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**‘Every Kingdom divided against itself shall be destroyed’:
Gaelic succession, overlords, *uirríthe* and the Nine Years’ War
(1593-1603)**

by

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Thesis for the Degree of PhD, Department of History National University of
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May 2020

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Declaration I hereby certify that this material is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work. I have not obtained a degree in this University, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

Signed:

Matthew McGinty

Abstract

The late sixteenth century was a tumultuous period for Ireland. The Tudor government's attempts to extend their authority, laws and customs into an autonomous or semi-autonomous Gaelic Ireland was met with fierce resistance as the local Gaelic lords were determined to preserve their traditional power and way of life. The struggle between the two opposing worlds escalated over the final decades of the century and culminated in the Nine Years' War, one of the most bloody and influential conflicts in Irish history. The war was fought between the crown government and a Gaelic confederacy headed by two Ulster chieftains, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and Hugh Rua O'Donnell. Tyrone and O'Donnell did not have the full backing of Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland as the island was a riven land. Much of the dissension in Gaelic Ireland was internal clan feuds which were a result of Gaelic succession practices. There was also conflict between clans as the stronger tried to impose their overlordship on the weaker. Such factiousness was open to exploitation by the government as rivals could be played off each and Gaelic allies recruited to their side. Such allies could prove to be very useful during conflict as they provided guides, spies, provisions and soldiers. During the Nine Years' War the Gaelic confederacy mirrored wider society and thus it was a house of cards plagued by numerous divisions. Taking advantage of the different rifts among Tyrone and O'Donnell's collusion was a key policy of the crown government. This study examines Gaelic succession and how it led to divided clans and internal wars over the position of chieftain. The poor relations between clans will also be touched upon. The study will then evaluate the part these two forces of disunity, and the government's exploitation of them, played during the Nine Years' War and how much of a bearing they had on the outcome of the war.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Pádraig Lenihan for all his help during this lengthy process and my parents for the invaluable support they provided.

Abbreviations

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| <i>A repertory</i> | <i>A repertory of the inrolments on the patent rolls of Chancery in Ireland</i> , John Caillard Erck (ed), 1846, Vol.1, part 1 |
| <i>APC</i> | <i>Acts of the Privy Council of England</i> , 32 Vols, J.R Dasent (ed), London, 1890-1907 |
| <i>AFM</i> | O'Donovan, John (ed and trans), <i>Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616</i> , 7 Vols, Dublin, 1990 |
| <i>ALC</i> | Hennessy, William (ed.), <i>The Annals of Loch Cé</i> , 2 Vols, London, 1871 |
| <i>AU</i> | Hennessy, William and B. MacCarthy (eds), <i>Annals of Ulster</i> , 4 Vols, Dublin. 1887-1901 |
| <i>Beatha Aodha Ruaidh</i> | Ó Cléirigh, Lughaidh, <i>Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill (The Life of Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill)</i> , 2 Vols, Paul Walsh (ed and trans), Dublin Irish Texts Society, 1948, 1957 |
| <i>Carew manuscripts</i> | <i>Calendar of Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archbishopal Library Lambeth, 1515-1624</i> , 6 Vols, J.S Brewer and W. Bullen, London, 1867-73 |
| <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls</i> | <i>Calendar of the Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland</i> , 3 Vols, James Morrin, Dublin 1861 |
| <i>Cecil Papers</i> | Hatfield House Archives, The Cecil papers |
| <i>CSPI</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland</i> , 24 Vols, H.C Hamilton et al (eds), London, 1860-1912 |
| <i>CSP Simancas</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Spain (Simancas)</i> , 4 Vols, Martin A S Hume (ed), London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1892-9 |
| <i>Irish Fiants</i> | Nicholls, K. W. (ed), <i>The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns</i> . 4 Vols, Dublin: De Burca, 1994. |

- Salisbury Manuscripts* *Calendar of the manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury ... preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, 24 Vols, R.A. Roberts et al (eds), London, 1883-1976*
- S. P Henry VIII* *State Papers: King Henry the Eighth. Vols 2 and 3, Part 3 London: His Majesty's Commission for State Papers, 1834*
- SP 52* *State papers Scotland Series 1, Elizabeth I, 1558-1603*
- SP 63* *Irish State Papers, Elizabeth to George III*

Notes on Conventions

Dates have been given in old style but the year will begin on the 1st January instead of the 25th March which was the custom in Tudor governed territories. In quotations, the original spelling has been kept as much as possible.

Introduction

Looking back, two decades after the Nine Years' War, Phillip O'Sullivan Beare laid most of the blame for the defeat of the Gaelic confederacy on the divisions within it and the Tudor government's deft exploitation of these fault lines. By taking advantage of the disunity, the government was able to secure the defections of several prominent Gaelic confederates and for O'Sullivan this stratagem was so successful that it crippled the Gaelic confederacy and led to its downfall. Furthermore, O'Sullivan thought that so many Gaelic confederates defected and served with the government that the Irish were 'conquered not so much by the English as by one another.'¹ It was not just O'Sullivan Beare who recognised the role divisions and infighting played in the defeat of the Gaelic confederacy. Richard Hadsor, an Old English lawyer from the Pale, stated a year after the conclusion of the war, that 'Yf the mere Iryshe in their late Rebellion hadd the understanding to unite themselves together in one body *quod omen Deus avartat* [which omen God avert] and leave their factious emulacions and contencions for superiority ... and yelde themselves & their estates in subjection to certen chieftaynes' then Ireland would have 'been in greate danger to be lost.'² This study will examine the Gaelic confederacy's structural weakness identified by both O'Sullivan Beare and Hadsor. To demonstrate this a detailed narrative of the emulations and contentions during the Nine Years' War is necessary. First though, the fissures within the Gaelic confederacy need to be understood and situated in the wider context of the socio-politics of Gaelic Ireland as the confederacy's divisions were not unique but a reflection of the fractured nature of Gaelic society.

Why was Gaelic Ireland so fractured? There were two major forces of disunity which produced division, Gaelic succession practices and the bad relationship between overlord and their *uirríthe*, *uirrí* in the singular, vassal chieftains who owed economic and military services. O'Sullivan Beare identified one of these forces as the cause of dissension within the Gaelic confederacy. He blamed disunity on internal clan feuds over the position of chieftain which were a by-product of Gaelic succession. The government could take advantage of these feuds when a chieftain rebelled as they could appeal to one of his rivals for military assistance and in return the crown would support their claim to their clan's

¹ O'Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*. Matthew Byrne (ed), Port Washington, Kennikat Press, 1970, pp.57-8

²McLaughlin, Joseph, "New Light on Richard Hadsor II: Documents XLVII: Richard Hadsor's 'Discourse' on the Irish State, 1604" *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol.30, no.119 pp. 342, 349-50

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lordship.³ It is important to note that when using the word ‘clan’ this thesis employs the Kenneth Nicholls’ definition which is as a patrilineal descent group forming a definite corporate entity with political and legal functions and who possessed particular lands. This definition is little concerned with linking a clan to the socio-familial sphere. The term sept (deriving from *sliocht* meaning division) is another label used to describe these corporate entities. The terms clan or sept may also refer to small descent groups within a larger clan who still remained part of the larger clan. These small descent groups could break from the larger one and become a separate entity. The O’Neills in east Ulster did this as they detached from the O’Neills of Tyrone to become the Clandeboye O’Neills.⁴

Gaelic Ireland did not have a word for their system of succession but the term most often used by English contemporaries and historians to denote Gaelic succession was tanistry. The term derives from the word *tánaiste*, tanist in its anglicised form. According to the eighth century legal text, *Críth Gabhach*, the *tánaiste* was the designated heir or more literally ‘the expected one’ who ‘the whole people looks forward to his kingship without opposition to him.’ Although the word *tánaiste* later broadened its meaning to become a translation of the Latin *secundus* so *tánaiste* could also be translated as the person second to the chieftain.⁵ The Elizabethan poet, Edmund Spenser, gave the most detailed description of ‘Tanistrie’ and the role of the *tánaiste* and therefore it is worth quoting in full:

It is a custome amongst all the Irish, that presently after the death of any their chiefe Lords or Captaines, they do presently assemble themselves to a place, generally appoynted and knowne unto them, to chose another in his stead: where they do nominate and elect, for the most part, not the eldest sonne, nor any of the children of there Lord deceased, but the next to him of blood, that is, the eldest and worthiest, as commonly the next brother unto him, if he have any, or the next couzine germane, or so forth, as any is elder in that kindred or sept: and then next

³ O’Sullivan Beare, Philip, *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, pp.57-8

⁴Nicholls, K. W., *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages*. Dublin: Lilliput press, 2003 pp.8-12,152-4, 158-62

⁵ Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000, p.54

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to him do those chose the next of the blood to be Tanist, who shall next succede him in the said Captentry, if he live therunto.⁶

Therefore, according to Spenser, following the passing of the incumbent the son would not inherit the chieftainship and instead a new chieftain would be elected, usually the brother or cousin of the deceased. At the same time his successor or ‘Tanist’ would be chosen and he was to replace the chieftain following his death. Much of the discourse surrounding tanistry is concerned with early medieval Ireland and whether tanistry existed then. This debate was started by Eoin MacNeill in 1919 when he concluded that tanistry and the designation of an heir apparent was largely a thirteenth century development. Historians such as Gearóid Mac Niocaill, D. A. Binchy, Donnchadh Ó Corráin, T. M. Charles-Edwards and Katherine Simms have argued against MacNeill’s hypothesis and there is a relative consensus that tanistry and the appointment of an heir apparent, was of considerable antiquity. Megan McGowan does provide a dissenting voice and largely agrees with MacNeill’s original assessment.⁷

While discussions surrounding tanistry are more concerned with the medieval period, early modern historians have touched upon the subject. Kenneth Nicholls in his seminal book, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, had a short section dedicated to tanistry. Like Spenser, Nicholls describes tanistry as the nomination of an heir apparent during the lifetime of a chieftain, theoretically at the same time as a new chieftain was elected. Nicholls also added that eligibility for the chieftainship was supposed to be restricted to the members of a clan’s *derbfine*, who were the descendent of a common ancestor within four generations so anyone whose great-grandfather had been chieftain could in theory become chieftain themselves. However, Nicholls also notes that in the sixteenth and seventeenth century English writers often saw tanistry as succession by agnatic seniority and the designation of a *tánaiste* was only a variant.⁸ Agnatic seniority was the succession of the eldest of the family. Thus, when a ruler died, he was replaced by his eldest living brother and following his death the next oldest brother would succeed and so on. When there were no more brothers left, the eldest son of the eldest brother would become the ruler and pass it on to his brothers and cousins. The different ways the term tanistry was used in an early

⁶ Spenser, Edmund. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. W. L. Renwick (ed), Oxford: Clarendon, 1970, pp.7-8

⁷For a summary of this debate see McGowan, Megan, “Royal Succession in Earlier Medieval Ireland: The Fiction of Tanistry” *Peritia*, Vol 17-18, (2003-4), pp.357-81

⁸ Nicholls, K. W., *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, pp.27-30

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modern context could possibly lead to confusion over whether one means a form of agnatic seniority or the designation of an heir apparent. To avoid this confusion when using the word 'tanistry' this thesis employs the term to mean the latter.

When discussing Gaelic succession, Nicholls also noted that the reality was much different to the theory because succession often devolved into bloody conflicts and the new chieftain was usually the strongest contender as he was best able to prevail in these wars of succession. What is more, such confrontations over succession, especially when the competitors were equally matched, could lead to permanent or temporary divisions within clans. Nicholls does not go into depth about the structural weaknesses of tanistry or Gaelic succession and how it led to a dysfunctional succession system which resulted in riven clans. Neither does Nicholls provide any footnotes.⁹ A more thorough examination of Gaelic succession is needed, and Katherine Simms does provide this in her book *From Kings to Warlords*. She tracks the development of Gaelic succession and the position of the *tánaiste* from medieval times to the early modern period, however she dismisses the link between succession and the problems of internal clan conflict. Simms instead points to the system of land tenure as a bigger problem because chieftains did not own their land but were just overlords. To impose and maintain their overlordship violence was required and it was this that Simms thinks was the cause of much of the strife and turmoil in Gaelic society.¹⁰ However the effect succession practices have on stability and violence cannot be dismissed and this is evident when look at the wider discourse surrounding succession.

Manuel Eisner examined regicides in Europe between 600-1800 AD and he found that during this period kings were either murdered or killed on the battlefield to such an extent that European kinship before the industrial revolution was one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. In fact Eisner concluded that the risk to life for a king in medieval and early modern Europe was at least equal to a soldier involved in a conflict today.¹¹ Succession was the main reason why being a monarch was so hazardous as Eisner classifies most of the regicides as related to the issue of succession. Eisner thought there was a link between succession laws and regicide and that some types of succession practices were worse as they made competing claims more likely which in turn increased the chances of

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, pp.41-60

¹¹ Eisner, Manuel, 'KILLING KINGS: Patterns of Regicide in Europe, ad 600—1800' in *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (May, 2011), pp.563-4

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a violent conflict related to succession.¹² Others accept that the system of agnatic primogeniture, whereby the eldest son should succeed his father, was flawed but was still was the most likely to produce stability and avoid violence. The reason for this is that agnatic primogeniture avoids two problems associated with succession, the coordination problem and the crown prince problem. The coordination problem occurs when there is no designated heir and there is uncertainty over who the successor is following the death of a monarch or autocrat. In this uncertainty, the elite and influential members of the current regime, such as princes, dukes, barons, ministers, generals etc, may struggle to coordinate their efforts in order to agree on a successor and this could lead to several candidates and conflict.¹³ This can happen when there is an open election following the death of an incumbent.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth used elective kingship and had a large pool of candidates and the entirety of the szlachta (nobility) had the right to attend royal elections. This resulted in tens of thousands being eligible to convene at Wola field but usually between ten and fifteen thousand actually attended. At Wola field they would crowd around the pavilion of their respective province and debate the election.¹⁴ The Commonwealth suffered from the coordination problem as the szlachta usually struggled to agree on a king, resulting in chaotic elections at Wola Field and disagreements, confusion and violence became a standard part of the succession process. Violence was so common in fact that when thirteen were killed in 1764 it was deemed to be a quiet year. On occasions the inability of the szlachta to agree on a king led to a double election and two rival kings. Then the battlefield could be used to decide succession, and this was the case in 1587. There was a double election involving Sigismund Vasa and Maximilian Habsburg and the succession issue was ultimately resolved at Byczyna when Sigismund's supporters, headed by Jan Zamoyski, defeated and captured Maximilian. Maximilian was then detained until he and the Habsburgs agreed to give up their pretensions to the Polish throne.¹⁵ The problems created by not having a designated heir and relying on elections

¹²Ibid, pp.564, 572

¹³ Kokkonen, Andrej & Anders Sundell, "The King is Dead: Political Succession and War in Europe, 1000-1799" *The Quality of Government Institute working paper series*, Vol.9 (2017), pp.7-12, Kokkonen, Andrej, and Anders Sundell, "Delivering Stability—Primogeniture and Autocratic Survival in European Monarchies 1000–1800." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2, (May 2014), pp.439-40

¹⁴ Bues, Almut, "The Formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century." in Butterwick, Richard Butterwick (ed), *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context, c. 1500–1795*. London: Palgrave, 2001, pp.69,72, Davies, Norman. *God's Playground. a History of Poland*. Vol. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.254, 313

¹⁵ Davies, Norman, *God's Playground*, Vol.1, pp.254-5, 328-9

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was not restricted to the immediate aftermath of a king's death. The uncertainty encouraged depositions because possible successors were unsure if they could ever be king if they remained passive and tried to secure the kingship through an unpredictable election. Therefore, they might decide that they had a better chance at becoming king by making a pre-emptive strike and deposing the incumbent.¹⁶

