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# *Bunú Choláiste na gCeithre Máistrí*

Nollaig Mac Congáil

Le cúpla bliain anuas tá comóradh á dhéanamh ar bhunú na chéad Choláistí Gaeilge corradh is céad bliain ó shin i gceantair éagsúla ar fud na tíre. Reáchtáladh ócáidí comóraha, tugadh cainteanna, foilsíodh aistí agus leabhair<sup>1</sup> mar chuid den cheiliúradh chéanna. Níl ansin ach an ceart nuair a chuimhnítear ar an lorg mhór a d'fhág na Coláistí Gaeilge céanna ar chinniúint na Gaeilge ar go leor bealaí ó shin i leith. Agus an ceiliúradh seo á dhéanamh, áfach, níor cheart neamart a dhéanamh i gceann ar bith acu óir rinne siad uilig a gcion féin in achan chearn den tír.

Ó thaobh na cróineolaíochta de, seo a leanas ord bunaithe na gcoláistí éagsúla: Coláiste Múinteoireachta na Mumhan, Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh, 1904, Ollscoil na Mumhan, an Rinn, 1905, Coláiste Chonnacht, Tuar Mhic Éadaigh, 1905, Coláiste Chomhghaill, Béal Feirste, 1905, Coláiste na gCeithre Máistrí, Leitir Ceanainn, 1906, Coláiste Uladh, Gort an Choirce, 1906, agus Coláiste Laighean, Baile Átha Cliath, 1906. Maidir le cuid de na coláistí sin, áfach, cha ndearnadh mórán tráchta orthu amach ó thagairt fhánach thall is abhus.<sup>2</sup>

Cás eisceachtúil ar bhealach a bhí i gCúige Uladh ó thaobh na gColáistí Gaeilge de. Mar rud amháin bunaíodh trí cinn acu taobh istigh de bhliain; beirt acu sin sa Ghalltacht – ceann i mbaile mór, mar atá, Leitir Ceanainn, agus an ceann eile sa dara cathair is mó sa tír, mar atá, Béal Feirste; ceann acu fosta, bhí sé ina choláiste geimhridh. Is iontach linn go raibh Cúige Uladh chomh maith sin as ar an téad seo agus ní miste an scéal a fhiosrú dá thairbhe sin.

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<sup>1</sup> Mar shampla: *Iolsgoil na Mumhan* (g.d.); *Coláiste Chonnacht: Na Blianta Tosaigh i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh* (Coiste Oidhreachta Thuar Mhic Éadaigh, 1905); Seosamh Ó Ceallaigh (eag.), *Coláiste Uladh 1906-2006* (Coiste Cuimhneacháin na Coláiste, 1906); Nollaig Mac Congáil, 'Coláiste Chonnacht: na Blianta Tosaigh i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh', *Feasta* (Meán Fómhair, 2005) 19-22, (Deireadh Fómhair) 19-23.

<sup>2</sup> Cuirim i gcás, is beag trácht ar fad a dhéantar sa leabhar *Belfast and the Irish Language*, in eagar ag Fionntán de Brún (Four Courts Press, 2005) ar Choláiste Chomhghaill agus ar a thábhacht i stair na Gaeilge sna Sé Chontae i dtús an chéid seo caite.

Ní hionann is mar a tharla sna cúigí eile, cuireadh an chéad Choláiste Gaeilge i gCúige Uladh ar bun i mBéal Feirste i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 1905.<sup>3</sup> Bhí trí rud eisceachtúla i gceist leis sin: (i) lonnú an choláiste i gcathair (ii) lonnú an choláiste sa Ghalltacht (iii) é a bheith ina choláiste geimhridh seachas ina choláiste samhraidh. Chomh dóiche lena athrach, bunaíodh Coláiste Chomhghaill san áit agus san am ar bunaíodh é ar chúiseanna maithe ó thaobh Athbheochan na Gaeilge de agus na praiticiúlachta de. Bhí sé i gceist i gcónaí, áfach, go mbunófaí Coláiste Samhraidh Gaeilge i nDún na nGall, príomhdhaingean na Gaeilge i gCúige Uladh ar aon dul lena raibh ag tarlú sna cúigí eile. Bhí buntáistí móra ag baint le suíomh Gaeltachta fá choinne Coláiste Gaeilge nach gá a iniúchadh anseo.

De réir na fianaise scríofa, maítear gurbh é an tAth. Ó Tighearnaigh as Muineachán a mhol ag tús 1905 go mbunófaí Coláiste Gaeilge i gCúige Uladh ar aon dul leis an cheann a bhí á reáchtáil i mBéal Átha an Ghaorthaidh ó bhí an samhradh roimhe sin ann.

