed the whole face of the Irish Church in the twelfth century.

That Toirdelbach and Muirechertach Ua Briain should have fostered learning in a monastery which was so close a neighbour to their own residence at Kincora, and which Brian himself seems to have fostered in his lifetime in honour of its patron Saint Flannán, does not seem to me in any way remarkable. Future developments were to be less favourable to this monastery, which was soon over-

---

13. This letter was first printed by Ussher in his *Veternum Epistoluarum Hibernicarum Syllopae* (1639), Ep.XXVIII., and was reprinted in Ussher's *Works*, vol. iv, pp.495-7. I have discussed it more fully in *Irish Eccles. Record* (August, 1941), pp.101-3.

14. See in general Dr. D. F. Gleeson's two papers on the history of the Diocese of Killaloe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: in this *Journal*, vol. i (1939), pp.142-58; and II (1940), pp.61-6. Fuller details will be given in Dr Gleeson's forthcoming *History of the Medieval Diocese of Killaloe*. 30
shadowed by the rapid growth of Limerick as a city and centre of commerce and learning. But I can see nothing at all improbable in the suggestion that the monk who compiled the main text of the Annals of Inishfallen made his compilation at Killaloe. The entries which I have cited from the years 1061 to 1084 seem clear evidence that Killaloe was a church in which the compiler of these Annals was personally interested. The patronage and encouragement of Domnall Ua hEmna, then at the height of his influence as chief bishop of Ireland, may well have been the decisive factor in the compilation of what is to-day one of our most venerable Irish texts.

One last word may be said about the entries which carry on the story from the year 1092, when the main scribe ceased from his work, to the year 1130 when our text is defective owing to the great lacuna from 1130 to 1159. No less than nineteen different hands can be distinguished in this record of less than forty years. Only two of these scribes, the fourth and the tenth, made entries for more than two years; and some of them make no more than one or two short entries. It is thus very much less easy to distinguish any local or personal interest, though the doings of Muirchertach móir Ua Briain naturally take a foremost place in much of the chronicle. His hosting to northern Ireland, and the seven days he spent at Armagh are recorded under the year 1103; but nothing is said of the defeat which forced him to leave Ulster hurriedly, which is fully recorded in the Annals of Ulster. Two curious items may be cited from the year 1105: ‘In the above year a camel, an animal of remarkable size, was brought from the king of Alba to Muirchertach Ua Briain. In the same year there was caught by fishermen in the sea of Luimneach a fish of unheard of size, which measured 15 feet, and two ingots' weight were obtained (?) for it’. The short — alas, too short — entry for the year 1111 concerning the ‘great assembly of the men of Ireland, both clergy and laity, in Fiad Mac Aengusa’ is noteworthy because some scribe has added the interlinear note ‘i. e. Raith Breasail to the name Fiad Mac M.Aengussa; thereby helping us to identify this assembly as the synod more fully described by Keating from the lost Book of Clonacagh.15

Limerick, which had by now become the normal residence of Muirchertach, is prominent in the story of his fall from power. The king’s illness, which was followed by many disasters, is recorded under the year 1114, with the sad comment: ‘Woe to him who brought upon us this sickness of the king of Ireland’. Before the end of the same year Diarmait, Muirchertach’s younger brother, had taken the kingship of Munster, and had banished Muirchertach from Limerick to Killaloe. The king was back in Limerick in the early months of 1115, and threw Diarmait into prison; but his recovery was short-lived. In 1116 Diarmait turned once more against Muirchertach ‘in violation of a mutual oath on the relics of Ireland’. A siege of Limerick was followed by the withdrawal of Muirchertach, now a broken man, to Lismore, where he ‘assumed the pilgrim’s staff’. Diarmait did not long survive his victory, for he died at Cork in 1118. Muirchertach himself died at Lismore in 1119, ‘after victory of repentance’. The entries which record the events of these decisive years make it plain that the scribes who wrote these entries (Dr. Best’s Hands 15, 16 and 17) were in sympathy with Muirchertach in his last disappointing struggle for power.