Designating an heir can solve the coordination problem but by doing this one encounters the crown prince problem. The term 'crown prince problem' was coined by John Herz. It describes the increased threat of a coup that accompanies the appointment of a designated heir. Herz thought there was a great likelihood that anyone seeking to be an autocrat and designated as a successor would be bold and ambitious, making them a potentially dangerous threat to the incumbent.¹⁷ Gordon Tullock expanded on Herz's crown prince problem theory. According to Tullock when an heir is nominated, he has strong motives for assassinating or removing the incumbent. The most important motivating factor is the danger that he may lose his position as heir apparent. If the successor is appointed by a king or dictator, then there is the possibility that he may change his mind and select another. Alternatively, another contender may seek to be eliminate him in order to take his place as heir. The position of designated heir could be a precarious one and by waiting and being patient one risked losing out on becoming the new king or dictator. Therefore, an appointed successor could be tempted to carry out a coup to ensure his succession rather than risk waiting.¹⁸ Another problem with appointing a successor was that a designated heir not only had motive and ambition but was more likely to have the means to overthrow the current ruler because usually when promoted to the position of designated successor one would acquire more authority and support which in turn could be used to depose the incumbent.¹⁹

Concerns over the crown prince problem informed Elizabeth I's decision not to name her heir even when she came under pressure from the Houses of Lords and Commons to do so. They were more worried about the coordination problem especially after the

¹⁶Kurrild-Klitgaard, Peter, "The Constitutional Economics of Autocratic Succession." *Public Choice*, Vol. 103, no. 1/2, (April 2000), p.67

¹⁷ Herz, John, "The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes; A Study in Comparative Law and Institutions." *The Journal of Politics* Vol.14 No.1 (Feb 1952), p.30

¹⁸ Tullock, Gordon, *Autocracy*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1987, pp.151-2, Kurrild-Klitgaard, Peter. "The Constitutional Economics of Autocratic Succession.", p.69

¹⁹ Konrad, Kai A, and Vai-Lam Mui, "The Prince—or Better No Prince? The Strategic Value of Appointing a Successor." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 61, No. 10, (2017), pp. 2159-61, Brownlee, Jason. "Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies." *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 04, (2007), p.604

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heirless Queen suffered from smallpox in 1562 and the possibility of her dying without a nominated heir was brought to the fore. The following year the two houses petitioned Elizabeth and the Lords warned of the violence that could ensue if her successor was not known:

great danger and peril to all states and sorts of men in this realm, by the factions, seditions and intestine war that would grow through want of understanding to whom they should yield their allegiances and duties.²⁰

In 1566 the Commons warned Elizabeth that if she refused to name an heir then she, her Privy Council and the Commons ‘shall answer for all the innocent blood that shall be split.’²¹ These warnings did little to move Elizabeth who was adamant that an nominated heir would pose a great threat to her. She, like Herz, thought they would be ambitious and she would ‘honour them as angels that should have such piety in them that they would not seek where they are second to be first.’²² Elizabeth also pointed out that even if her heir apparent did not want to attempt a coup they would act as a beacon for those who were disaffected and wanted a regime change. This fear was based on Elizabeth’s time as her sister’s successor, when there were conspiracies to put her on the throne. In 1566 she responded to the parliament’s demands that she name an heir and stated that she would not as she had been the ‘second person’ and ‘tasted the practises’ against her sister.²³ On another occasion she told a Scottish ambassador of these conspiracies and explained that was why if her heir were known she would ‘never think herself in sufficient security.’²⁴ Although ultimately her refusal to name her successor did not prevent her presumptive heir, Mary Queen of Scots, from becoming a focal point for plotters and Mary was eventually executed for her role in the Babington plot which aimed to assassinate Elizabeth I.²⁵

For Tullock, agnatic primogeniture was the best approach to succession as it not only solves the coordination problem but limits the dangers of the crown prince problem. This is largely due to the fact that the successor, as the son of the incumbent, would be much younger than the current ruler. Such an age gap meant that the son if he wants to

²⁰ Quoted in Haigh, Christopher. *Elizabeth I*. New York Routledge, 1998, pp.20-1

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (eds), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002, p.96

²³ *Ibid*, p.9

²⁴ Haigh, Christopher. *Elizabeth I*, p.22

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.149

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succeed to the throne 'is wise to simply wait for his father to die.'²⁶ In other forms of succession, there could be a small age gap between successor and incumbent. Agnatic seniority, by looking towards familial coevals for a successor, guaranteed that the age gap would be relatively close.²⁷ Having an heir apparent who was close in age with the current ruler worsens the crown prince problem and the threat of a coup. If the designated successor waits patiently for the incumbent to die, there is a real threat that he may die before he gets a chance at ruling. The designated successor may become increasingly anxious about this possibility and decide, instead of waiting, to guarantee his succession by overthrowing the incumbent.²⁸ Tullock also thought that the rigidity of agnatic primogeniture positive. There could only be one eldest son and he could not be replaced by another eldest son and with such security there is little incentive for heir apparent to seek to succeed through the riskier path of war and violence.²⁹ Lastly agnatic primogeniture decreases the dangers of the crown prince problem because as soon as the eldest son is born he is heir. For a portion of his tenure as heir the eldest son is a child and completely incapable staging a coup.³⁰

Some have tested Tullock's thesis about stability and agnatic primogeniture. Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard looked at the Danish monarchy from 935 to 1849 AD and it was a good case study to examine Tullock's theory because during the near millennium, succession arrangements changed on several occasions and the stability each period produced can be compared. Prior to 1536, when primogeniture was first informally adopted, there were 40 kings and 12 ,or 30 percent, were deposed but following the adoption of primogeniture there were no coups.³¹ Kokkonen and Sundell took a more macro approach as their study on stability and primogeniture incorporated 961 monarchs from 42 European states who ruled between 1000-1800 AD. They found that the risk of deposition was lower when primogeniture was used, and that agnatic seniority was more unstable than elective kingship which suggests that the crown prince problem was a greater threat to stability than the coordination problem. Therefore, having no successor was better than having one who was of a similar age to the incumbent. Furthermore, the political stability that primogeniture created increased a state's chances of survival.³²

²⁶Tullock, Gordon, *Autocracy*, p.163

²⁷ Kokkonen, Andrej, and Anders Sundell. "Delivering Stability", p.445

²⁸ Ibid, pp.440-1 Brownlee, Jason. "Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies." p.605

²⁹ Tullock, Gordon, *Autocracy*, pp.163-4

³⁰ Kurrild-Klitgaard, Peter, "The Constitutional Economics of Autocratic Succession.", p.70

³¹ Ibid pp.73-79

³² Kokkonen, Andrej, and Anders Sundell. "Delivering Stability", pp.445-51

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Kokkonen and Sundell in another study looked at how autocratic succession and succession arrangements affected the chances of war in Europe from 1000 to 1799 AD. They examined 28 states and focused on years when a monarch's death was unconnected to anything political. They defined non-political deaths as deaths that resulted from disease or accidents. The reason for focusing on only non-political deaths is that it helps to isolate the casual effect of succession on war propensity. Under their criteria, the 28 states provided a combined total of 453 years in which a monarch died from a non-political death. Their results showed that the probability of a civil war related to succession breaking out in a normal year was 2.7 per cent and in states that practiced primogeniture this increased to 6.3 per cent following the non-political death of a monarch. In states that used alternative succession arrangements, the risk of a civil war increased to 14.9 per cent after a monarch's non-political death. The results indicate that whenever a monarch died the possibility of a civil war increased but this was more pronounced when primogeniture was not used. Therefore, succession under primogeniture was more likely to result in a peaceful transfer of power.³³

Kokkeonen, Sundell and Kurrild-Klitgaard's findings along with the crown prince and coordination problem indicate that Simms was wrong to reject a link between instability and Gaelic succession. Moreover, the findings and theories can give a fuller understanding of the discord resulting from Gaelic succession than if one just used contemporary sources. Most of our information on Gaelic succession and Gaelic Ireland comes from hostile English, or sometimes Old English, sources which blamed 'tanistry' for violence and the 'barbarousness' of Gaelic Ireland. John Perrot, who was president of Munster in the 1570s and Lord Deputy from 1584-8, often pointed to Gaelic succession as a barrier to civility. In 1573 he stated that Gaelic succession was 'one of the chiefest causes which procured the disorders amongeste the Irishery' and in 1584 he referred to Gaelic succession as the 'rowte of all the barbarism and disorder of this land.'³⁴ Rowland White was from an Old English family who held lands in east Ulster before being ousted by the local populace and he shared Parrot's opposition to Gaelic succession. He believed Gaelic succession produced much 'debate, slaughter, and conspiracie.'³⁵ Both thought that the fact

³³ Kokkonen, Andrej & Anders Sundell, "The King is Dead", pp.15-18, 29-31

³⁴ Sir J. Perrot to Secretary Sir Thomas Smith, 23rd October 1573, Baynard's Castle, (SP 63/42/no.57), Lord Deputy Perrot to the Privy Council, 25th October 1584, Dublin (SP 63/112/no.45)

³⁵ Canny, Nicholas. "Rowland White's 'Discors Touching Ireland', c. 1569." *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 80 (1977), pp. 452-4

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that the chieftain only had a life interest in his clan's lordship and could not pass it on to his son impeded Gaelic Ireland's development and encouraged rebellious activity. Perrot believed that a chieftain would not care about improving his lands and would be more willing to risk losing them through rebellious activity because his son would not inherit it. However, if a chieftain knew his posterity would receive his lands then the 'love to there children will make them fearfull to offend lawes and desirous to build howes, to purchase lands and grow welthie.'³⁶ White also argued that if a father knew that his son would get his lands then he would:

become carefull of his behaviour, ever studinge which waie to governe hymself in godlie feare and due obedience for the proffit and welth of his posteritie, buyldinge, repayrynge and plentifullie inhabytinge his groundes with quyet and profitable manuers.³⁷

Yet knowing the wider context of succession more generally can tell us that the problems with Gaelic succession are more complex than the hostile sources suggest and such problems were not unique. Furthermore, looking at the larger discussion shows that Gaelic succession and the rationale behind it was not simply 'barbarous' nor exclusive to Gaelic Ireland. One of the main reasons why primogeniture was shunned in Gaelic Ireland was because of the risk that a child could succeed and given the martial nature of Gaelic society, a child who could not defend his lands was not feasible as a leader. Thus, agnatic seniority was preferred when choosing a chieftain. Spenser noted this and wrote that a son should not succeed his father as chieftain because it was thought that he would be 'unable to defend his right, or to withstand the force of a forayner' so 'they do appoynt the eldest of the kin to have the seigniory, for that he commonly is a man of stronger yeares, and better experience to maintain the inheritance, and to defend the country.'³⁸ Spenser was not alone in these observations as Edmund Campion echoed his sentiments and stated that the Irish usually chose as successor the chieftain's 'brother, nephew or cousin germaine [who is] eldest and most valiant: for the childe be oftentimes left in nonage or otherwise young and unskilled, were never able to defend his patrimonie.'³⁹ In a court case between two

³⁶ Sir J. Perrot to Secretary Sir Thomas Smith, 23rd October 1573, Baynard's Castle, (SP 63/42/no.57), Reasons drawn up by Sir John Perrot to move the Privy Council, December 1590 (SP 63/156/ no.51)

³⁷ Canny, Nicholas. "Rowland White's 'Discors Touching Ireland', p.454

³⁸ Spenser, Edmund. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, pp.7-8

³⁹ Campion, Edmund. "Campion's History of Ireland," in James Ware (ed), *Ancient Irish Histories*. Vol. 1. Dublin: Hibernia, 1809, p.28

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O'Callaghans over their clan's lordship, the practice of 'tanistry' and the selecting of the eldest member of the clan as chieftain was similarly defended by the side of the plaintiff. They argued that the eldest of the clan could better defend his land, compared to an infant.⁴⁰ It was not just hostile English sources that pointed this out. The seventeenth century historian and Catholic priest, Geoffrey Keating, defended Gaelic succession and its shunning of agnatic primogeniture because it made certain that an 'efficient captain', who could defend his clan's lordship, would be chieftain rather than a youth who 'would not be capable of defending his own territory' and whose succession would be very detrimental to the fortunes of the clan.⁴¹

Outside Gaelic Ireland primogeniture and child heirs were similarly criticized. The likes of Machiavelli and Thomas Paine argued against primogeniture because of the risk that a child or someone completely unfit may inherit the throne.⁴² Rousseau acknowledged that primogeniture avoided any confusion over who the successor was and averted a disorderly and potentially dangerous interregnum. Yet, he too still dismissed it as an inadequate form of succession as it risked having as king 'children, monsters and imbeciles.'⁴³ Thomas Walsingham, a fourteenth/fifteenth century English monk and chronicler, while not calling for the abandonment of primogeniture was highly critical of the child kings which it produced. These concerns were the result of the kingship of Richard II as he blamed much of the failure of his reign on his youth. Therefore, when Henry V died in 1422 and left a nine-month baby as heir, Walsingham warned of the challenges that this would pose and evoked *Ecclesiastes*, saying 'woe to thee O land whose king is a boy.'⁴⁴

John Gillingham in his examination of elective kingship in Germany argued in its favour as it averted young or incompetent kings. Succession to the position of King of the Romans was elective in theory but did become hereditary in practice as certain families held a monopoly over the position of king. Yet between 1254 to 1356 there were six genuine elections. During this period minorities were avoided and the youngest king in the

⁴⁰ Davies, John. *A Report of Cases and Matters in Law Resolved and Adjudged in the King's Courts in Ireland*. Dublin, 1762, p.81

⁴¹ Keating, Geoffrey. *The History of Ireland*. Vol. 1, David Comyn (ed), London: D. Nutt, 1902, pp.67-9

⁴² Kokkonen, Andrej & Anders Sundell, "The King is Dead", p.5

⁴³ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Social Contract: or, Principles of Political Right*, Henry John Tozer (ed), 1895, pp.165-7

⁴⁴ Dodd, Gwilym, "Richard II and the Fiction of Majority Rule." *Royal Minorities of Medieval and Early Modern England*, Charles Beem (ed), Palgrave Macmillian, New York, 2008, pp. 140-1, Griffiths, R.A., "The Minority of Henry VI, King of England and of France." in *Royal Minorities of Medieval and Early Modern England*, pp.165-6

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century of actual elections was Ludwig der Bayer who was in his late twenties and already an accomplished military commander when elected. Before and after the period of genuine elective kingship there were very young kings such as Otto III, who was three when crowned king in 983, or Wenzel, who was 15 when he became king.⁴⁵ According to Gillingham elective kingship also meant ineffective candidates could be side-stepped as ability could be factored in when choosing a successor. The genuine elections reflect this because out of the six kings chosen only Adolf of Nassau proved to be an incapable ruler. Even then elective kingship made deposing an incompetent king easier because his claim was through election and one could simply elect another in his place. This was the fate of Adolf of Nassau who was deposed after only a six-year reign and another elected in his stead. In agnatic primogeniture this was more difficult as there was only one eldest son entitled to the throne so there was no room to manoeuvre. Potentially, agnatic primogeniture could foist an obviously weak and feeble monarch, such as Henry VI of England or Charles VI of France, on the throne for a lengthy period. Charles suffered from bouts of insanity and Henry had mental breakdowns yet because of primogeniture they could not simply be replaced and had long disastrous reigns.⁴⁶

Another glaring problem with agnatic primogeniture was the danger that a monarch could have no male children or close male relative, and this could potentially led to a violent dispute over succession when the incumbent died such as the thirteen year long War of Spanish Succession which was triggered by the death of the heirless Charles II of Spain.⁴⁷ Thus biological luck was a factor in stability and a series of unlucky monarchs having no male heirs could be disruptive and detrimental. In the twelfth century the Angevin kingdom of Sicily was a highly organised and well governed polity with strong state institutions such as a large bureaucracy and tax gathering apparatus and its capital at Naples was more prosperous than Paris. Over the next three centuries there were six kings who died without an heir leading to periods of instability that contributed the decline of the kingdom.⁴⁸ The violence and regime changes during The War of the Roses also exhibits that primogeniture

⁴⁵ Gillingham, John, "Elective Kingship and the Unity of Medieval Germany." *German History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1991, pp.128-9, Reuter, Timothy, "Otto III and the Historians." *History Today*, Vol. 41, No. 1, (1991), p. 21

⁴⁶ Gillingham, John, "Elective Kingship", p. 129

⁴⁷ Troost, Wouter, "Leopold I, Louis XIV, William III and the Origins of the War of the Spanish Succession." *History*, Vol. 103, No. 357, (2018), pp. 545–570

⁴⁸ Acharya, Avidit and Alexander Lee, "Path Dependence in European Development: Medieval Politics, Conflict and State Building." (2018), unpublished paper, Stanford university, Accessed at <http://stanford.edu/~avidit/europe.pdf>

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did not guarantee stability or avoid bloodshed even among close family. The most notably example that illustrates this was the case of Richard III who declared that his nephews and heirs to the crown were illegitimate, seized the throne and most probably had his nephews killed.⁴⁹ Primogeniture was clearly not as perfect or ‘civilised’ as Perrot or White suggest and there were merits to other forms of succession as Gillingham and others argued. Gaelic succession and its arguments against using primogeniture were therefore not complete outliers or baseless. Yet even with all its drawbacks, Tullock and the findings of Kokkonen, Sundell and Kurrild-Klitgaard still indicates that primogeniture was the lesser evil and in comparison to the alternatives more likely to result in stability.