#### *Coláiste Uladh*

*Sgríobh an tAthair Ó Tighearnaigh, as Muineachán... ar choláiste chur ar bun imeasg na nGaedhilgeoirí i gcúigeadh Uladh, mar an gceann a bhí i mBéal Átha an Ghaorthaidh. Bhí sé ag Coláiste na Mumhan agus deir sé gur mór mór an bhuntáiste do chanamhaint Chúigidh Uladh dá mbeadh a mhacasamhail-san de cheann aca féin.<sup>4</sup>*

Gan amhras, thóg sé tamall sular glacadh lena mholadh ach chaithfí dlús a chur faoi eagraíocht na hAthbheochana ó thuaidh sula bhféadfaí cuimhneamh ar a leithéid fiú amháin, rud a tharla.<sup>5</sup> Ní miste stair na heagraíochta úire Ultaí a thabhairt ina

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<sup>3</sup> Tá alt liom, bunaithe ar léacht a thug mé ag Comhdháil: Litríocht agus Cultúr na Gaeilge, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh, (Deireadh Fómhair, 2005) ar stair bhunú Choláiste Chomhghaill le foilsiú in *Leabhar Cuimhneacháin Mháirtín Uí Bhriain* a fhoilseofar sa bhliain 2007.

<sup>4</sup> *Irish Independent* (6.1.05, 4).

<sup>5</sup> 'A conference of the Ulster branches of the Gaelic League is to be held shortly in Derry to consider the creation of a permanent council to promote the working of the League in Ulster, the formation of a training college and other matters. The secretaries of the conference to whom suggestions or notices of motion may be sent are Miss Lavery, 18 King Street, Belfast; Father M. O'Mullin, C.C., Carndonagh, Co. Donegal, and Mr. P.J. Flanagan, Derry People, Derry,' in *The United Irishman* (2.9.05, 1).

<sup>5</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (2.9.05, 9).

Féach, fosta: 'In the course of a letter the Hon. Secretaries of the forthcoming Ulster Gaelic League Conference write: 'It has long been apparent to workers in the language movement in the North that, while excellent work is being done in particular districts, and while isolated branches and workers are carrying on the fight successfully, still, if contrasted with the other provinces, Ulster is lamentably deficient in organisation. Munster and Connaught have their training colleges, while Leinster has a school of Irish Learning, and in each there is sufficient cohesion among the constituent parts of the League to enable combined action to be taken on any question of moment. In Ulster the scattered units have never been brought in touch with one another. In addition, the necessity for a training college is evidenced by the scarcity of competent teachers to give instruction in the native speech either in the

hiomláine anseo ó tharla a leithéid de thábhacht a bheith ag baint léi agus le go bhfeicfear cé na daoine uilig a raibh lámh acu san obair agus cad é mar a tháinig sé ar an tsaol.

### **THE LEAGUE IN ULSTER** **PROPOSED GENERAL CONFERENCE**

*On Friday of Oireachtas Week an informal meeting of some of the Ulster Delegates to the Ard-Fheis was held in Barry's Hotel, Dublin, for the purpose of devising some scheme for the consolidation of the working units in the North, with a view to the more effective propagation of the aims and principles of the Gaelic League. There were present: Miss Mac Neill, Cushendun House, Cushendun, Miss Lavery, Belfast; Miss Mac Crudden, Belfast; Miss Alice Milligan, Rev. Fr. Greenan, Co. Down; Rev. M. O'Mullin, Carndonagh, Co. Donegal; Rev. J. O'Doherty, Derry; Rev. Fr. Maguire, Donaghmoyne; Mr. Stephen Gwynn, Mr. Roger Casement, Mr. Richard Bonner, Townnwilly, Donegal; Mr. John King, Newcastle; Mr. Seamus Mac Manus, Mountcharles, Co. Donegal; Mr. Ward, Omearth; Prof. Mac Laughlin, St. Columb's College, Derry; Mr. P.J. Flanagan, Derry; Mr. J. Bonner, Barnesmore, Co. Donegal; Mr. J.J. O'Hegarty, Derry; Mr. Cahill, Co. Down and Mr. Tierney, Monaghan. Mr. Stephen Gwynn presided.*

*The position of the Movement in Ulster generally was discussed, and proposals were put forward for the amalgamation for the whole province of the Toome conference, at present operating in the North East, and the Ulster Union of the Gaelic League, working in the North West, the objects of both of which are practically similar.*

*The secretaries of the two bodies, Miss Lavery of the Toome Conference, and Father O'Mullin and Mr. Flanagan of the Ulster Union, were present at the meeting. Finally, on the motion of Fr. Greenan, seconded by Seamus Mac Manus, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted.*

- *That this meeting of Ulster delegates to the Ard-Fheis suggest to the secretaries of the Ulster Union of the Gaelic League and the Toome Conference that they issue a summons jointly signed (sic!) to all members of their respective bodies to attend a conference in Derry at a date to be fixed by agreement between them for the purpose of creating a permanent council to promote the working of the Gaelic League in Ulster, and that they send a copy of the summons with a request for a representative to every branch of the Gaelic League in the province.*