There are several entries concerning Lismore in the twelve years which follow the entry concerning Muirchertach’s death. Many of them show such personal interest in what was happening at Lismore in these years that it is tempting to suggest that the book in which these events were chronicled had

15. Father Ryan has given a full account of this synod in this Journal, vol. iii (1843), pp.29-38.
been brought from Killaloe (or Limerick) to Lismore by one of those who accompanied Muirchertach in his last exile. One entry in particular is most unusual, and deserves special comment. It is made partly in Irish, partly in Latin; and its form suggests that it was written by a scribe who had come under the influence of contemporary theological discussions, presumably at Lismore. The year is 1121, when Toirdelbach Ua Conchobuir was in the first stages of his rise to power. He made a circuit of Munster, and 'they burned Clairesshe Luachra from north to south'. This is followed by an entry in a different hand (Dr. Best's Hand 20): 'A predatory hosting by Toirdelbach son of Rucidhri, into Desmmu, and he did a deed which was vexatious to God and to the whole Christian Church generally, namely the plundering of Les Mór Mo-Chutu. The people of Desmmu, however, at the instigation of the Lord, for the honour of its saints, slay Ua Flaithbertaig and Ua hEldin along with other leaders, though this vengeance preceded the sin'. So far the entry is in Irish. The scribe then uses Latin for a curious theological comment on these events: 'But if any objector should be found (si quis abstinator inuentus fuisset) to say, 'Never has God punished a sin before it was committed', it shall be replied to him that it was not extraordinary if God, to whom all time is present, should avenge a wrong done to His Church before it was committed'. The Latin text of this curious piece of theology is worth citing in full: 'Respontebitur ei quod nec mirum sit si Deus, cui omne tempus praesens sit, inlueriam aeclesiae suae antequam facta fuisset undicaret'. It seems to me certain that the scribe who wrote that entry was resident at Lismore, and was perhaps making his first contact there with academic theological discussions which were causing such intellectual excitement in the schools of France at this time. The abstinator of this entry is more familiar to us to-day as the objicent; he is answered by the defendant. I must leave my readers to be judges of their theology.

Entries concerning Lismore are frequent for the next few years. An unnamed bishop of the Ulaid (an t-epsceup Ultac) died at Lismore in 1123. The monastery was burned again in 1125. Sadb, daughter of Ua Conchobuir Charrague, died at Lismore in 1126. Cormac Mac Carthaig, who was deposed by the men of Munster in 1127, entered Lismore in that year; readers of St. Bernard's Vita S. Malachiæ will remember his vivid account of Cormac's life as a royal monk and pilgrim in Lismore at this time. His return to power is chronicald almost immediately after his deposition. The entries for the next three years, which are unusually long, deal mainly with the affairs of Kerry and Inis Cathaig. The death of Gilla Mo-Chutu Ua Rebacháin, coarb of Mo-Chutu (abbot of Lismore) is duly chronicled under the year 1129; and also the fact that Cellach, coarb of Patrick, who had died at Ardpatrick, was buried at Lismore in the same year. But these are events of more than local interest, and cannot be cited as proof that the scribe who made them was himself resident at Lismore. I am content to argue that the entries from 1116 to 1127 show an interest both in the fortunes of Muirchertach mór Ua Briain and in the monastery of Lismore, which may be due to the fact that one of Muirchertach's retinue brought the main portion of these Annals to Lismore in 1116; and that he and others after him continued to write the annals of the next few years at Lismore. Why and how the book in which they made these entries came from Lismore (or some other Munster centre) to Kerry at some date towards the middle of the twelfth century, cannot now be explained; but the fact of this migration is proved by the nature of many entries concerning the kingdom of Kerry after 1159.

That the book which we now call the Annals of Inisfallen was in Kerry from the end of the twelfth century to the early seventeenth century is certain; and it
was almost certainly at Inisfallen for all that time. In what I have written above, I have put forward my reasons for believing that the older and nobler portion of this book was written by some unknown scribe in or about 1092, and that Killaloe is the most probable place of composition. My evidence may not be accepted as sufficiently strong, though it seems to me to have cumulative effect. What is certain is that the title 'Annals of Inisfallen' is sadly misleading for the general reader. It is now too late to change a name which has been familiar to all students of early Irish history for more than three centuries. But, if we talk (as we do, and rightly) of 'Annals of Ulster' and 'Annals of Connacht,' surely these venerable Annals deserve a better title! Much of the early chronicle seems to derive from the great monastery of Emly. I have argued, perhaps at too great length, that other sections in the eleventh century derive from Tomgraney and Killaloe; and that a short section in the early twelfth century was written at Lismore. The final section, covering the last years of the twelfth century, a broken chronicle for the thirteenth century, and a sadly mutilated chronicle of the first twenty years of the fourteenth century, was almost certainly written at Inisfallen. Surely these Annals, with so varied a history, deserve the proud title 'Annals of Munster.'