Debate surrounding succession and stability is clearly much bigger than just Gaelic succession so it cannot be treated as if it were in a vacuum. This and the lack of attention given to early modern Gaelic succession means that a new and more comprehensive examination of fifteenth/sixteenth century Gaelic succession, informed by the wider succession discussion, is need. This is what chapter one will do alongside showing why Gaelic succession led to divisions. Chapter one will also focus on the second force of disunity within Gaelic Ireland, the relationship between overlords and *uirríthe*. Stronger clans would attempt to impose overlordship and exactions on weaker clans, their *uirríthe*, and Simms was not completely incorrect when stating that the imposition of overlordship led to violence as *uirríthe* often resented the demands of their overlords and would defy them militarily, hoping to break free and become independent. The stronger clan would in turn resort to violence to enforce their claim of overlordship. The clashes between overlords and *uirríthe* presented the Tudor government with another division to exploit. If a chieftain rebelled, then the government could offer his disgruntled *uirríthe* a chance to be independent and free from their overlord’s exactions. Instead they would only be subjects of the English monarch. In return the *uirríthe* would serve with the government against their overlord. Chapter one will examine the relationship between overlord and *uirríthe* and why it was so volatile.

Once the divisions in Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland have been explored, the thesis will focus on how these divisions played out during the Nine Years’ War. The term Nine Year War describes a conflict between the Tudor government and a nationwide Gaelic confederacy headed by Hugh O’Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, and his ally Hugh Rua

⁴⁹ Hicks, Michael, “A Story of Failure: The Minority of Edward V” in *Royal Minorities of Medieval and Early Modern England*, pp.195-210

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O'Donnell. This Gaelic confederacy developed as a response to the government's attempts to spread their authority into semi-independent Gaelic areas and eradicate the traditional Gaelic customs, customs which the Gaelic chieftains derived much of their power from and were unwilling to give up without a fight. The war was dubbed the Nine Years' War in the late 19th century by Standish O'Grady because the war lasted nine years. However, the name is far from ideal as when the war began is disputed. O'Grady thought the war started in 1594 but Ciaran Brady dismissed this start date and said that the war did not truly began until 1595, when the Earl of Tyrone openly took up arms against the crown. This interpretation too easily dismisses the imperative role Tyrone played behind the scenes and the military engagements that occurred prior to 1595 such as the Battle of the Ford of the Biscuits. Other historians, such as Hiram Morgan and James O'Neill, more convincingly point to 1593 and Hugh Maguire's expulsion of Humphrey Willis from Fermanagh as marking the start of the war. Thus, the Ten Years War would be a more apt name. The war has also been referred to as Tyrone's rebellion, but this does not adequately acknowledge the important contributions of other Gaelic confederates like Tyrone's most important ally Hugh Rua O'Donnell. The name Nine Years' War is problematic, but it has become so entrenched that there is little use in trying to change it so for the purposes of this thesis the name will be retained.⁵⁰

The Nine Years' War ended in March 1603 when the Earl of Tyrone surrendered at Mellifont. The divisions within Gaelic society that were present in the Gaelic confederacy and their role in its defeat has been commented upon. James O'Neill recognised that the Gaelic confederacy was plagued by internal dissension and this allowed the government to secure the defections of several Gaelic confederates. For O'Neill, the inability to overcome these divisions and prevent defections was partially to blame for the Gaelic confederacy's collapse.⁵¹ G.A Hayes McCoy more generally thought the disunity which prevented the Irish from fully combining on a national level helped the Tudor government suppress any Gaelic resistance.⁵² Yet most historians, including Hayes-McCoy and O'Neill, place more significance for the failure of the Gaelic confederacy on its defeat at Kinsale at the end of

⁵⁰ Brady, Ciaran, "Politics, Policy and Power, 1550–1603," in Jane H. Ohlmeyer (ed), *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, Vol.2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 46. For the problems with name Nine Years War see O'Neill, James, *The Nine Years War 1593-1603: O'Neill, Mountjoy and the Military Revolution*. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2017, pp.15-16. For Hugh Rua O'Donnell's importance during the war see McGettigan, Darren, *Red Hugh O'Donnell and the Nine Years War*. Dublin: Four Courts, 2005

⁵¹O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.102-3, 143, 166-8, 250

⁵² Hayes McCoy, G.A, 'The service of the Scottish mercenary forces in Connacht during the rebellions of that province' (M.A., National University of Ireland, Galway, 1932), pp.194-5

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1601 and the subsequent withdrawal of its Spanish allies. Hayes-McCoy stated that the 'war was won at Kinsale, the battle which marked the failure of the Spanish effort, the collapse of Ulster resistance, the completion of the Tudor conquest and the eclipse of Gaelic Ireland.'⁵³ O'Neill said that the defeat at Kinsale was 'decisive and irreversible' and marked 'the collapse of Irish resistance' which 'was as spectacular as it was conclusive.'⁵⁴ Steven Ellis stated that the Gaelic confederacy's failure at Kinsale 'broke the rebellion' and Hiram Morgan wrote that at Kinsale, Tyrone's army, which had been built up over years and for the most part had been successful, was 'destroyed in an instant' and he and O'Donnell were defeated.⁵⁵ Kinsale was a pivotal moment in the war and the importance of its contribution to the government's victory should not be disregarded. However, with such prominence given to Kinsale other important factors that were influential have not been given the attention they deserve, nor their vital contribution to the government's victory fully recognised.

One challenger to the orthodoxy was John McGurk as he has argued that the military activities of Henry Docwra in northwest Ulster were instrumental in ending the war and the emphasis on Kinsale meant that Docwra's contribution had been wrongly ignored. Docwra's vital contribution was heavily intertwined with the issue of disunity within the Gaelic confederacy because McGurk attributed much of Docwra's military success to his exploitation of dissension among Ulster confederates. The divisions allowed Docwra to secure several important defections and he heavily relied on the military assistance of his newly won Gaelic allies. Without this help Docwra would have not made much headway in the northwest.⁵⁶ William Kelly and Hiram Morgan have also looked at Docwra's time in northwest Ulster and they too credit the defections and assistance provided by his Gaelic allies as the key component to Docwra's success. These studies touch on the the fractures within the Gaelic confederacy caused by the socio-politics of Gaelic Ireland, the crown's exploitation of such fractures and the assistance the defectors provided the government with, but these themes remained only a tangential issue and not

⁵³ Hayes-McCoy, G.A. "The Completion of the Tudor Conquest," in *A New History of Ireland*. Vol. 3. Ed. T. W. Moody et al (eds), Oxford: Clarendon, 1976, p.135

⁵⁴ O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, p.159

⁵⁵ Ellis, Steven G. *Tudor Ireland: Crown, Community, and the Conflict of Cultures, 1470-1603*. London: Longman, 1985, p.351, Morgan, Hiram, *The Battle of Kinsale*. Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell, 2004, p.2

⁵⁶ McGurk, John. *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631: Derry's Second Founder*. Dublin: Four Courts, 2006

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fully explored.⁵⁷ This thesis will seek to rectify this by putting these issues to the fore and test whether they were as important as O’Sullivan Beare thought. For the purposes of this study the geographical area to be studied will be restricted to Ulster. The reasoning for this is that is where Tyrone and O’Donnell resided and where their power and influence was the strongest. These two chieftains were the heart of the Gaelic confederacy so when Tyrone and O’Donnell were defeated, the war would be for all intents and purposes finished. Contemporaries were aware of this reality. Conyers Clifford, president of Connacht, once avowed that ‘if either Tirone or odonnell be once broken thoroughly, this war is ended.’⁵⁸ An unsigned report on the state of Ireland in 1599 made it clear that Tyrone, O’Donnell and the Ulster theatre of war should be of main concern. In the other provinces the anonymous author said that only a defensive war was needed because ‘they be but branches, that spread and flourish from the root [Ulster], which being plucked up, they must of necessity perish, since their nourishment is gone.’⁵⁹ Given this centrality to the war it is necessary to focus on O’Donnell and Tyrone and their sphere of influence in Ulster as the divisions, defections and events there carried more weight.

In order to understand the importance of the rifts within the Gaelic confederacy in Ulster, one must first know what the rifts were. Thus, chapter two will look at the O’Neills and O’Donnells and the rival factions among them competing for the chieftainship. Then this chapter will show how Tyrone and Hugh Rua O’Donnell emerged as chieftains of their respective clans by overcoming their competitors, either by killing them or with a strong hand forcing them to recognise their authority. However, some of the cowed rivals did not give up their pretensions to the chieftainship or animosity towards Tyrone or Hugh Rua so their allegiance to the Gaelic confederacy was tenuous and they were liable to defect if the government offered them their clan’s lordship as recompense. Chapter three will explore the other clans in Ulster and their relations with the O’Neills and O’Donnells. These clans were *uirríthe* of either the O’Neills or the O’Donnells and as mentioned earlier the overlord-*uirríthe* relationship was not always good. Indeed, this was the case for some of the Ulster clans and so, Tyrone or Hugh Rua had to coerce them into subservience. As a consequence, they were unwilling *uirríthe* and reluctant members of the Gaelic

⁵⁷ Ibid, Kelly, William (ed), *Docwra's Derry: A Narration of Events in North-West Ulster, 1600-1604*. Belfast, Ulster Historical Foundation, 2003, Morgan, Hiram, “Mission comparable? The Lough Foyle and Kinsale landings of 1600 and 1601,” in Morgan, Hiram (ed). *The Battle of Kinsale*, pp.73-91

⁵⁸ Sir Conyers Clifford to Sir Robert Cecil, 17th October 1597, Athlone (SP 63/201/no.20)

⁵⁹ Account of the state of Ireland, addressed to [the Earl of Essex], September 1599 (SP 63/205/no.189)

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confederacy. They were open to the idea of defecting in return for independence from their overlord. Moreover, these smaller Ulster clans were not monoliths and contained rivals contending for the chieftainship. Tyrone and O'Donnell also had to try and keep the peace between these competitors and prevent them from defecting. This would be a complicated and difficult task as there could only be one chieftain and there was a strong possibility that those who missed out on becoming chieftain would side with the government in order to attain their clan's lordship.

Once the fault lines within the Gaelic confederacy are known, the study will then turn its attention to their influence during the Nine Years' War. For the purposes of this dissertation the Nine Year's War will be divided into three phases, and each given a separate chapter. Chapter four deals with the beginning of the war until May 1600. During this period Tyrone and O'Donnell, with great difficulty, were largely able to keep their fragile confederacy together. How they did this will make up the bulk of the chapter. The chapter will also highlight that the divisions and the threat they posed to the stability of the Gaelic confederacy remained as early defections gave a preview of the potential damage the fissures within the Gaelic confederacy could cause. Chapter five will cover the period between May 1600 to the coming of the Spanish in September 1601. The reason for the start date of May 1600 is, that is when Henry Docwra landed at Lough Foyle and established a garrison at Derry. Docwra's landing at Lough Foyle and subsequent activities in the northwest were, as McGurk argued, of momentous importance and greatly influenced, or even determined, the outcome of the war. The chapter will show how Docwra managed to turn the tide of the war through exploiting the riven nature of the Gaelic confederacy in Ulster and securing defections. The chapter will also demonstrate how the help Docwra received from these defectors was paramount to his success and consequently the service of the government's Gaelic allies was a major factor in their victory. Finally, the chapter will explore developments in Ulster outside Docwra's sphere of influence and how the government took advantage of disunity to procure defections. Chapter six covers post Kinsale until the end of war with references to the aftermath of the conflict. This chapter will focus on how Docwra and the government continued to secure defections and rely on the help of their Gaelic allies to finish off the last embers of resistance in Ulster. The fate of some of the defectors after the war will also be touched upon.

Chapter One

'You know the nature of the Irish, how easily they are divided': Tánaistí, Gaelic Succession, Overlords, Uirríthe and Division

In 1604 Richard Hadsor blamed Gaelic succession for 'much bloodshed & rebellion by contencion for the seignorie.'¹ The Old English and Middle Temple Lawyer was not a neutral observer of Gaelic Ireland but his comments about the divisive and destructiveness of Gaelic succession were not merely prejudiced or ill-informed but reflective of the truth. This chapter will examine Gaelic succession and how it caused conflict and divisions. First the chapter will explore the role of the *tánaiste* and how it exacerbated the crown prince problem, leading to tensions and violence between the incumbent and the *tánaiste*. Next the chapter will look at other aspects of Gaelic succession: elections, the electorate, consent, inaugurations and Gaelic titles. Then the chapter will focus on how the criteria used to decide who to elect as chieftain were indistinct and led to contentious succession disputes which were often resolved by a clan civil war. These civil wars created factions who could continue their feud over the chieftainship for decades, so violent coups and countercoups were a constant problem within clans. Then the focus will shift to how the attempts by the government to introduce primogeniture further complicated an already complex and divisive succession situation. The disputes that resulted from the factious and multifaceted succession situation in Ireland were ripe for exploitation by the crown government and such manipulation will also be examined in this chapter. Once succession has been explored the chapter will turn its attention to violence between clans. Stronger clans tried to subjugate weaker clans and claim them as their *uirríthe*. The chapter will show how the demands the stronger clans made of their *uirríthe* were unpopular and this resentment led to clashes between the two and like succession disputes these could be taken advantage. Lastly the chapter will touch upon the contemporary debate around the merits of exploiting divisions within Gaelic Ireland and relying on Gaelic allies.

At a glance, the tanistry described by Spenser would not appear to have much potential for instability or violence following a chieftain's death.² In fact, D.A Binchy theorised that the role of *tánaiste* was established in order to create certainty and reduce

¹ McLaughlin, Joseph, "New Light on Richard Hadsor," p.346

² See introduction

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violent disputes after a chieftain died.³ However, a closer examination of the position of *tánaiste* shows that in reality it did little to engender stability within clans or smooth transitions of power. Firstly, the preference for agnatic seniority meant the *tánaiste* was usually a brother, cousin or uncle of the chieftain.⁴ Thus, tanistry exacerbated the crown prince problem as it resulted in an heir apparent who was of similar age to the chieftain and therefore unsure if they would outlive the incumbent. Spenser hints at this dilemma for the ‘tanist’ when he stated that he would only succeed to the chieftainship ‘if he live thereunto.’⁵ Moreover, the Irish annals show that dying before the chieftain should have been a legitimate concern as it was not an uncommon occurrence. Caffar O’Donnell was ‘Tanist of Tirconnell’ but he never got the opportunity to succeed his brother, Hugh MacManus O’Donnell, because he died in 1580, two decades before his brother’s death. In 1544 the *tánaiste* of the O’Neills died before the incumbent and another O’Neill *tánaiste* passed away in 1517. Other *tánaistí* who perished before a chieftain were Tadhg O’Beirne in 1519, Donough O’Brien in 1531 and Hugh O’Boyle in 1588.⁶ This possibility meant there was little incentive for a *tánaiste* to remain passive and patient if he wanted to become chieftain so the likelihood of him attempting to depose the incumbent was increased.