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*schools or in the capacity of travelling teachers.' A Conference is to be held towards the end of this month at Derry, and the following matters will be considered:*

- *The establishment of a training college in Ulster*
- *The creation of machinery for the more effective organization of Ulster.*
- *The cultivation of the language and literature in Ulster.*

The Hon. Secretaries, with whom those interested should put themselves in communication, are Miss Lavery, 18 King Street, Belfast; Father M. O'Mullin, C.C., Carndonagh, Co. Donegal, and Mr. P.J. Flanagan, Derry People, Derry., in *The Leader* (16.9.05,

- *That the secretaries be requested to issue along with their summons the sketch of an agenda paper covering the following points for discussion:*
  - (a) *the formation of an Ulster Training College*
  - (b) *the creation of a machinery for the organization of Ulster*
  - (c) *the cultivation of the Irish tongue and literature in Ulster*
- *That the secretaries should invite individual members and branches of the League in Ulster to suggest and send in definite motions for discussion at the Conference, that these be circulated amongst all persons invited at least a week before the Conference assembles.*

*Members of the two bodies and Gaelic League Branches are requested to send in any suggestions or motions they may have to make on the above scheme as soon as possible to any of the secretaries: Miss Lavery, 18 King Street, Belfast; Rev. M. O'Mullin, C.C., Carndonagh, Co. Donegal, or P.J. Flanagan, Derry People, Derry.<sup>6</sup>*

Socraíodh mar sin go mbunófaí Coláiste Gaeilge i nDún na nGall, ach cén áit? Cha raibh achan duine ar aon intinn fán cheist. Cha raibh an tEaspag Pádraig Ó Dónaill<sup>7</sup> fuar ná falsa ar an ócáid agus rinne sé a mholadh féin maidir le láthair an choláiste úir. Tuairiscíodh an méid seo a leanas sa bhliain 1905:<sup>8</sup>

*During the month of August native scholars will hold a school of Irish learning in its (i.e. St. Eunan's) halls for National teachers and others who may desire to attend.  
Patrick O'Donnell*

<sup>6</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (2.9.05, 9).

Féach, fosta: 'In the course of a letter the Hon. Secretaries of the forthcoming Ulster Gaelic League Conference write: 'It has long been apparent to workers in the language movement in the North that, while excellent work is being done in particular districts, and while isolated branches and workers are carrying on the fight successfully, still, if contrasted with the other provinces, Ulster is lamentably deficient in organisation. Munster and Connaught have their training colleges, while Leinster has a school of Irish Learning, and in each there is sufficient cohesion among the constituent parts of the League to enable combined action to be taken on any question of moment. In Ulster the scattered units have never been brought in touch with one another. In addition, the necessity for a training college is evidenced by the scarcity of competent teachers to give instruction in the native speech either in the schools or in the capacity of travelling teachers.' A Conference is to be held towards the end of this month at Derry, and the following matters will be considered:

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<sup>7</sup> Pádraig Ó Baoighill, *Patrick Cardinal O'Donnell, his role and influence in Irish society, with particular reference to County Donegal, 1888-1927*, (Tráchtas Ph.D., University of Ulster, 2003). Tá cuntas iomlán ansin ar an bhaint mhór a bhí aige le cúrsaí creidimh, polaitíochta agus Gaeilge go náisiúnta agus ina chontae féin.

<sup>8</sup> *The Freeman's Journal* (16.10.05, 8).

*Feast of St. Eunan, 1905*

Ar bhealach bhí an t-easpag ag tochas ar a cheirtlín féin agus é ag iarraidh an Coláiste Múinteoireachta Gaeilge i gCúige Uladh a lonnú i Leitir Ceanainn agus sa mheánscoil úr aige féin, mar atá, Coláiste Adhamhnáin, a bhí le hoscailt ar 1 Meán Fómhair, 1906. Bhí loighic áirithe leis an mholadh seo aige. Mar rud amháin bhí foirgneamh úrnua, feistithe amach go cuí le haghaidh an teagaisc le fáil i gColáiste Adhamhnáin – rud nach raibh teacht air go réidh agus in am, mar a d’aithneofaí gan mhoill. Bheadh lóistín d’ardchaighdeán le fáil i Leitir Ceanainn ó tharla gur bhaile mór turasóirí, lucht taistil agus aonaigh a bhí ann. Fógraíodh na sonraí seo a leanas faoin Choláiste úr:

*The New College will open on Saturday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of September... Perfectly up to date in all its details, the magnificent building possesses unique advantages of situation and sanitary arrangements of the most modern type. Hot water pipes and a commodious arcade are important features...*<sup>9</sup>

Thar aon rud eile, b’fhéidir, bhí múinteoirí léannta oilte ar fhoireann bhuan teagaisc Choláiste Adhamhnáin a d’fhéadfadh an teagasc a dhéanamh ar an Choláiste Samhraidh fosta – rud a tharla. Mar shampla, ar fhoireann teagaisc an dá choláiste ag an tús bhí Rev. E. Maguire, D.D., Mr. J.P. Craig, Rev. P.A. O’Doherty, Ph.D. Cá bhfaighfí bualadh amach na ndaoine sin maidir le cúrsaí léinn, Gaeilge agus taithí múinteoireachta? Ainneoin na mbuanna sin ar fad, cha raibh glacadh go forleathan go mbunófaí Coláiste Múinteoireachta Gaeilge Dhún na nGall i Leitir Ceanainn.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *The Derry Journal* (20.8.06, 1).

<sup>10</sup> **THE GAELIC COLLEGE FOR ULSTER**

***To the Editor of the Derry Journal***

*Mr. King proposed that it be an instruction to the next Council to take immediate steps to carry out the proposal to promote an Irish Training College in Donegal. He understood there was an offer from Very Rev. Dr. O’Donnell to provide a school for the coming summer, and it would require all the time of the Council until then to get the scheme carried out successfully.*

*The Chairman said some place should be named, as it would be quite useless to send pupils to some part of Donegal where there was no Irish spoken. (Applause)*

*Mr. King said he would strike out Donegal from the resolution, as there was an offer from Dr. O’Donnell for Letterkenny, which was not an Irish-speaking district at all. The location of the college could be decided on its merits afterwards.*

*Chairman: - Letterkenny is not a proper place at all. I would rather have you decide at once that it be in an Irish-speaking district.*

*Very Rev. Dr. Maguire proposed that the Executive be instructed to take steps to secure an effective course of training in Letterkenny for the coming summer and to establish a college in an Irish-speaking district for the permanent purpose of training teachers.*

*Chairman:- I would say exclude Letterkenny and have it in an Irish-speaking district. (Applause) I would be inclined to propose that we have a school established for the training of teachers in Irish, and that the Council proceed at once to make it permanent in an Irish-speaking district of Donegal.*

Tá an Tuaisceart ag gluaiseacht ar son na Gaedhilge. Tháinig Ultaigh i gceann a chéile Lá Fhéile Stiamhain agus thoghadar Coisde Gnótha dhóibh féin. Cumann Gaedhealach na nUltach a thugadar mar ainm baiste ortha féin agus a lucht leanamhna. Toghadh fuireann bheag ar an gCoisde agus d'órduigheadh dóibh Ionad Colláiste Múinte do sholáthairt i nDún na nGall. B'é cómhairle an Choisde nár bh'fhuláir an Colláiste do thógbháil i ndúthaigh Ghaedhilge, agus bhí an ceart annsoin aca. Samhluigheann sé dhúinn gur bh'fhearr le Easbog Ráithe Both dá dtoghfaidhe Leitir Cheanainn i n-a chómhair; acht, do réir deallraimh, ní'l na Gaedhil eile ar aon intinn leis. Is cuma san. Cuirfear an Colláiste ar bun, agus sin é feabhas agus leaghas an scéil. Is beag nach deimhin go mbeidh ceann nuadh eile againn i Laighnibh i gcómhair an tSamhraidh. Má bhíonn colláistidhe ar siubhal i ngach árd de'n dúthaigh le haghaidh múinte na Gaedhilge fé'n am go dtiocfaidh Árd-Rúnaidhe Gallda na hÉireann i n-ar measc.<sup>11</sup>

Socraíodh ag an chéad chruinniú sin de Dháil Uladh go gcuirfí Coláiste Gaeilge ar bun an bhliain dár gcionn i nGaeltacht Dhún na nGall.<sup>12</sup> Socraíodh ar thoradh moille ina dhiaidh sin ag cruinniú de Dháil Uladh a tionóladh i bPort an Dúnáin i mí Feabhra 1906 go mbeadh an Coláiste Gaeilge lonnaithe i nGaoth Dobhair.

*Dáil Uladh held a largely attended and most business-like meeting at Port an Dúnáin on Wednesday of last week. Gweedore<sup>13</sup> was fixed upon as the site of the Ulster Training School for this year, the question of alternating with Cloghaneely or Arranmore in future years being left in abeyance. A small sub-committee was named to look after the details of the college organization, and it was decided to advertise for two teachers...*<sup>14</sup>

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*On being put to the meeting the Chairman declared the latter amendment carried and the selection of a site for the proposed college was referred to the Executive Council, to receive a report on the matter from the President of the Council and the Donegal delegates. The Derry Journal (29.12.05).*

<sup>11</sup> *The Irish People*, (6.1.06, 7).

<sup>12</sup> 'At the Conference of the Northern Gaels in Doire Chuilm Chille on Lá Fhéile Stiopháin two important matters were finally decided upon – the formation of Dáil Uladh and the establishment of an Ulster Training College. The consensus of opinion with regard to the latter project was that the College ought, like its Munster and Connaught prototypes, be in an Irish-speaking district. A further meeting which is to assemble in February will discuss localities and other details' in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (6.1.06, 7).