The crown prince problem suggests that designated heirs tended to be more dangerous to incumbents as their position usually brought with it more power and authority and a *tánaiste* was no different as he acquired land and exactions with his office. Spenser mentioned this increase in status and stated that the ‘Tanist hath also a share of the country allotted unto him, and certaine cuttings and spendings upon all the inhabitants under the Lord.’⁷ Among the MacDermott Roes of Moylurg, modern day north Roscommon, these lands reserved for the *tánaiste* became so synonymous with the position that they bore the name Tanistagh and in the Irish annals they were referred to as the ‘tanist portion of Moylurgh.’⁸ During a dispute over the O’Sullivan Beare lordship, Eoghan O’Sullivan and his witnesses discussed the lands set aside for the *tánaiste*. According to them, the *tánaiste* was to have a castle at Ardea and a portion of land. Furthermore, one of Eoghan’s witnesses

³Binchy, D.A, “Secular Institutions” in Myles Dillon (ed) *Early Irish Society*, Dublin, Cultural Relation Committee, 1954, p. 57

⁴ See introduction pp.10-11

⁵ Spenser, Edmund. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, pp.7-8

⁶Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, p.56, *AFM*, pp.1345, 1403, 1485, 1725, 1867, *AU*, Vol.3 p.529

⁷ Spenser, Edmund. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, pp.7-8

⁸ Nicholls, K. W. *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages*, p.28, *AFM*, p.1399

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refers to the exactions that accompanied the acquisition of the ‘tanist’s portion’ as he claimed to be an ‘officer that useth to take certaine fees out of the lands of Ardea’ for the *tánaiste*.⁹ During a dispute among the O’Reillys in 1583, the position of *tánaiste* was discussed and once again it was highlight that the *tánaiste* would receive ‘some land in respect of his office.’¹⁰ These extra resources increased the threat of a *tánaiste* as it meant he had more means to overthrow the chieftain.

The *tánaiste*, as a powerful heir apparent who was not sure if he would succeed due to age, fitted neatly into the archetype of a dangerous designated successor identified by the crown prince problem and its proponents. Therefore, tanistry should have produced conflict over the chieftainship between the incumbent and *tánaiste*. The O’Neills during the first half of the sixteenth century show that this did indeed happen. Con Bacach O’Neill became chieftain in 1519 and he had a tumultuous relationship with his nephew and *tánaiste*, Niall Connallach O’Neill. The extent of the bitterness between them was noted by the Lord Deputy and council in 1542. They stated that Niall Connallach bore a ‘mortall hate’ towards Con and there had ‘ben long warre’ between the two men.¹¹ This animosity between chieftain and *tánaiste* was repeated by the two men’s sons. Niall Connallach’s son, Turlough Luineach, was *tánaiste* to Con’s son Shane and when the latter was absent in England for much of the first half of 1562, Turlough launched a failed coup and thereafter the two became bitter rivals.¹² It was not only the O’Neills who experienced problems between chieftain and *tánaiste*. Brian Ballach O’Rourke in 1552 had his *tánaiste* hanged.¹³ In 1538 the *tánaiste* of the O’Briens, Murrough, grew concerned that his position as successor was under threat as he thought his brother and the chieftain of the clan, Conor, sought to block his succession in favour of his son. Murrough responded by attempting to overthrow his brother but failed as Conor received support from the government and the Lord Deputy, who defeated Murrough at O’Brien’s bridge, took a number of his castles and ‘burnte and destroyed’ his lands.¹⁴

If the *tánaiste* did survive the chieftain, that did not mean his succession would be uncontentious. The ambiguity of a *tánaiste*’s right to succeed was one reason for this. The

⁹ An abstract of Sir Owen O’Sullivan’s proofs affirming the succession of tanist, 8th June 1587 (SP 63/130/no.10)

¹⁰ Exceptions against Edmund O’Reilly, 2nd July 1583 (SP 63/103/no.4)

¹¹ *S. P Henry VIII*, Vol.3, pt.3, pp.434-5

¹² Lord Justice Fytzwylliams to Cecill, 19th June 1562, Thomas Court (SP 63/6/no.26)

¹³ *AFM*, p.1525

¹⁴ *S. P Henry VIII*, Vol.3, pt.3, pp.56-7, 59-60

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right of a *tánaiste* to succeed was often portrayed as absolute. When describing the *tánaiste* of the O'Donnells in 1543, Lord Deputy Anthony St. Leger said that he was the 'heyre apparante, to be the next ODonell which is captaine of the countrey.'¹⁵ Similarly St. Leger and the council at Dublin said that Niall Connallach O'Neill 'shulde be by their Irish lawe' the chieftain after Con Bacach O'Neill and they were not misinformed about his status as *tánaiste* because the Irish annals described him as the 'Tanist of Tyrone.'¹⁶ The description by Edmund Tremayne, chief secretary for Ireland between 1569-71, of succession also suggests that the *tánaiste* had a right to succeed and in fact it was necessary to be *tánaiste* if one wanted to become chieftain. Tremayne stated that if one wanted to be chieftain then they would need to 'first be Thanist which is as it were heir in succession and afterwards to be the only ruler when the lo[rd] in possess[ion] dyeth.'¹⁷ In Spenser's account of tanistry, he too indicated that the *tánaiste* should succeed when he wrote that the *tánaiste* 'shall next succede him [i.e. the chieftain] in the said Captentry.'¹⁸

However, a contradiction in Spenser's account hints that the *tánaiste's* right to succeed may not be as absolute as he and others suggested. Spenser said that following the death of a chieftain there was an assembly to choose his replacement but if the *tánaiste* was the designated heir then there should be no need for an election unless his succession was not guaranteed. Other accounts indicate that there were elections following the death of a chieftain and the *tánaiste* was not assured of his succession. After the death of John Burke in 1580, there was a dispute over the chieftainship of the Burkes of Mayo, also known as the MacWilliam Burkes. Richard MacOliverus Burke claimed that he should be chieftain because 'in his brothers tyme he was nomynated to bee Tawnist' but his rival, Richard an Iarainn Burke, argued that this was not relevant because 'the right was his and, that the whole cuntrey had geven it unto him....and by their election hee was possessed of it.'¹⁹ Richard an Iarainn's comment would suggest that following a chieftain's death there should be an election and any supposed right of the *tánaiste* mattered little. It was however in Richard an Iarainn's interest to dismiss his rival's right to succeed but other evidence does infer that elections occurred after a chieftain's death. Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh's, Hugh

¹⁵ Ibid, p.481

¹⁶ Ibid, p.434, *AFM*, p.1457

¹⁷ "Mr. Tremayne's discourse" in *Discourses and devices touching the ill state and reformation of Ireland*, (Cotton Titus, B. XII, 81)

¹⁸ Spenser, Edmund. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, pp.7-8

¹⁹ Relation of Sir N. Malbie's proceedings against the rebels in Connaught, 23rd March 1581, Dublin (SP 63/81/no.42 i)

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Rua O'Donnell's biographer, stated the MacWilliam Burke chieftain was elected and the Irish annals also regularly record an election after a chieftain's passing. The *Annals of the Four Masters* stated that after the death of Turlough Óg MacSweeney Fanad in 1570, his successor Donal was elected and in 1588 Eoghan Manntagh O'Heyne died and 'his son, Hugh Buí, was elected in his place.'²⁰ When discussing succession in 'Irishe countries' in 1562, Shane O'Neill maintained that there must be an election following the 'death of the L[ord] of the countrie.' He claimed that once the chieftain died the 'Countrye assembl and by common assent electeth and choseth the most ablest and worthiest of the heade name of the sayd countrie to be' chieftain.²¹

It appears that this requirement for an election meant that after a chieftain's death a *tánaiste* would still need to seek election to confirm his succession. Turlough Luineach O'Neill 'had been in Shane's life tanist of Tyrone' and he did succeed Shane O'Neill in 1567.²² Yet it was not by virtue of his position as *tánaiste* that he succeeded. Rather in his submission to the government shortly after his becoming chieftain it was stated that after Shane's death 'certain of the cuntrye of Tyrone' assembled and 'according to the ancient custome of the same, elected the sayd Tirlagh Onele.'²³ In 1566, Hugh MacManus O'Donnell was elected following the death of his brother and chieftain, Calvach O'Donnell. The Lord Deputy, Henry Sidney, when reporting the election said that the principal men of the country 'chose there tanist hugh mcmanus' as the new chieftain.²⁴ The annals, Shane's description and the fact that Turlough Luineach and Hugh MacManus were *tánaistí* yet still required to be elected conveys that the a *tánaiste* was not fully assured of his succession.

Why would a *tánaiste* who was chosen as the heir apparent need to once again seek to be elected? Spenser claimed that that the *tánaiste* was chosen at the same time as a new chieftain was inaugurated and evidence from Irish annals does show that this did indeed happen during the early modern period. The *Annals of Loch Cé* noted that when Tadhg O'Beirne became chieftain of his clan in 1527, his brother 'assumed the tanistship.'²⁵ This

²⁰ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.115-7, *AFM*, pp.1637, 1869

²¹ The answer of Shane O'Neill to the seven articles sent to him by the Privy Council, 7th February 1562 (SP 63/5/no.22)

²² Brady, Ciaran (ed), *A Viceroy's Vindication?: Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir of Service in Ireland, 1556-1578*. Cork, Ireland: Cork UP, 2002, p.54

²³ Submission of Turlough O'Neill, 18th June 1567, Camp in Tyrone (SP 63/21/no.22)

²⁴ Lord Deputy Sydney to the Privy Council, 18th January 1567, Kilmainham (SP 63/20/no.130)

²⁵ *ALC*, Vol. 2, p.263, Spenser, Edmund. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, pp.7-8, Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, p.56

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may have been the ideal but the reality was that a *tánaiste* could be chosen at any time and whether he was elected at an assembly was questionable. It was not specified how Tadhg's brother became *tánaiste* but English and Irish sources point to a *tánaiste* or successor being appointed by the chieftain. In 1600 Owey O'More was said to have appointed his successor to the chieftainship and Turlough Luineach was recorded on several occasions as choosing his heir.²⁶ In 1578 he picked Shane Óg O'Neill to be 'chefest of the contrye' after his death. The following year he temporarily allied with his rival, Hugh O'Neill, and as part of this brief friendship, Lord Justice William Phelham reported that Turlough Luineach made Hugh his 'Thanist or successor.'²⁷ The annals also show a *tánaiste* being picked without an election. In 1480, during a conference between the O'Donnell chieftain and his rival Egneghan O'Donnell, they came to an agreement that Egneghan should have the 'tanistship.'²⁸ If *tánaistí* were regularly unelected and receiving the consent at assembly was important then this may explain why a *tánaiste* had to seek election following the death of chieftain. If *tánaistí* were not assured of their succession then this could increase the threat they posed to the incumbent because without any certainty there was little to be gained by waiting for the chieftain's death.

How the *tánaiste* was chosen and his right to succeed was equivocal but what of the elective aspect of Gaelic succession. Firstly, who were the electorate? Richard an Iarainn Burke, Turlough Luineach O'Neill and Shane O'Neill highlighted that it was the country who assembled and voted but who were the country? According to Oliver St John when describing the election of an O'Cahan chieftain, those of the country entitled to vote were the 'freeholders and immediate followers as lived there under them, who yielded unto O'Cahan chief rent and Irish services.'²⁹ Florence MacCarthy made a similar statement when discussing the election of a MacCarthy Mór chieftain. He stated that those who should choose the new MacCarthy Mór were the O'Sullivans 'and all the rest of the gentlemen freeholders and followers of that country, who ever elected him that was McCarthy or Lord of that country.'³⁰ In 1544, the election of Ulick Burke as chieftain of the Burkes of Clanricard was described in comparable terms as it was stated that 'all the

²⁶ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol.3, p.432,

²⁷ Baron of Dungannon to the Lord Justice Drury, 22nd December 1578, Ballyscanlane (SP 63/65/no.4 ii), *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.2, p.172

²⁸ *AFM*, p.1115

²⁹ Sir Oliver St. John to Salisbury, 1st June 1607, Dublin (SP 63/221/no.59)

³⁰ Florence McCarthy to Sir Robert Cecil, 6th May 1600, Cork (SP 63/207/pt. 3 no.18)

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gentlemen and other free tenants assembled and chose' Ulick as chieftain.³¹ These freeholders or followers were, as defined by Vincent Carey, members of 'subordinate clans who rendered economic and military services to principal lords.' They were 'freeholders in a sense that their land belonged to them by right under Gaelic Law' and the principal lord whom they elected and owed services and dues to was not their landlord but their overlord.³² The expansion of powerful clans also meant that many of the freeholders could be members of the principal family. In the MacMahon lordship of Monaghan in 1591, it was found that out of 48 ballybetaghs, a land measurement roughly amounting to English 900 acres, occupied by freeholders 30 were held by members of the MacMahons.³³ Therefore one's own clan played a prominent part in an election and Conor Óg MacDermott Roe emphasised his clan when describing his election. He stated that he was 'appointed and chosen by the rest of his name and kindred.'³⁴

Others in the 'country' who elected the chieftain were the clans who occupied the *lucht tige*. The *lucht tige* or household lands were attached to the office of chieftain and their main function was to act as mensal land and thus provide food for the chieftain. In return these lands were exempt from certain exactions. The clans who occupied the *lucht tige* also acted almost like a civil service for the chieftain as they performed a wide range of jobs including sheriff, tax collector, marshal of the forces, lawyer, poet and the less glamorous role of keeper of the toilets and these positions were hereditary.³⁵ The followers of a chieftain were also *uirríthe*, who like the freeholders owed a chieftain economic and military services but they possessed their own lordships and could also be powerful overlords in their own right. For example the O'Conors of Sligo were, on occasions, the *uirríthe* of the O'Donnells while themselves being the overlord of a number of Sligo clans such as the O'Dowds, MacDonoughs and the O'Haras.³⁶ Although the distinction between *uirríthe* and freeholders could be blurred and Kenneth Nicholls even stated that it was near

³¹ Carey, Vincent, *Carew manuscripts*, Vol.1, p.212

³² Carey, Vincent. "The End of the Gaelic Political Order: The O'Moore Lordship of Laois 1536-1603", in Padraig G. Lane and William Nolan (eds), *Laois: History & Society*. Dublin: Geography Publications, 1999, pp. 231-32

³³ Duffy, Patrick, "The Territorial Organisation of Gaelic Landownership and Its Transformation in County Monaghan, 1591-1640." *Anniversary Essays - Forty Years of Geography at Maynooth*. Alistair Fraser (ed). Maynooth: NUIM, 2012, pp.65

³⁴ Petition of Connor Oge M'Dermott to Sir John Norreys and Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 1596 (SP 63/196/no.56)

³⁵ For more on the *Lucht Tighe* see Fitzpatrick, Elizabeth, "Gaelic Service Kindreds and the Landscape Identity of Lucht Tighe", in E. Campbell, E. FitzPatrick, & A. Horning (Eds.), *Becoming and Belonging in Ireland AD c. 1200-1600: Essays in Identity and Cultural Practice*. Cork: Cork University Press, pp. 167-88

³⁶ Lord Deputy Sydney to the Privy Council. 27th April 1576, Dublin (SP63/55/no.34)

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‘impossible to draw the line between a small vassal lordship and a mere landed property.’³⁷ Not all the members of the subordinate clans, whether they were freeholders or *uirríthe*, would vote in the election of a chieftain. Instead it was usually just the chieftains of the subordinate clans or heads of prominent septs of the dominant clan that participated in elections. Therefore, when the chieftain of the Mayo Burkes was elected in 1595, it was just the chieftains of the O’Malleys, MacDonnells, MacJordans, MacCostellos and MacMorrises who took part.³⁸

Receiving consent at an assembly from the clan and its followers was supposed to be vital if one wanted to become chieftain and thus it was often cited when chieftains were justifying their position to the Tudor government. In 1562 Shane O’Neill stressed that that he received unanimous support.³⁹ When writing to the Dublin government in 1592, Hugh Rua O’Donnell stated that he became chieftain ‘with the will and consent of all the whole country.’⁴⁰ It was not just when defending their position as chieftain to the government that this consent from one’s followers was accentuated. In an agreement with the Earl of Argyle in 1555, Calvach O’Donnell acknowledged that he held ‘the Lordship of Tirconnell with the consent and advice of the lords and nobility of Tirconnell.’⁴¹ The Irish annals mirror this sentiment when describing Manus O’Donnell’s election in 1537 as it was said that he became chieftain with ‘the permission and by the advice of the nobles of Tirconnell.’⁴²

The succession process was not just an election as there was also an inauguration ceremony. This ceremony was intrinsically linked with the election as one could be seen as invalid without the other as an inaugurated chieftain ‘avails nothing except he be chosen by the followers’ and vice versa.⁴³ The inauguration ceremony of a chieftain usually took place at a designated open air site and involved a number of rituals.⁴⁴ One of the rituals involved the waving of a rod or a white wand over the head of the aspirant clan chieftain

³⁷Nicholls, K. W. *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, p.23

³⁸*Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.115-7

³⁹ The answer of Shane O’Neill to the seven articles sent to him by the Privy Council, 7th February 1562 (SP 63/5/no.22)

⁴⁰ Hugh Roe O’Donnell, chief of his name, to the Lord Deputy, 18th May 1592, Kilmacrenan (SP 63/165/6 ii)

⁴¹ Mackechnie, John. "Treaty Between Argyle and O’Donnell." *Scottish Gaelic Studies* Vol.7 (1953), p.100.