*'Ulster Gaels are animatedly discussing the prospects of the proposed Training School for the North. The matter engaged the attention of the recent monthly meeting of the Dún na nGall Coiste Ceanntair, the question of site being the one chiefly discussed. On this and other points the Rúnaidhthe were instructed to put the views of the Coiste before the meeting of the All-Ulster Committee, which meets in Port an Dúnáin this week. Craobh Choluim Chille, Gort a' Choirce, sends us a cheery Irish report telling of a successful annual meeting after a successful year's work...in An Claidheamh Soluis* (10.2.06, 8).

<sup>13</sup> 'A building which was formerly used as a Courthouse, and is the property of the County Council, has been secured for the purpose *The Derry Journal* (12.2.06, 3).

<sup>14</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (17.2.06, 7).

Níor leanadh rófhada leis an rún go gcuirfí an Coláiste ar bun i nGaoth Dobhair. Socraíodh ar Chloich Cheann Fhaolaidh agus sin mar a tharla.

*The Rev. Dr. Maguire... reported that some slight difficulty had arisen as to the building proposed for the Ulster Training College at Gweedore, but added that he hoped it would be successfully surmounted.*<sup>15</sup>

Má bhí a bheagán nó a mhórán conspóide ag baint leis an chinneadh sin, cha raibh deireadh leis an chonspóid go fóill. Thoisigh an cur is an cúiteamh. Cha raibh Gaoth Dobhair fóirsteanach ar an ócáid ar go leor cúiseanna:

### THE GAELIC COLLEGE FOR ULSTER

*To the Editor of the Derry Journal*

*Sir –*

*In the Journal of yesterday I see it stated that the Gaelic College for Ulster is likely to be established in Gweedore. It is also stated that no better place could be selected for it in Donegal or in Ireland. Well, I do not claim to have a local knowledge of Ireland, but I think I do know my native county of Donegal fairly well and I am sorry I cannot at all agree with the view of your correspondent as to Gweedore being the best place in Donegal for the new Gaelic College for Ulster.*

*There are many Irish-speaking districts in Donegal which, in the absence of better and more congenial places, would be suitable for a Gaelic College. But most of those Irish-speaking districts, including Gweedore, I pass over as not being central enough as a rallying-ground for the Gaels of Donegal, not to mention the Gaels of Ulster. Besides, many of those places have not the hallowed and inspiring associations that Donegal can and should give to the new Gaelic College. There seems to be a dearth of local historical association and tradition in Gweedore compared to many of the Irish-speaking districts of Donegal. I fear, too, that Gweedore with its thousands going out yearly to the Lagan and to Scotland for a long time back cannot be the best place in Donegal to find the Irish language spoken with its pristine blas and purity. Those poor people who had to migrate every year must have insensibly incorporated with their own Irish language a large number of Scotch words and phrases. This is very noticeable in all the parishes along the North-Western seaboard of Donegal. I think it highly desirable and important for the success of the new Gaelic College to have it established in an Irish-speaking district that is rich in historic traditions and hallowed memories of the past. It would grow and flourish better in such a congenial soil. It could thus more naturally and easily be grafted on the venerable tree of Irish learning and civilization. It would therefore be very desirable that the Gaelic College should be located near some hallowed centre of Irish learning and culture which in the days of Irish freedom*

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<sup>15</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (24.3.06, 9).

*diffused its beneficent light through the land. It would thus more easily inherit the Irish genius and traditions of the place, and link us faithfully with the past. Can such a suitable and congenial rallying centre for the Gaels of Ulster be found in Donegal? I think so, and the Gaels of Ulster should get the best possible location that Donegal can give them for the Gaelic College.*<sup>16</sup>

Bheadh fonn ar an chomhfhreagraí sin Baile Dhún na nGall a mholadh ar chuid mhór cúiseanna ach amháin nach raibh Gaeilge ar bith san áit ná le fada roimhe sin.<sup>17</sup> Chaithfí áit eile a aimsiú, chan Gaoth Dobhair, a d'fhóirfeadh don ócáid. Tá áit ar intinn aige a bheadh taghna.

*There is, I think, one other locality in the county which is Irish-speaking, more central and more inspiring even in its historic associations for a Gaelic College than the beautiful town of the Four Masters...*

*I think if the Gaelic College is established in the parish of Gartan, near the birthplace of St. Columba, especially since the district is so thoroughly Irish-speaking, so central and so redolent of sweet traditions and noble inspirations for Gaelic Leaguers, it will more easily and naturally become a real rallying centre for the Gaels of Donegal and Ulster, than if established in a backward district possessing few of the above claims and attractions. The Gaelic College would gain considerably by its proximity to Letterkenny. The Cathedral of St. Eunan, with its Irish workmanship, inscriptions and designs, would be an instructive object lesson for the Gael to see occasionally. The new College of St. Eunan, with its thoroughly Irish courses of learning, would be a help and inspiration to the Gaelic College.*

*And what earnest Gaelic Leaguer should not wish to have the Gaelic League near to and under the fostering care of the illustrious Bishop of Raphoe, than whom no living Irishman has taken a deeper and more enlightened interest in the Irish revival, nor has done more for the restoration of Irish learning and every good that it typifies and embraces. It would be loss for the Gaelic College to be too far removed from his beneficial and kindly influence. The Gaelic College, thus established under the patronage of St. Columba, amid the hallowed surroundings of his natal spot, and under the fostering care of the distinguished and illustrious Bishop of Raphoe, who seems to have inherited the genius, the patriotism and the virtues of St. Columba in a remarkable degree,*

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<sup>16</sup> *The Derry Journal*, (22.2.06, 7).

<sup>17</sup> *Keeping the above object in view, and taking a broad, impartial glance at the country, the town of Donegal where the Four Masters with patient and unremitting toil compiled their Annals 'Chun Glóire Dé agus Onóra na hÉireann,' would at once suggest itself as a very congenial and inspiring place for the Gaelic College. But is the town of the Four Masters Irish-speaking still? There's the rub. I know there are several Irish-speaking districts near the town, and there are many Irish speakers and a few Irish scholars in the town of Donegal. The old castle is still there, proudly reminding us of the glories of other days; and then, too, is the cloistered, roofless abbey by the sea, silently reminding us of a thousand hallowed associations and memories of the past. The scenery all around the town of Donegal is very varied and beautiful.*

*But passing over the claims of the town of Donegal as not being, perhaps, Irish-speaking enough, for the Gaelic College (op. cit.).*

*would soon become a centre of hope and joy, diffusing light and new life to the  
Gaels of Donegal, of Ulster and of Ireland...*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Columkille*

*17<sup>th</sup> February, 1906.<sup>18</sup>*

Nuair a mhol an comhfheagraí seo Gartán go poiblí, tugadh freagra air láithreach agus maíodh nach bhféadfaí Gaeltacht a thabhairt ar an cheantar a bhí i gceist. I ndeireadh na dála, ní dheachthas ar aghaidh leis an smaoineamh sin faoi Ghartán ná níor leanadh ar aghaidh le Gaoth Dobhair ach oiread ar chúis iontach praiticiúil – ní raibh fáil ar fhoirgneamh a bheadh fóirsteanach in am do thús an tseisiúin.

*Dear Sir - Referring to your application for the use of the Bunbeg Courthouse for the purposes of the Irish lectures. In your first letter you spoke of these as being under the auspices of the 'Ulster Union,' which you described as 'non-political and non-sectarian.' On enquiry this turns out to be a branch of the Gaelic League which I consider both sectarian and political. Under the circumstances I regret that I cannot see my way to granting the use of the Courthouse for your purposes. – Faithfully yours, H. Irvine.<sup>19</sup>*

Cinneadh ar Ghort an Choirce agus sin mar a bhí.<sup>20</sup>

Char éirigh an t-easpag as a chuid pleannanna féin, áfach. Duine dáigh, neamhspleách a bhí ann nach ngéillfeadh go réidh do dhuine ar bith agus a shantódh a dhóigh féin a fháil. Mar sin a tharla. Chuirfí tús le Coláiste na gCeithre Máistrí i samhradh na bliana 1906, an samhradh céanna ar a gcuirfí tús le hArd-Scoil Cholm Cille (Coláiste Uladh ina dhiaidh sin). Is cinnte go raibh contúirt ann go millfeadh ceann amháin an margadh ar an cheann eile agus aithníodh sin agus féachadh lena sheachaint

*Eilís Ní Mhaeagáin writes:-*

*He [the Bishop] was most anxious to hear all about the project of the Irish Summer College which is to be at Cloghaneely, and it is most important that the latter should be managed in such a way as not to be in rivalry with the Bishop's Summer School. The two schemes could be arranged to fit into and help one another.<sup>21</sup>*

*From a letter contributed by Miss Alice Milligan to last week's issue of An Claidheamh Soluis, it would appear there is some danger of the proposed Ulster Training College clashing with a Summer School contemplated by the Most Rev. Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe. Miss Milligan, in the course of her letter says....*

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<sup>18</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> *The Derry Journal* (21.3.06, 5).