⁴² *AFM*, p. 1439

⁴³ McCarthy, Daniel. *The Life and Letters of Florence MacCarthy Reagh*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867, p.12

⁴⁴ For more about inaugurations in Gaelic society see: Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, pp.21-41, Fitzpatrick, Elizabeth. *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland C. 1100-1600: A Cultural Landscape Study*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2004

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and then delivering the rod to him. This was an ancient custom and before the Norman conquest the rod was known as *slat na rígh* (the rod of kingship). By the sixteenth century it was referred to as the *slat tighearnais* (rod of lordship) or *slat sheibhe* (rod of possession), and the reception of the rod symbolised the new chieftain's legitimate acquisition of the lands attached to his office.⁴⁵ Other rituals were putting a shoe on the new chieftain's foot or throwing it over his head and proclaiming aloud the surname of the chieftain. The reason for shouting the surname was that once the ceremony was finished, the new chieftain would henceforth be simply known by his surname. This would act as a formal title denoting him as the chieftain, a position that was also referred to as chief (or captain) of his name (or nation). Thus, the calling aloud of the surname conferred and recognised the newly appointed chieftain's possession of his Gaelic title.⁴⁶ The inauguration rituals were performed by the chieftain's followers, *uirríthe*, possibly along with an *ollamh*⁴⁷ and local clergymen. Specific roles were designated for certain individuals. During the inauguration of an O'Neill for example, it was the chieftain of the O'Cahans who threw the shoe over the new O'Neill chieftain's head and when a MacCarthy Mór chieftain was inaugurated, he had to receive the rod from the O'Sullivan Mór chieftain.

The performance of these rituals by *uirríthe* and others represented their support for the new chieftain and without them executing their assigned ceremonial role, the legality and legitimacy of the authority of the new chieftain would be questioned. The observations of importance of the O'Cahan chieftain's involvement in the inauguration of an O'Neill highlights this. Miler Magrath, Protestant Archbishop of Cashel, stated that 'if any should undertake the name of O'Neill not appointed by O'Cahan, the people will think themselves not bound in conscience to obey him.'⁴⁸ Magrath was from a Fermanagh clan and originally he had been the Catholic bishop of Down and Connor before converting to

⁴⁵Fitzpatrick, Elizabeth. *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp.1,213-4

⁴⁶ Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, pp.30-33, Ó Canann, Tomás. "Ó Domhnaill's Inauguration, According to Pilib Ó Súilleabháin Bhéarra." *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 137 (2007), pp. 103-4

⁴⁷An advisor and master of poetry and other professions. See Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, p.88, 176

⁴⁸ Book set down in writing by the Archbishop of Cashel by Her Majesty's express commandment, declaring the state of Ireland, May 30th 1592, (SP 63/164/ no.47), Sir Oliver St. John to Salisbury, 1st June 1607, Dublin (SP 63/221/no.59), William [Lyon], Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Sir Robert Cecil, 15th February 1600, Cork (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.108)

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Protestantism.⁴⁹ The fact that he was an Ulster native meant Magrath would have had a good knowledge of the customs in the province and so his remarks about O’Cahan’s significance were likely well informed. Moreover, a fifteenth century poem by Tuathal Ó hUiginn made a similar comment about the importance of the MacDermott Roe chieftain. MacDermott had the job of putting a shoe on the foot of the O’Connor Roe chieftain during his inauguration and in his poem Ó hUiginn bragged about the influence this gave MacDermott:

According to law no prince or chief is appointed independently of thee ... If, O Prince of Mis, in opposition to him whom thou makest king in Cruachain, a rival be set by thy foe he cannot be lawfully styled.⁵⁰

For clans whose chieftain was an *uirrí*, an overlord would play an important role in deciding who the new chieftain would be. An overlord could be involved in the election process. For instance, the O’Donovans were *uirríthe* of the MacCarthy Reaghs and it was the ‘Mac Cartie Reough, and the moste parte of the gentlemen of the said contrie’ who ‘had the ellection, nomynatinge,...of the O’Donovan.’⁵¹ In the case of the O’Cahans, the O’Neill chieftain would have the final say on whether or not the candidate chosen by the clan’s followers would become chieftain because an O’Cahan could not officially become chieftain until he ‘received his full confirmation and establishment from him that was then O’Neale, as from their superior.’⁵² This confirmation by an overlord would often take the form of involvement in the inauguration ceremony. For example, MacCarthy Reagh was not only involved in electing the new O’Donovan chieftain but also had the job of handing him the rod during his inauguration ceremony. O’Donnell performed the same role during the inauguration of the McSweeney Fanad.⁵³

Without the inauguration ceremony and acquisition of Gaelic title one’s authority, as Magrath pointed out, would be undermined or at least lessened. Hugh Rua O’Donnell stated that if he did not take the title of the O’Donnell then he could not receive any

⁴⁹ For more on Miler Magrath see Ryan, Patrick J. *Archbishop Miler Magrath, 1522-1622: The Enigma of Cashel*. Lisheen Publications, 2014

⁵⁰ Quoted in Simms, Katherine, “Gabh Umad a Fheidhlimidh’: A Fifteenth-Century Inauguration Ode?” *Ériu*, Vol. 31 (1980), p.145, Fitzpatrick, Elizabeth. *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p.123

⁵¹ O’Donovan, John (ed), *The Genealogies, Tribes and Customs of HyFiachrach, Commonly Called O’Dowda’s Country*. Dublin: Irish Archaeological Society, 1844, p.445,

⁵² Sir Oliver St. John to Salisbury, 1st June 1607, Dublin (SP 63/221/no.59)

⁵³ O’Donovan, John, *The Genealogies, Tribes and Customs of Hy Fiachrach* p.446, O’Grady, Standish (ed), *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum*. Vol. 1. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1992, p.386

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assistance from his country. Florence MacCarthy likewise said that before he was publicly inaugurated and proclaimed as chieftain, he could not get twenty people to follow him. By placing such importance and need on the title of chief of their name, O'Donnell and MacCarthy were certainly trying to excuse their behaviour to the government, who did not approve of taking Gaelic titles and tried to abolish them throughout the sixteenth century because of the power and prestige associated with them.⁵⁴ In 1585 the composition of Connacht, a scheme to replace traditional Gaelic exactions with a fixed rent, aimed to undermine the authority of Gaelic chieftains and one way to achieve this was banning the influential 'styles and titles of captainships.'⁵⁵ Henry Docwra, who was a captain serving in Connacht at the time of the composition, made note of this aim and wrote that the 'purpose' of the composition was 'to take awaye the greatnes of the Irishe Lordes, with their names, macks and Oes.'⁵⁶ In 1603, Docwra would get first-hand experience of how an inauguration and Gaelic title increased one's authority and shows that there was truth to Hugh Rua O'Donnell and Florence MacCarthy's comment. Docwra met with Niall Garbh O'Donnell after he was inaugurated and noted a difference as Niall Garbh had a 'greater troupe of attendances then at any time before' and everyone was now referring to him as my lord.⁵⁷ The status and importance of a Gaelic title can be seen in 1599 when William Warren, a crown servitor and a friend to the Earl of Tyrone, and John Harrington, who came to Ireland with the Earl of Essex in April 1599, were sent to meet and negotiate with Tyrone. When Tyrone was signing a piece of paper he subscribed 'O'Neal', his Gaelic title and it was only with 'very great difficulty' that Warren got Tyrone to change and write Hugh, Tyrone.⁵⁸ Tyrone clearly greatly valued his Gaelic title, even above his English one, and it was once said by George Carew, who had spent many years in Ireland and was appointed president of Munster in 1600, that Tyrone thought the title of the O'Neill was more valuable to him than being 'intituled Caesar.'⁵⁹

How did the election aspect of Gaelic succession effect stability and violence within Gaelic and Gaelicised clans? Several features of Gaelic elections meant it suffered

⁵⁴ Florence McCarthy to Sir George Carew, 14th May 1600, Iniskayne (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.37) Hugh Roe O'Donnell, chief of his name, to the Lord Deputy, 18th May 1592, Kilmacrenan (SP 63/165/6 ii)

⁵⁵ Quoted in Cunningham, Bernadette, "The Composition of Connacht in the Lordships of Clanricard and Thomond, 1577–1641." *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 93 (1984), p.4

⁵⁶ O'Donovan, John (ed), "Docwra's Relation of Service done in Ireland," *Miscellany of the Celtic Society* Vol.1, Dublin, The Celtic Society (1849), p.189

⁵⁷ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.71

⁵⁸ Harrington, John, *Nugae Antiquae*, London, 1804, p.250

⁵⁹ Treatise on Ireland by Sir George Carewe, April 1594 (SP 63/174/no.13 i)

from the coordination problem. Firstly, extending eligibility for the chieftainship to the clan's *derbfine*, meant there were a large number of potential candidates for the chieftainship. A reference in the *Annals of Ulster* about the Battle of Athenry in 1316 gives a sense of the large number of eligible candidates. In the battle Tadhg O'Kelly was killed along with 28 other O'Kellys, all of whom were eligible to be chieftain.⁶⁰ Such numbers meant reaching consensus would be difficult and this difficulty was aggravated by the criteria used to decide who should be chieftain. Of those eligible the electorate were supposed to pick as chieftain the member of the *derbfine* who was the 'eldest and worthiest.' Being the strongest and having the largest following and army was an important component of the criteria used to determine who was the 'worthiest.' This importance was noted by John Davies when he wrote that the Irish usually chose the claimant who had the 'most swordsmen and followers depending upon them' to be the chieftain.⁶¹ Contemporary historian James Ware made a similar claim and wrote that the chieftain was usually he who was 'the strongest and he who had most followers' and Dubhaltach MacFirbhisigh, a mid-seventeenth century genealogist, also mentioned that the chieftain should be he that possesses the most 'clients and power.'⁶² Another criterion cited as being an important deciding factor in determining who was worthiest was the frequency of a claimant's military activity. John Davies and Fynes Moryson both mentioned that the Irish usually chose as successor the claimant who was 'most active' militarily, while John Perrot said that the most 'warlike' was picked to succeed. Tremayne, in a more disparaging manner, asserted that the successor should be the member of the clan that 'hath shewed himself most mischievous in murdinge and spoilinge and burninge.'⁶³ This requirement for military activity is reflected in a poem written about 1550 by a Munster poet Loughlin Óg Ó Dalaigh. He was writing for three potential O'Brien chieftains and he advised them that they must lead incursions into enemy territory and engage in combat.⁶⁴ The reason why potential claimants had to raid and fight regularly was to prove themselves and show that

⁶⁰ AU, Vol. 2, p.429

⁶¹ Davies, John. "The Lawes of Irelande." Hiram Morgan (ed). *The Irish Jurist* Vol.28 No.1 (1993): pp. 307-13

⁶² Ware, James. *The Antiquities and History of Ireland*. Dublin, 1705, p.21, Ó'Raithbheartaigh, Toirdhealbhach (ed), *Genealogical Tracts*. Dublin: Irish Manuscript Commission, 1932, p.30

⁶³ Davies, John, "The Lawes of Irelande", Moryson, Fynes. "The Itinerary of Fynes Moryson," in C. Litton Falkiner (ed), *Illustrations of Irish History and Topography*. London: Longmans, Green, 1904, p.319, *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol. 3 pp. 27-9, Mr. Tremayne's discourse in Discourses and devices touching the ill state and reformation of Ireland, (Cotton Titus, B. XII, 81)

⁶⁴ Edwards, David, "Escalation of Violence in the Sixteenth-Century Ireland." *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland*, David Edwards et al (eds), Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2010, p.41.