<sup>20</sup> Seosamh Ó Ceallaigh (eag.), *Coláiste Uladh 1906-2006* (Coiste Cuimhneacháin na Coláiste, 1906);

<sup>21</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (12.5.06, 8)

*Why will the promoters of the Irish Summer College at Cloghaneely not keep the Bishop fully informed as to the progress of their project? Does it not seem this duty has been neglected when the Bishop is represented as 'most anxious to hear all about the project?'*<sup>22</sup>

Mar a tharla, féachadh chuige nach dtiocfadh an dá choláiste salach ar a chéile. Chuirfidh tús le Coláiste na gCeithre Máistrí agus mí ina dhiaidh sin, Ard-Scoil Cholm Cille. Bheadh an dá choláiste agus foireann an dá choláiste ar na hóí le chéile feasta ó tharla aon chuspóir amháin acu. Thugadh na daoine gradamúla agus léannta céanna cuairt ar an dá áit. Bhain siad beirt leis an eagraíocht amháin, ar bhealach. Ócáid mhór a bhí ann don easpag, ó thaobh an oideachais, na Gaeilge agus na hidéolaíochta de. Ní hiontas go bhfacthas dó go raibh dea-spéir os cionn an fhiontair:<sup>23</sup>

*Rev. Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe said:*

*'...In the course of a very few days, they would have there planted in Donegal and across the chasm of three centuries, a new College of the Four Masters, teaching the Irish language and all kindred subjects to everyone who chose to come there to be instructed in them. Might it be given to them to revive, and if possible, to exceed, the fame of that noble Abbey by the sea that still in its ruins drew to it the heart of every Irishman whose heart beat for holiness or for learning.*

*Their new College was exceedingly fortunate in the staff that it had secured in the School of the Four Masters. Just as three centuries ago on the staff of the Four Masters there were other assistants of the same qualifications to aid in doing the work that they undertook for rescuing the Annals of Erin from oblivion, so, too, there would be with their Four Masters one or two others of similar standing to render any assistance that might be required. The masters would reside in the College. Their pupils were to live in the town or in the neighbourhood, and the rules for them would be simple rules, such as all could observe who were interested in the progress of their studies. All would be welcome, most of all National teachers – all, in fact, would be welcome who were willing to bend their minds and give honest service to the hard work of learning the Irish language. Although a great many spoke Irish in Letterkenny, it was not an Irish-speaking district, and in that respect they had not the*

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<sup>22</sup> *The Irish People* (19.5.06, 7).

<sup>23</sup> *The Bishop availed of the gathering of the priests, teachers, and people of Donegal to announce the details of his scheme for a summer course of Irish learning within the walls of the new College. The Rev. Dr. Maguire will have responsible charge of the course, and will be assisted by a staff of able and enthusiastic professors. The classes, whilst intended mainly for National Teachers, will be open to all who are anxious to secure training in Irish, and who, as the Bishop was careful to forewarn his audience, are willing to work hard. The inauguration of this new seat of Irish learning is in a sense dramatic. 'The idea underlying the building of that College would be made manifest to the world when... they would have there planted in Donegal and across the chasm of three centuries a new College of the Four Masters teaching the Irish language and all kindred subjects to everyone who chose to come there to be instructed in them. Might it be given to them to revive, and, if possible, to exceed, the fame of that noble Abbey by the sea that still, in its ruins, drew to it the heart of every Irishman whose heart beat for holiness or for learning!'* An aspiration of the Bishop to which every Gaelic Leaguer will say 'Amen! as An Claidheamh Soluis (21.7.06, 7).

*advantage that would be enjoyed by the new College that would soon be started at Cloughanealy. But the Irish districts were not far away, and in other ways they had tremendous advantages in St. Eunan's College. Thanks be to God, their hearts could not desire a more competent staff than the staff that had already volunteered for their service. They had also the great advantage of starting then Gaelic course under the leadership of one who was a past master in educational work – the Very Rev. Dr. Maguire.*

*The College that Dr. Maguire was going to conduct there during the month of August would open its doors on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of that month. Those who were anxious to follow the courses should communicate at once with Dr. Maguire who would make the best possible arrangements for their convenience. The prospectus would be published at once and would be given to everyone who wanted it. But those who were interested in the College would tell no man or no woman that there was a royal road to learning the Irish language.*

*Undoubtedly, as far as he was concerned, one of the great advantages that he looked forward to in the erection of that College was that it would bind by a close bond the teachers of Donegal to a centre of enlightenment to which they could come and receive a welcome, and from which they would go back with new encouragement and new light to do the work which they did in the schools for the people...<sup>24</sup>*

Ar bhealach, bhí saolú Choláiste Adhamhnáin agus Choláiste na gCeithre Máistrí sa bhliain sin 1906 mar an dláíóg mhullaigh ar ghníomhaíocht oideachais agus Ghaeilge an easpaig i rith a shaoil.

*The Irish Language Session in St. Eunan's College, Letterkenny, will open on the 1<sup>st</sup> August. The daily routine of the school will extend over 10 hours. Work will begin at 10.00, and the first half hour will be devoted to comments and questions in Irish on home lessons, and lessons based on the Direct Method of teaching Irish. This will be followed by exercises in reading, analysis, translation, grammar and pronunciation; after which there will be dictation or original composition in Irish. This work will be the order until 12 o'clock, at which hour an adjournment will take place. On resumption, classes will be engaged in methods of teaching for an hour. From 4.00 p.m. to 5.30 classes will be again engaged in method work, the reading of texts, translation etc. and in study of a course of phonetics. At 5.30 there will be another adjournment, and from 7.00 to 8.00 there will be a sgoruidheacht, at which story-telling, traditional singing, dancing and conversation will be the principal features. A staff specially qualified in each branch of the college work and consisting of Fr. Maguire, Fr. O'Doherty and Messers. Ward, Craig and O'Doherty, has been engaged for the session and it is intended to have their work supplemented by occasional lectures on Irish subjects by leading Gaelic scholars. The session will last from the 1<sup>st</sup> August to the 1<sup>st</sup> September. No fees will be charged for the teaching, and at the end of the course a certificate for proficiency and attendance will be given to all qualifying students.<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> *The Irish Peasant* (21.7.06, 5).

<sup>25</sup> *The Irish People* (28.7.06, 7).

Maidir leis an cháineadh a rinneadh go ráibh an Coláiste i gceartlár na Galltachta, bhí freagra réidh ag an easpag:

*A... plausible objection is raised against the un-Irish character of the town and neighbourhood of Letterkenny, where the old tongue is little spoken. Now, this is a hollow fallacy; the atmosphere of our students, who are tied down to their desks for these five weeks, is very circumscribed, and is thoroughly impregnated with the healthy aroma of the very best Irish. Most of our students are fluent native speakers, and the rest must associate and converse in Irish with these, on their walks, at their recreation, in the evening reunions, etc.*<sup>26</sup>

Rinne Coláiste na gCeithre Máistí a chion féin san obair a chuir sé roimhe féin i gcaitheamh na mblianta agus, rud nach gcuimhnítear air go minic, bronnadh oiread teastas ansin is a bronnadh sna coláistí eile ar mó an trácht a rinneadh orthu. Bhí daoine oilte léannta ar an fhoireann teagaisc ann i gcaitheamh na mblianta, thug lucht léinn<sup>27</sup> den uile chineál léachtaí ansin fosta agus rinne an coláiste leas mór do chúis na Gaeilge sa chontae.<sup>28</sup>

Cuireadh na coláistí Gaeilge seo ar bun an chéad lá riamh ‘to supply defects in the official system which had failed to supply qualified teachers of Irish.’<sup>29</sup> Is é Dughlas de hÍde a dúirt: ‘The training colleges are, from an Irish Ireland point of view, rotten to the core.’<sup>30</sup> B’ionann a bheag nó a mhór an curaclam agus an mhodheolaíocht, an córas scrúdaithe srl. ó choláiste go coláiste ar an ábhar go raibh na spriocanna oideachais céanna acu uilig. Rinne siad aoine ó thaobh na Gaeilge agus theagasc na Gaeilge de sa chóras náisiúnta oideachais a leigheas ag pointe áirithe i stair na tíre seo. Níorbh ionann iad ar an uile dhóigh, áfach, ó tharla go raibh cuid acu lonnaithe faoin tuaith agus cuid eile i gcathair nó baile mór, cuid á reáchtáil i rith an gheimhridh, cuid ag deireadh an tsamhraidh. Rinne siad uilig leas mór do chinniúint na Gaeilge agus ba cheart comóradh a dhéanamh orthu dá réir.

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<sup>26</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (29.8.08, 7).

<sup>27</sup> ‘Dr. Sigerson, John MacNeill, Miss O’Farrelly, and many other Ulster litterateurs have been requested to give occasional lectures on useful subjects suited to the course.’ As *The Derry Journal* (1.6.06, 5).

<sup>28</sup> Seo a leanas leid bheag spéisiúil faoi chuid den obair a bhí ar siúl faoina scáth: ‘A Society or association was formed in Letterkenny during the session of the Irish Training College there last September to carry out the collection not only of proverbs but of prayers, hymns, songs, folklore, idioms etc.’ as *The Derry Journal* (31.1.08, 8).

<sup>29</sup> ‘The Gaelic Colleges’ in *The Freeman’s Journal* (10.10.22, 6).

<sup>30</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (14.10.11, 8).

Ní miste críochnú le teist seo Eoin Mhic Néill orthu:

*[The Irish Colleges are] the flower of Gaelic League endeavour. They are certainly the best instruments we have forged for the working out of our purpose. Their staff consist of teachers who are expert in knowledge and method, and they are engaged in the training of other teachers who will carry on in school and college the work of the revival... The Irish colleges are to the League what military colleges are to an army. They train the officers of our movement in knowledge and in methods and give them courage and resourceful individuality for their work. Before the advent of the colleges, in spite of the enthusiasm and sincerity of many workers, much energy was wasted in unfruitful endeavour to teach Irish without the skill of the language teacher.<sup>31</sup>*

[Foilsíodh an t-alt seo in *An tUltach* (Deireadh Fómhair, 2006) 10-4.]

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<sup>31</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis* (23.10.09, 9).