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they were valiant and the best able to defend their clan's lordship and attack their enemies.⁶⁵

The need to prove oneself militarily if one wanted to be accepted as chieftain can be discerned from a conversation between the Earls of Tyrone and Ormond. Ormond and his companions tried to convince Tyrone to send his sons to England as pledges, where they were to be trained in 'good manner and civility.' They assured Tyrone that the Queen and the government would make sure that his son inherited his lands when he died. Tyrone however dismissed this as his country would not regard his sons if they did not remain in his country, 'scratching for themselves.' By this Tyrone meant that his followers would not adhere to those who had not remained and shown through military exploits that they were able to rule and defend their followers.⁶⁶ It could be plausibly argued that Tyrone was just trying to look for an excuse not to send his sons to England but his words might have reflected his own experience of returning to Ulster after being brought up outside the province.⁶⁷ Furthermore the Earl of Kildare's experience suggests that there was truth to Tyrone's claim because in 1601 he complained that due to spending his youth in England he was seen as a 'stranger' and so 'less followed by this countrymen.'⁶⁸ The case of Hugh Gallda O'Rourke also added credence to Tyrone's claim. He had spent over 20 years among the English as pledge for his father and his nickname, Gallda or the Anglicised, alludes that he viewed as an outsider. He tried to succeed his father in 1562 but as an unknown and unproven quantity, Hugh Gallda lacked credibility within Gaelic Ireland. Therefore he received little support within the O'Rourke lordship and was killed after two years and given his poor prospects it was an achievement to hold on to power for that long.⁶⁹ The rise of Brian MacArt O'Neill exhibits how by being active, displaying military aptitude and having many followers one could become a serious contender for the chieftainship. According to Arthur Chichester, appointed Lord Deputy in 1605, before the Nine Years' War Brian MacArt was thought to be a 'private man of no noate' but he was so 'active' and 'sufficient' during the Nine Years War that he accrued many followers and wealth and became so popular that after the Earl of Tyrone died, it was thought that Brian

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp.39-41. Collier, Hugh "Discourse on the Mere Irish of Ireland," Hiram Morgan (ed) accessed at *CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts*, <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/E600001-004/index.html>, p.17, Moryson, Fynes. "The Itinerary of Fynes Moryson," p.243

⁶⁶ Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, 28th December 1597, Dublin (SP 63/201/no.122)

⁶⁷ See chapter 2

⁶⁸ The Earl of Kildare to Secretary Cecil, 14th September 1601, (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.79)

⁶⁹ Maginn, Christopher. "The Limitations of Tudor Reform: The Policy of 'Surrender and Regrant' and the O'Rourkes." *Breifne*, Vol. 11, No. 43 (2007), pp.446-7

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may become the next O'Neill chieftain.⁷⁰ In a similar vein Donal Spainagh Kavanagh was propelled to the chieftainship of his clan because he had shown himself to be 'a good leader' in war.⁷¹

Bardic poetry can also shed a light on what traits were thought to be important for a chieftain to have and consequently what should be considered when determining if a potential chieftain was worthy. In regard to bardic poetry it first must be stated that its main concern was not producing a factual retelling of events, although they can sometimes provide useful historical information that otherwise would be unknown such as the subject's wife or mother or the places where he fought. Rather, poets expected rewards for their services and so their main purpose was to please their patron either by including what they requested or writing what they thought their patron wanted to hear. This resulted in partisan political works, but they can still be useful as historical sources because by reflecting what the patron thought or wanted to hear, we can get an insight into his political outlook and mindset.⁷² Moreover the use of recurring tropes and imagery, while not describing actual events, can give an indication to what was deemed to be important in Gaelic society. Therefore, the prevalence of tropes and imagery that celebrate attributes such as bravery and toughness and actions like defending one's land and attacking the territory of an enemy demonstrates that it was vital to have a reputation as militarily proficient in Gaelic Ireland. This was especially the case if one wanted to rule or was ruling. The use of motifs associated with warfare by poets to describe their patrons were thus functional as they confirmed the patron's worthiness and right to lead in the future or continue to do so.⁷³ This can be seen in a poem written for Dermott O'Connor Don around 1597 by Gofraidh Mac an Bhaird. Dermott was a prospective chieftain for the O'Connor Dons and Gofraidh's poem was written to support his candidature. According to Mac an Bhaird the kind of chieftain the O'Connor Don lordship needed was a protector who was 'a hackers of bodies' and because Dermott possesses this and other martial qualities necessary for leadership, he should be chieftain.⁷⁴ Philip O'Reilly's martial qualities were also commended and given as a reason for his suitability for the chieftainship. The poet

⁷⁰ Sir Arthur Chichester to the Lords of the Privy Council, 4th August 1607, Dublin (SP 63/222/no.112)

⁷¹ Sir George Carew, President of Munster, to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th February 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.101)

⁷² Simms, Katharine. "Bardic Poetry as a Historical Source," in Tom Dunne (ed). *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence*. Cork: Cork UP, 1987, pp.58-71

⁷³ Simms, Katharine. "Images of Warfare in Bardic Poetry." *Celtica* Vol. 21 (1990), pp.608-17

⁷⁴ Hoyne, Mícheál. "A Bardic Poem to Diarmaid Ó Conchubhair Donn.," *Ériu*, Vol. 61 (2011), pp.59- 93

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praised Philip's military exploits in vivid language, complimenting him for keeping birds well fed because of all the dead bodies he left in his wake:

You fed a flock of ravens, your weapon was wont to nourish them, though that sword was avid (for blood) you satisfied its greed⁷⁵

Cúchonnacht Maguire was praised for his 'frequent raids' and the destruction he caused. One poet thought it was admirable that Maguire's actions had led to 'many trees growing through the roofs of houses in the fair plains of Meath. [i.e. many houses were destroyed and abandoned].' It was not just his attacks that made Maguire a good chieftain but his ability to defend Fermanagh as well. The poet applauded Maguire because he does not 'abandon the duty of a good king...the protection of his fatherland against aggression.'⁷⁶ Poems would also demonstrate the subject's military prowess by listing their victories in a battle roll or *caithréim*, which usually consisted of a list of place names and an explanatory couplet or quatrain.⁷⁷ While the *caithréim* and celebrations of heroic bravery and feats of arms show the importance of having a good military reputation, so too do satires because it is telling that when a poet wanted to damage someone they knew tarnishing his military standing would be effective. A poet for instance might question their target's courage because, as highlighted by Katherine Simms, 'to accuse a king of cowardice is in effect to brand him as unfit for kingship.'⁷⁸ Thomas Cusack's comments about the people of Tyrconnell turning against Calvach O'Donnell in the summer of 1564 shows the real world implications for a chieftain if they were viewed as cowardly, inept and inactive. Calvach had been struggling to defend his country against his powerful neighbour Shane O'Neill and as a result Cusack stated that Calvach's 'country do not love him and their chief cause is that he hath nor never had activity nor manhood'.⁷⁹ Clearly it was necessary to engage regularly in successful military exploits in order to display one's prowess and manhood and in turn one's suitability to lead and defend the clan.

The criterion of being the 'worthiest' or most powerful and militarily skilled was problematic and led to strife. Conceivably any clan member in the *derbfine* with some

⁷⁵ Carney, James (ed), *Poems on the O'Reillys*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1950, pp.182-5

⁷⁶ Greene, David (ed and trans), *Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir. The Poembook of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir, Lord of Fermanagh 1566-1589*. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1972, p.115

⁷⁷ Simms, Katharine. "Images of Warfare in Bardic Poetry", p.616

⁷⁸ Ibid pp. 610-11

⁷⁹ Sir Thomas Cusack's advice to the Lord Justice Arnold, 13th June 1564 (SP 63/11/no.11)

semblance of power and military skill could believe themselves the ‘worthiest’ and lay claim to the position of chieftain, making quarrels over the chieftainship between numerous kinsmen possible. A tract titled *Discourse on the Mere Irish of Ireland*, possibly by a government spy named Hugh Collier, recognised this problem with Gaelic succession and stated; ‘thus euery one of that familie being as likely to be the best [i.e. worthiest], as another will strive to aduance their owne fortunes aboue the reste.’⁸⁰ In the court case over the disputed O’Callaghan lordship, the problem of the subjective nature of the ‘worthiest’ was also raised. Part of the argument of the defendant’s side against the use of Gaelic succession was that using the criteria of being worthiest created uncertainty because worthiness ‘cannot be reduced to certainty by any trail or proof’ so each man can have a different opinion of who is worthiest. Therefore, ‘some will say the most learned man and knowing man is most worthy, some that the most valiant; some, that the richest.’⁸¹

The other criterion, being the eldest, was also problematic and contributed to feuds within clans. Both English and Gaelic sources emphasised the importance of being the eldest and therefore Gaelic succession was sometimes portrayed as *de facto* agnatic seniority. During the dispute over the O’Sullivan Beare lordship, Eoghan O’Sullivan and his witnesses argued that according to their ‘ancient custom’, following the death of the chieftain the ‘ancientest of the blood.....ought to be oswlyvan and enyoie the said countries.’ Their description of ‘tanistry’ also raises further doubts over whether or not the *tánaiste* was elected in early modern Ireland as they claimed that a *tánaiste* acquired their position solely because they were the second oldest and they were entitled to succeed by virtue of their seniority.⁸² Seniority was shown as paramount in 1580 when Ulick and John Burke, the sons of the Earl of Clanricard, rebelled against the government and reverted to Gaelic succession. When deciding who should succeed to the chieftainship Nicholas Malby, the president of Connacht, stated that Ulick’s seniority decided the matter as John acknowledged that as the elder brother Ulick should be chieftain and he the *tánaiste*, another example of *tánaiste* not being elected at an assembly. Due to his seniority John was also willing to be deferential to his brother in other matters and agreed that ‘Ulick’s horse shall allwayes [be] led foremost before’ his.⁸³ The *Annals of the Four Masters*

⁸⁰Collier, Hugh, “Discourse on the Mere Irish of Ireland” p.17

⁸¹ Davies, John, *A Report of Cases and Matters in Law*, pp.96-7

⁸² An abstract of Sir Owen O’Sullivan’s proofs affirming the succession of tanist, 8th June 1587 (SP 63/130/no.10)

⁸³ Sir N. Malbie to Walsyngham, 17th November 1580, Athlone (SP 63/78/no.41)

similarly depict that John's willingness to defer to Ulick was because 'a junior should be to a senior' obedient.⁸⁴

The prominence of agnatic seniority was reflected in Gaelic poetry as the importance of seniority over youth was a theme. A Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn poem told the MacWilliam Burke chieftain that he should be chieftain because 'he is the best, since he is the eldest' and in another poem for a Cormac O'Hara, Tadhg cites an example of two powerful and potential kings of Munster refraining from becoming kings 'for fear of wronging their seniors.'⁸⁵ The adherence to agnatic seniority meant that elections among Gaelic clans could be a formality as the electorate had no option but to choose the senior candidate. This at least was how Nicholas Malby reported Richard an Iarinn Burke's account of his election. Richard claimed that the country elected him because he was 'eldest, and as in their old custom of right they ought to do.'⁸⁶ Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh's, description of an election in 1595 does suggest that Richard an Iarinn's claim was not merely out of self-interest as others shared this belief. The O'Malley, MacDonnell and MacMorris chieftains all argued that William Burke as the most senior candidate should be elected as it was 'their custom was to appoint the elder in preference to the younger.'⁸⁷ The preference for agnatic seniority, as already stated, caused problems as it meant *tánaistí* were of a similar age to the incumbent and this worsened the crown prince problem. Agnatic seniority also meant that there was little incentive for the rest of the *derbfine* to wait and remain passive. The size of the *derbfine* meant that an aspirant chieftain could have a lengthy wait behind a number of his elders. Florence MacCarthy highlighted this when assessing his own chances of becoming chieftain in 1589. Florence had a cousin Donal and an uncle Eoghan who were older than him so 'by the custom of tanistship...I am the third person, after Sir Owen McCarthy, and after Mr. Daniel McCarthy, to possess the said country.'⁸⁸ Compared to Donal Spainagh Kavanaugh, Florence's chances of becoming chieftain by agnatic seniority were good as George Carew claimed that there were 40 Kavanaughs older than Donal.⁸⁹ With such numbers most hopefuls, if they waited until they were the eldest, would never attain the chieftainship.

⁸⁴ *AFM*, p.1745

⁸⁵ Knott, Eleanor (ed), *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*. Vol. 2, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1922, pp.93,157

⁸⁶ Relation of Sir N. Malbie's proceedings against the rebels in Connaught, 23rd March 1581, Dublin (SP 63/81/no.42 i)

⁸⁷ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.117

⁸⁸ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol.3, pp.451-2

⁸⁹ Sir George Carew, President of Munster, to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th February 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.101)

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John Perrot wrote about this potential dilemma when commenting upon the situation of a son of a recently deceased chieftain. Perrot noted that the son ‘should not have their seignories till all the rest of the eldest and worthiest of the house’ had passed away, which according to Perrot ‘seldome happened in their lives.’⁹⁰ Such poor prospects for most of the clan meant attaining the chieftainship by overthrowing the current chieftain was a more attractive and realistic option compared to waiting.

Not all agreed that Gaelic succession followed a strict adherence to agnatic seniority and instead being the worthiest was argued to be more important. Tadhg O’Beirne became chieftain of his clan in 1527 ‘in preference to the senior of the descendants of Cormac O’Birn’ but the *Annals of Loch Cé* did not describe this as illegitimate but rather stated that it was ‘as good merit deserves.’⁹¹ Rejection of seniority in favour of ability was also a topic in bardic poetry. One such poem was written for Philip O’Reilly during the 1580s and argued that his youth should not preclude him from becoming chieftain as a chieftain:

is not chosen for his age; virtue is the true measure of the claim; whoever may come to choose a king it is deeds that must determine the choice.⁹²

The lack of consensus over the right of the eldest to succeed was exhibited in an episode known as the Contention of the Bards. The ‘Contention’ took place between 1616-1624 and it was an argument between southern and northern poets about which half of the country was superior and a major aspect of the debate centred around the mythical brothers Eireamhon and Eibhear. These brothers were part of an invasion force that had supposedly conquered Ireland and the Irish believed that they were their progenitors. After the successful conquest of Ireland, the island was divided between the brothers. Eibhear obtained the southern portion of Ireland and the southern poets were his descendants, while Eireamhon got the north of the island and the northern poets were his progenies. There was a controversy between the southern and northern poets about this division. The southern poets claimed that Eibhear had headed the invasion force and once Ireland was conquered the southern poets believed that he gave Eireamhon the lesser half of Ireland, the northern half. The southern poets justified these claims by pointing to the fact that Eibhear was the

⁹⁰ Reasons drawn up by Sir John Perrot to move the Privy Council, December 1590 (SP 63/156/ no.51)

⁹¹ *ALC*, Vol. 2, p.263

⁹² Carney, James. *Poems on the O’Reillys*, pp.208-12

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elder brother and the elder always comes before the junior so he must have been in command of the invaders and in a position to give his younger brother the northern half of Ireland. Tadhg MacBruaideadha, a Munster poet, argues this case in his poems. He averred that Eibhear must have been the leader of the invaders and given his brother the north of Ireland because ‘elders before others were always chosen afterwards by Mile’s sons in sea grit Éire to rule the tribe.’⁹³ These comments indicate that for MacBruaideadha seniority was the most important aspect of the criteria used to determine who the new clan chieftain should be.

The northern poets dismissed the importance of seniority and Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh argued that ‘if it be the younger who is perfect in deeds he is chosen for the throne.’ Ó Cléirigh was thus placing more importance on a new chieftain being capable or the ‘worthiest’ rather than his age. To support his argument Ó Cléirigh maintained that on many occasions ‘the younger [did] take precedence of the elder in the law of Mil’s race.’⁹⁴ Then Eibhear being the eldest did not mean he was automatically entitled to be leader of the invaders. Rather, Ó Cléirigh contended that following the conquest there was a dispute between the brothers over the kingship of Ireland and their younger brother Aimhirgin acted as arbitrator between the two. He decided that ‘though Eireamhon was the younger he should be in place of the elder’ so it was Eireamhon that had given Eibhear the south of Ireland to enjoy.⁹⁵ Disagreements over the right of the elder to succeed were not confined to the ‘Contention’ as evidenced by the fact the theme of youth not preventing someone from attaining the chieftainship was found in a number of other poems.⁹⁶

What the ‘Contention’ and other poems really highlight is that when convenient, seniority would be put at the forefront of the criteria used to evaluate the suitability of a clan chieftain. When the right of the eldest to succeed was problematic for a claimant, the importance of it was disregarded or disparaged. This was why you can have Eoghan O’Sullivan in 1587 arguing that he, as the eldest of the eligible candidates, was entitled to be chieftain while also having Shane O’Neill, who became the chieftain of the O’Neills at the relatively young age of about 29, make no reference to seniority and instead he claimed

⁹³ McKenna, Lambert (ed), *Contention of the Bards*. Vol. I, London: Irish Texts Soc., 1918. pp.13,31

⁹⁴ Ibid p.55

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 19, 55

⁹⁶ Simms, Katharine. "Bardic Poetry as a Historical Source.", p.64

that it was the ‘ablest’ and ‘worthiest’ of the clan that was chosen to be chieftain.⁹⁷ The poetry of Eochaidh O’Hussey best reveals the flexible and opportunistic attitude towards seniority. In a poem written for Tadhg O’Rourke, O’Hussey dissuades him from seeking the chieftainship as he was young, inexperienced and impetuousness. These characteristics were undesirable in a chieftain as ‘a rash young fellow’s first manifestations betray an instability of character invariably.’ O’Hussey then advised O’Rourke to wait until he was ‘at a [more] temperate age’ before being inaugurated and if he does ‘the obedience yielded thee [by the clan] will be all the greater.’ This advice would suggest that the clan respected and were more willing to obey an older chieftain and youthful chieftains were looked down upon. It was also advisable for a prospective chieftain to gain military experience so O’Hussey instructed O’Rourke to seek some mercenary work outside his clan’s lordship because without such experience ‘seldom’ candidates become chieftain.⁹⁸

Yet O’Hussey, when writing a poem for Hugh Rua O’Donnell, (who would have been in his late teens or early twenties at the time of composition) completely contradicted what he had told Tadhg. O’Hussey told O’Donnell that his youth should not impede him from seeking the kingship of Ireland and his case was similar to a former ancient king of Ireland, Conaire. During Conaire’s time Ireland was without a king so the Gaels of Ireland flocked to Tara to elect a new one. O’Hussey said that Conaire’s prospects of being chosen were poor due to him being an ‘impetuous youthful chieftain and a stripling’ and this proved to be correct as the other chieftains thought this youth was not fit to be a king. Conaire disagreed that his youth and inexperience should disbar him from being king because the *ollúna* of Ireland had the knowledge required to govern Ireland and he can learn from them while he rules. This won over the other chieftains and they duly elected Conaire king of Ireland. O’Hussey told O’Donnell to heed the example of Conaire and not allow his youth stop him from seeking the kingship of Ireland, which in reality meant the chieftainship of his clan.⁹⁹

When writing for the young Hugh Rua it was obviously in O’Hussey’s interest to use the theme of youth not being an impediment to chieftainship. When writing the poem for Tadhg O’Rourke, O’Hussey could have been working on behalf of Tadhg’s half-

⁹⁷ An abstract of Sir Owen O’Sullivan’s proofs affirming the succession of taniist, 8th June 1587 (SP 63/130/no.10), The answer of Shane O’Neill to the seven articles sent to him by the Privy Council, February 7th 1562 (SP 63/5/no.22)

⁹⁸ O’Grady, Standish (ed), *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts*, pp.457-8

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 469-71

brother Brian. The purpose of the poem was probably to dissuade Tadhg from challenging Brian's claim to the O'Rourke lordship so exploiting the supposed aversion in Gaelic Ireland to youthful leaders was beneficial for O'Hussey at that time. Whatever the reason, O'Hussey's differing stances clearly demonstrates the mutable attitude towards seniority and this was one of the reasons why Gaelic succession caused divisions and conflict because it allowed for elders to be challenged by younger claimants and vice versa. Such a conflict occurred following the death of the O'Carroll chieftain in 1532. The chieftain was replaced by his son Ferganaimn and this was done 'in preference to his seniors', his two uncles Donough and Owney, and 'evils resulted to the country in consequence of this' because Ferganaimn's uncles were furious by being usurped by a junior and took up arms against their nephew.¹⁰⁰

Disagreements over the importance of seniority, the subjectivity of being the worthiest, uncertainty over the *tánaiste's* right to succeed and a large number of eligible candidates meant that Gaelic clans, their subordinates and overlord, often struggled to reach an agreement on a successor. Some may favour the eldest while others may prefer another from large pool of potential chieftains who they deemed more capable and powerful or whose election furthered their own self-interests. Clans thus suffered from the coordination problem and this trouble finding consensus was highlighted by Shane O'Neill as he said that 'strife and debates' were the norm when electing a chieftain of the O'Neills.¹⁰¹ Therefore even though it was supposed to be important to receive consent from the country to rule, the reality was that having universal support was often not feasible. Even those like Shane O'Neill, Hugh Rua O'Donnell and Conor Óg MacDermott who claimed to have had the full backing of their country in fact faced opposition. As elections took place after a chieftain died, the aftermath of a chieftain passing could be a precarious period as the coordination problem and inability to agree meant opposing candidates and succession disputes were a real threat. Thus, episodes like Sean O'Doherty's election and inauguration as chieftain being opposed by a Cahir O'Doherty in 1582 or in 1523, Godfrey and Sean O'Cahan contending with each other for the chieftainship following the death of the O'Cahan chieftain, were not infrequent.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ *AFM*, p.1409

¹⁰¹ The answer of Shane O'Neill to the seven articles sent to him by the Privy Council, 7th February 1562 (SP 63/5/no.22)

¹⁰² *ALC*, Vol.2, p.241, *AFM*, pp.1789-91

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When succession disputes arose, they were seldom settled by precedents. Rather, Tadhg O'Dunne's description of how his predecessors usually became chieftain illustrates what in actuality resolved the succession issue. O'Dunne stated that it 'often came to pass that he obtained the name of O'Doine [was] who could win the same by stronger hand and force of arms.'¹⁰³ Sidney's prediction about the outcome of the possible death of a sick O'Reilly chieftain in 1576 encapsulates the typical destructive and bloody aftermath that accompanied a chieftain's death. Sidney stated that 'his death will breede great trouble... the competitors for his place will hazard the destruction of their country, themselves and their neighbours.'¹⁰⁴ George Carew's expectation of the fallout from the death of the O'Carroll chieftain in 1600 mirrors Sidney's anxiety about the probable violence that usually followed a chieftain's death. Carew stated that 'four of the O'Carrolls are in competition for the Lordship of that country, wherein (before the question be decided) it will cost much blood.'¹⁰⁵ The resolution of the succession disputes among the O'Dohertys in 1582 and the O'Cahans in 1523 exemplifies why Sidney and Carew were right to have such concerns. Sean O'Doherty emerged as chieftain but not before his country 'was ravaged, both crops, corn, dwellings, and cattle' because of the dispute with Cahir.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the quarrel between Sean and Godfrey O'Cahan in 1523 led to the destruction of their country as well as the death of several of prominent O'Cahans including Sean who was killed by Godfrey's son.¹⁰⁷

Such use of force was not seen as illegitimate and was even celebrated by the poets when it suited them. Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn, when writing a poem for the MacWilliam Burke chieftain and trying to legitimatise the presence of the Old English in Ireland, stated that 'the land of *Banbha* is but swordland: let all be defied to show that there is any inheritance to the Land of *Fál* save that of conquest by force of battle!' and the 'father does not bequeath [land] to the son [in] *Fódla*'s Isle of noble scions; until it be obtained by force it cannot be occupied.'¹⁰⁸ Henry Óg O'Neill became chieftain in 1493 by murdering his elder brother and in a poem celebrating his inauguration this violence was not shunned or glossed over but applauded as the best way to acquire the chieftainship because:

¹⁰³Nicholls, K. W, (ed), *The O Doyne (Ó Duinn) Manuscript*. Dublin: Stationery Office for Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1983, p.34-6

¹⁰⁴Lord Deputy Sydney to the Privy Council, 27th April 1576, Dublin (SP63/55/no.34)

¹⁰⁵Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, 20th July 1600, Limerick (SP 63/207, pt 4/ no.30)

¹⁰⁶ *AFM*, pp.1789-91

¹⁰⁷ *ALC*, Vol.2, pp.241, 253, *AFM*, p.1373,

¹⁰⁸Knott, Eleanor, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*, Vol 2, p.80

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I am certain whichever of you has the best right to the land of Ireland, until he adds his might to his right he may not obtain union with her inheritance. Power is not won without peril.¹⁰⁹

If we return to the ‘Contention’ and a poem by Robert MacArthur, force was again promoted as an appropriate way to obtain authority and right or precedent dismissed. In his poem MacArthur denies the right of the eldest to succeed because ‘Seniority does not give right to a land when it is being seized by force.’¹¹⁰

The use of force to resolve the issue of succession meant precedents or lawful inauguration could be undermined by a candidate who possessed enough military power. Donal MacCarthy for instance was not properly inaugurated as the O’Sullivan Mór chieftain refused to give him the rod but Donal had a large number of mercenary soldiers from Connacht and support from the Earl of Tyrone so he was powerful enough for a period to act as chieftain regardless.¹¹¹ Not being part of the *derbfine* could also be overcome if one had enough power. Brian Óg Mac Hugh MacMahon was not a member of the *derbfine* but Brian, using his alliances with his neighbours and the hiring of mercenaries, was able to build up a strong force and had himself installed as chieftain of his clan in 1589.¹¹² An election could be ignored and such disregard is present in a poem by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird and written for Conor Óg MacDermott upon his becoming chieftain. MacDermott, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, claimed to have been chosen by his clan but this was not the case. The real reason why Conor Óg MacDermott became chieftain was that he had the backing of the powerful Hugh Rua O’Donnell. O’Donnell had extended his influence into Connacht and to maintain it, he went to the province at the end of 1595 in force and installed men as chieftains who he thought would be loyal to him. O’Donnell’s choices were not popular as, according to Geoffrey Fenton (the secretary of state in Ireland), those new chieftains were ‘base and farr of that dignity.’¹¹³ Such opposition is hinted at in Mac an Bhaird’s poem because overriding a *rogha* or a selection was a theme. Mac an Bhaird tells MacDermott that not being elected should not preclude him becoming a chieftain because;

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, p.43

¹¹⁰ McKenna, Lambert, *Contention of the Bards*. Vol. I. p.122-3.

¹¹¹ MacCarthy, Daniel. *The Life and Letters of Florence MacCarthy Reagh*. pp.162, 179, 212-6, 220

¹¹² Moody, T.W. et al (eds), *A New History of Ireland*. Vol.9, pp.146-7, *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.3 p.13, Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 7th August 1589, Kilmainham (SP 63/146/no.5), *ALC*, Vol.2, p.495

¹¹³ Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 9th January 1596, Dublin (SP 63/186/no.10)

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activity and little rest, and being on the peaks of mountains brought in its benefits for the youth of Luan; victory always over the elected man.¹¹⁴

Violence and instability were not just restricted to the aftermath of chieftain's death because even when a claimant managed to obtain the chieftainship, the disgruntled contenders who missed out on becoming chieftain would not meekly give up on their ambition. Rather, as force was seen as a legitimate way to seize power and the alternative of acquiring authority through passive means unlikely, the disappointed hopefuls would often try to depose the current clan chieftain whenever an opportunity presented itself. This high threat of deposition meant that a chieftain's right to possess his clan's lordship only lasted as long as he could defend it or as Edmund Campion remarked, a chieftain could keep 'his [patrimony] no longer then he can hold by force of arms.'¹¹⁵ The violent disorders whenever there was a vacancy and possible depositions thereafter meant conflict in Gaelic lordships was regular and Campion also commented upon how Gaelic succession produced this regular and almost unending internal clan violence. He stated that Gaelic succession 'breedeth among them continuall warres' and William Russell came to a similar conclusion. He said that in a Gaelic lordship there could be 'contynuall warre forever most commonly to stryve amongst themselves to be masters.'¹¹⁶

Campion and Russell's comments partially stem from hostility but examining the O'Carrolls of Ely from 1532-1582 and the O'Rourkes of West Breifne during the 1560s gives an insight into how politically unstable, violent and fractured a Gaelic clan could be and shows that there was truth to Campion and Russell's statements. In 1532 Ferganaimn O'Carroll, with help from his father-in-law the Earl of Kildare, was able to subdue his uncles, Owney and Donough, who were angry at the younger man for taking the chieftainship. The conflict was not over as the following year Owney had himself inaugurated as the O'Carroll chieftain 'in opposition to Ferganaimn.'¹¹⁷ This further fractured the clan as Donough was not pleased with his brother Owney obtaining the chieftainship before him and so there was now a three-way feud among the O'Carrolls. Donough got the upper hand in 1536 as he deposed both his brother and nephew and was

¹¹⁴ Ó Macháin, Pádraig (ed and trans). "On the Inauguration of Conchubhar Óg Mac Diarmada, 1595." *Celtica*, Vol. 29 (2017), pp. 109-11, 123.

¹¹⁵ Campion, Edmund. "Campion's History of Ireland," p.28

¹¹⁶ Ibid, Heffernan, David (ed), *'Reform' Treatises on Tudor Ireland*, Irish Manuscripts Commission, Dublin, 2016, p.164

¹¹⁷ *AFM*, pp.1409, 1417

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the dominant force within his clan until his death in 1538. Ferganaimn retook the chieftainship in 1538 but rivalries in Gaelic Ireland transcended generations as sons and grandsons inherited their forebears' ambitions for power and bitterness toward other factions. Therefore, the quarrel over Ely continued but Ferganaimn now had to contend with the sons of Donough. The O'Carroll chieftain had the backing of the Lord Deputy and with this support he was able to establish control over Ely.¹¹⁸ Ferganaimn also hunted down Donough's eldest son, William Maol O'Carroll. William sought refuge at a church at Ballingarry but this provided him with little protection as Ferganaimn set the church alight and 'there pitously murdered the said William.'¹¹⁹ Donough's sons would get their revenge in 1541 when Donough's third son, Tadhg, along with his allies sneaked into Ferganaimn's castle and killed the by then blind and elderly chieftain. That did not end the rivalry as Ferganaimn's son, Tadhg Caoch, became chieftain and feuded with Donough's second son Calvach. In 1553 Calvach killed Tadhg Caoch and became chieftain but his rule was short lived as he was slain by another son of Donough William Odhar. William Odhar led the clan until 1581 when he was killed by the neighbouring O'Connors Faly and this prompted another period of violence and instability. William's son John succeeded him but in 1582 he was killed by Maolmordha O'Carroll, a son of Tadhg Caoch. Before the end of the year Maolmordha was killed by another son of William Odhar, Calvach.¹²⁰

The O'Rourkes also experienced a similar bloody and volatile period from 1559-66. In 1559 the chieftain of the O'Rourkes, Brian Ballach, was deposed by his son Tadhg. Once Tadhg was in power, he had to worry about his younger brother Eoghan, who also sought to be chieftain but this threat was neutralised once Eoghan was imprisoned in Leitrim castle. Eoghan managed to kill his guard and he then ascended to the top of the castle and declared that the castle was his and the people of the O'Rourke's lordship should side with him over his brother. The appeal made little impact as a guard outside the castle, after hearing Eoghan's declaration, took aim and shot and killed Eoghan. Tadhg's reign as chieftain did not last much longer as he drowned in 1560. Brian Ballach retook the chieftainship and died two years later. His son, Hugh Gallda, succeeded him but his rule was cut short as he 'was maliciously and malignantly slain by his own people' in 1564 and it was rumoured that his brother Brian na múrtha had instigated the murder. Brian could

¹¹⁸ Venning, Tim. "The O'Carrolls of Offaly", in *Offaly History & Society*. William Nolan and Timothy O'Neill (eds), Dublin: Geography Publications, 1998, p.187

¹¹⁹ *S. P Henry VIII*, Vol.3, pt.3, p.77 see footnote

¹²⁰ Venning, Tim. "The O'Carrolls of Offaly", pp.188-96, *AFM*, p.1775

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not take control of the lordship though as his older brother, Hugh Buí, was allied with the powerful Shane O'Neill and using his help he became chieftain. Brian did not give up and two years later he did become chieftain after he, with help from his maternal cousins the O'Donnells, had his brother killed.¹²¹ David Edwards' examination of violence in the early sixteenth century sheds further light on the frequency of internecine clan violence. He found that between 1501-40, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, there were nearly 100 members of ruling clans killed by a near kinsmen.¹²²

Succession in Gaelic Ireland was further complicated because there were two types of succession law competing with each other. Gaelic succession was seen as barbarous by government officials and thus during the sixteenth century they attempted to abolish Gaelic succession and replace it with primogeniture.¹²³ The most popular way they tried to accomplish this was through surrender and regrant arrangements. Surrender and regrant involved a chieftain surrendering his land to the crown, which would then be given back to him with letters patent confirming his ownership of said land. These letters patents also contained certain conditions which aimed to eradicate Gaelic customs and laws and replace them with English law and culture. One of the common conditions was the outlawing of Gaelic succession and instituting primogeniture in its stead.¹²⁴ This meant whenever a chieftain who availed of a surrender and regrant agreement died, his son could appeal to the crown and point to his father's letters patent and its provision for the establishing of primogeniture as proof that he should inherit his father's land. However, the introduction of primogeniture proved to be difficult for the government because it led to the *tánaiste* and the rest of *derbfine* losing their opportunity to become chieftain and this provoked anger. Tremayne highlight this flaw with surrender and regrant. He pointed out that the 'Thainst' would be 'extremelie discontented' by being 'put from all hope of government.' The rest of the inhabitants too would be displeased with losing 'all hope of inheritance.' Therefore, establishing primogeniture would be difficult especially if a child inherited a lordship because he could not defend himself and will require assistance from the crown which will be costly.¹²⁵ Lord Deputy Anthony St. Leger observed anger and anxiety when

¹²¹ *AFM*, pp.1577-9, 1591, 1597-9, 1609, *A New History of Ireland*. Vol.9, pp.162-3.

¹²² Edwards, David. "Escalation of Violence in the Sixteenth-Century Ireland." pp.47-8

¹²³ See introduction, pp.9-10

¹²⁴ Bradshaw, Brendan. *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979, pp.196-8,

¹²⁵ Mr. Tremayne's discourse" in *Discourses and devices touching the ill state and reformation of Ireland*, (Cotton Titus, B. XII, 81)

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the surrender and regrant policy was first implemented in the 1540s. When he met with the *tánaiste* of the O'Donnells in 1543, St. Leger noted that he was greatly concerned that the chieftain, Manus O'Donnell, would surrender the O'Donnell lordship and accept primogeniture which the *tánaiste* 'and his bretherne wolde be lothe to agree unto.'¹²⁶ Manus did not surrender his lordship but Con Bacach O'Neill did and he was made Earl of Tyrone and acknowledged primogeniture. His nephew and *tánaiste*, Niall Connallach O'Neill was furious and St. Leger remarked how he was 'moche grevid in that the sayd Erle receyvid the saide honor gevyn to him and to his heires by Your Majestie, wherby he thought hymselffe disheryted.'¹²⁷ This anger could turn into violence as some of the *derbfine* would not stand by while the introduction of primogeniture deprived them of a chance to obtain their clan's lordship. Niall Connallach would die in 1544 so he could not halt the adoption of primogeniture but Con's son Shane O'Neill did. He killed his half-brother and Con's heir, Matthew, in 1558 and when Con died the following year instead of primogeniture and English law being observed Shane was inaugurated as the O'Neill chieftain in the traditional Gaelic manner.¹²⁸

There were similar difficulties establishing primogeniture in the O'Brien lordship of Thomond. Murrough O'Brien surrendered his clan's lordship and was made Earl of Thomond in 1543 but initially the instituting of primogeniture was delayed and instead of Murrough's son inheriting the earldom his powerful nephew, Donough did. However, Donough wanted his son, Conor, to be heir but Donough's brothers, Donal and Turlough, responded by attacking and killing the Earl.¹²⁹ The annals leave little doubt that this killing resulted from the brothers' objections to their exclusion from succession in favour of Conor and primogeniture.

The cause of this dissension was, that Donough had obtained from the King the right of succession for his son, who had been styled Baron in preference to his seniors. In consequence of this the brothers became enraged, and made the aforesaid attack upon O'Brien. Some assert that it was no wonder that they should have acted thus.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ S. P Henry VIII, Vol.3, pt.3, pp. 481-2

¹²⁷ Ibid, pp. 434-5

¹²⁸ Brady, Ciaran. *Shane O'Neill*. Dublin, UCD Press, 2015, pp.29, 44

¹²⁹ Maginn, Christopher. "'Surrender and Regrant' in the Historiography of Sixteenth-Century Ireland." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2007, p. 971

¹³⁰ Ibid, *AFM* p.1529

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Following Donough's death, Donal would be inaugurated as chieftain and withheld the O'Brien lordship from Conor. The Lord Deputy, the Earl of Sussex, was determined to uphold English law and primogeniture so he supported Conor and in June 1558 he marched into Thomond and formally established Conor as Earl. This was not the end of the dispute as the following year Donal and his supporters defeated Thomond and his ally, the Earl of Clanricard, at Spencil Hill. The war between the two O'Briens would continue until a compromise was agreed by Sussex's successor. Donal acknowledged Conor as Earl and in return Donal was recognised as having an independent status from his nephew.¹³¹ Disputes between those using Gaelic succession and those using primogeniture would continue throughout the sixteenth century and in 1597 this conflict 'between them that challenge by lyneall descent and them that challenge by Tanistry' was cited by Nicholas Browne, the son of an English planter with lands in Kerry, as the cause of much dissension in Munster. For example, Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare used primogeniture to oppose his uncle Eoghan, and his use of 'tanistry', to further his claim for the O'Sullivan Beare lordship.¹³² This dispute also displayed that Tremayne's concerns over children inheriting by primogeniture were valid as Donal Cam was two when his father died and because he was too young to defend his right; Eoghan was able to take control of the O'Sullivan Beare lordship.¹³³

The divisions caused by Gaelic succession, further exacerbated by the attempt to introduce primogeniture, helped the government because it prevented a chieftain from enjoying the full backing of his lordship and so stopped him from becoming too powerful and developing into a serious military threat.¹³⁴ The point was not lost on the annalists. During the succession dispute between Eoghan and Tadhg O'Rourke in 1560, the *Annals of the Four Masters* mentioned that this rivalry diminished their capabilities and made them vulnerable. Otherwise they would have been able to defend their lordship because to attack the brothers while they were united 'would have been as dangerous as to rob the nest of a serpent, to plunder the young of the griffin, or to attack a lion in his den.'¹³⁵ The government too were conscious that divisions weakened Gaelic clans and could be used to

¹³¹ Carew Manuscripts, Vol.2 p.344, Brady, Ciaran. *The Chief Governors: The Rise and Fall of Reform Government in Tudor Ireland, 1535-1588*. Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp.98-9

¹³² Browne, Nicholas. "Munster in A.D. 1597." James Buckley (ed). *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society* Vol 12 No.70 (1906), pp. 66-67, An abstract of Sir Owen O'Sullivan's proofs affirming the succession of tanist, 8th June 1587 (SP 63/130/no.10), The answer of Donnell O'Sullivan to the false accusations and surmises of Sir Owen O'Sullivan, 10th May 1587 (SP 63/129/no.74)

¹³³ Donnell O'Sullivan to Sir George Carew, 2nd May 1601, Murronmue (SP 63/208/pt.2/no.40)

¹³⁴ Carew Manuscripts, Vol.3. p.45

¹³⁵ AFM, p.1579

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not only subdue them but also pave the way for the full establishment of English authority and customs throughout the island. The government would thus try to maintain these fractures and to achieve this they would, when the opportunity arose, divide and then distribute the land of a Gaelic lordship among the prominent members of the clan, granting each recipient letters patent. Henry Sidney believed this was the best way to ‘reform’ Gaelic Ireland and he made his stance on the matter clear to the Privy Council when discussing the fate of the Magennis lordship. Sidney argued against giving the lordship to one man because he was ‘of [the] opinion and holde the same for an infallible principle, that the discipacion of the great lordes and their Countries by good distribucion into many hands is a sounde way of proceadinge to the perfectere formacion of this unhappie and cursed estate.’¹³⁶ Henry Bagenal, marshal of the army in Ireland and from an English family who settled at Newry, once said that the ‘cheefeste, or rather only means to reduce these barbarous people to obedience is to so disunite them as all may be enforced to depende on the Queen.’¹³⁷ Geoffrey Fenton too saw the benefits of dividing a lordship as the different factions could be played off each other to keep a clan weak and divided. Therefore, during the dispute between Donal Cam and Eoghan O’Sullivan Beare, Fenton proposed a division because when ‘severall competitors stand for one country there is no waie better to keep the Balance even then apportion [of] the lands into parts so to make one of them to counterpeyse another.’¹³⁸ When dealing with feuding members of the O’Connors of Faly in 1583, the Dublin government also saw the benefits of keeping clans divided; ‘which quarrell we nourishe between them as much as we may thinking yt the best meanes to weaken them both.’¹³⁹

The government would also exploit rifts within a clan when a chieftain decided to rebel against them. When this occurred, the government would appeal to a rival of the chieftain for help and offer him rewards. Rewards that could include the most valued prize, the clan’s lordship, sometimes along with an English title or even the position of chieftain with its traditional Gaelic title. In return the rival would promise to be a faithful subject and aid the overthrow of the rebellious chieftain, often receiving military and financial support from the government to help with this.¹⁴⁰ During Shane O’Neill’s rebellion for

¹³⁶Collins, Arthur, *Letters and Memorials of State*. Vol.1, p.96

¹³⁷Sir Henry Bagenall to Burghley, 20th February 1592, Newry (SP 63/163/no,29)

¹³⁸ Geoffrey Fenton to Lord Burghley, 10th May 1587, Dublin (SP 63/129/no.73)

¹³⁹ Lord Justices to the Privy Council, 29th April 1583, Dublin (SP 63/101/no.43)

¹⁴⁰Moryson, Fynes. "The Itinerary of Fynes Moryson" pp.290-1

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example, Sidney appealed to his rival and *tánaiste*, Turlough Luineach, for help. Turlough Luineach submitted in March 1567 and was augmented by 75 English soldiers. He made good use of them as Sidney commended him for ‘daielie Embryunge himself in the Blood of the Rebbells followers.’¹⁴¹ Nicholas Malby would also take advantage of divisions during his tenure as president of Connacht. In 1578, Brian na múrtha O’Rourke was found to be counterfeiting coins and Malby responded by sending soldiers to seize his castle at Leitrim. His soldiers captured the castle and put the ward to the sword. To further restrain O’Rourke, Malby also wanted to set up a counterbalance so the castle was handed over to O’Rourke’s nephew and rival, Brian MacTadhg O’Rourke, who was further strengthened by being appointed sheriff of Sligo.

When Brian na múrtha took up arms in 1580, Malby reiterated his desire to have a counterpoise to weaken the O’Rourke chieftain and he told Francis Walsingham, principal secretary to the privy council, that he hoped to utilise O’Rourke’s ‘great enemy’ as an ‘Olyver against a Rowland.’ By this he meant that he hoped to have an equal that he could use to pacify the rebellious O’Rourke.¹⁴² Malby did receive military assistance from his ‘Olyver’ as the *Annals of Loch Cé* recorded that in 1581, Brian MacTadhg along with ‘Irishmen, and a number of Saxons’ raided the O’Rourke chieftain’s land and they ‘routed’ and killed ‘a great many’ of his men.¹⁴³ Brian MacTadhg’s assistance helped to quell O’Rourke, temporarily at least, and O’Rourke would attempt to reach an accommodation with the government by participating in the Composition of Connacht in 1585. Yet at the same time he was still conscious of the threat his nephew posed to his authority and thus he seized on an opportunity to eliminate the government’s counterpoise. In 1585 Brian MacTadhg raided the MacClancys of Dartry but was forced to retreat and was hotly pursued back to West Breifne. Upon his return he did not receive any help as he ‘should have....on such an emergency’ but rather was attacked and captured by the ‘men of Breifny and O’Rourke’s people.’ Brian MacTadhg was later executed, and the *Annals of the Four Master* accused O’Rourke of ‘participating in this unbecoming deed.’¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹Collins, Arthur, *Letters and Memorials of State*. Vol. 1, London: 1746, p.30, Privy Council to Lord Deputy Sidney, 12th May 1567, (SP 63/20/no.83)

¹⁴²Maginn, Christopher. “The Limitations of Tudor Reform”, pp.455-9, Sir N. Malbie to Walsyngham, 17th August 1580, Dublin (SP 63/75/no.53)

¹⁴³ALC, Vol. 2, pp.441-3

¹⁴⁴AFM, pp.1825-7

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The support Malby and the government showed Brian MacTadhg highlighted the flexible approach that government officials had towards ‘tanistry’ and Gaelic customs. When it suited them they would permit and engage with Gaelic practices if it provided them with short-term success. The position of *tánaiste* and the lands accompanying the office would increase the power and influence of Brian MacTadhg and better enable him to keep the O’Rourke chieftain in check. Therefore, although the *tánaiste* was a Gaelic office the government, in order to strengthen Brian MacTadhg, were willing to grant him ‘the place of second person in O’Rourke’s country’ and ‘such possessions as the second person or tawnyst of the country has had.’¹⁴⁵ The Earl of Sussex best highlighted this malleable and hypocritical approach towards tanistry and Gaelic succession. Sussex hated Gaelic succession and said that ‘Irish election to the captainry of their nations is the chief cause of their disobedience’ and ‘rebellion.’ He thought because of the elective aspect and emphasise on strength, the hopefuls for the chieftainship would retain many soldiers in order to show they were the strongest and thus worthy of being elected whenever there was a vacancy. Maintaining these soldiers was expensive and prospective chieftains would extort the locality to provide for them and this could cause disturbances even during peace times. If primogeniture was introduced and there was only one successor, the eldest son, Sussex believed the rest of the clan would dismiss many of their soldiers because without any prospects of getting elected the soldiers were not needed. Sussex therefore urged the ‘taking away of this election and granting of states in succession to the heir male.’¹⁴⁶

This commitment to upholding primogeniture appeared to be reflected in Sussex’s support of Conor O’Brien inheriting the earldom of Thomond. Yet in 1558 when dealing with the O’Carrolls, Sussex was willing to engage with an ‘Irish election’ and other Gaelic customs. The chieftain of the O’Carrolls, William Odher, had ‘behaved himself so traitorously towards their Majesty’ so Sussex hoped to depose him and set up another O’Carroll in his place. Sussex ‘by consente of the reste of the Okarwelles and others, the freeholders of Ely, appoynted Tege Okarwell...claymyng as eldeste of that name to be capitayn of his nacyon.’ By accepting the eldest candidate who had the consent of the clan and freeholders Sussex was acting almost as if he was an overlord confirming the election of one of his *uirríthe*. What is more Sussex allowed Tadhg to retain the title of O’Carroll and was even willing to acknowledge the authority of local Gaelic judges, the Brehons. He

¹⁴⁵ *Fiants, Ire., Eliz.* No. 3392

¹⁴⁶ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol.1, pp.339,348-9

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decreed that when resolving disputes within the O'Carroll lordship 'every man to stande to suche order as shalbe by the breyhouns taken between them in the presence of Tege or by his assignement.'¹⁴⁷ Five years later Sussex, now Lord Lieutenant, would again permit Gaelic practices when exploiting a division in a clan. Sussex went to Ulster in April 1563 and hoped to set up Turlough Luineach O'Neill against Shane O'Neill but Turlough was experiencing trouble within his own sept. Turlough Luineach was challenged by his first cousin Art MacHenry Ballach O'Neill and Sussex in order to strengthen Turlough negotiated a settlement between the two which allowed for the office of *tánaiste* to remain as Art was 'bound to serve Tirlough as his chief and Tirlough to allowe him as tanest.'¹⁴⁸

Warfare in Gaelic Ireland was not restricted to internal clan wars as conflict between different clans was a regular feature of Gaelic society. Ireland in 1515 was estimated to consist of 60 major Gaelic lordships under a clan chieftain and 30 lordships controlled by Gaelicised Old English lords.¹⁴⁹ Besides the 90 or so major lordships there were numerous other chieftains who controlled smaller lordships so Ireland was a much fractured island made up of many large and small lordships. The strongest clans would compete with each other for regional hegemony and attempt to subjugate the smaller weaker clans and turn them into their *uirríthe*. An *uirrí's* overlord could alter with the changing strength and fortunes of the foremost regional powers. For instance, the MacMurroughs in south Leinster were the *uirríthe* of the Earls of Ormond but when the Earls of Kildare rose to prominence in the late fifteenth century, the MacMurroughs changed their allegiance to them.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, the Maguires' adherence alternated between the O'Neills and O'Donnells depending on which clan was more dominant at the time.¹⁵¹

The overlord-*uirríthe* relationship dynamic was the cause of much contention because *uirríthe* were often not happy with their status and wished to break free from their overlord. This discontent partially stemmed from the many burdensome services and exactions that *uirríthe* owed their overlord. In the sixteenth century coign and livery was used by English observers as a catchall term to describe these exactions. Originally coign, deriving from the Gaelic term *coinnmheadh*, was the taking of provisions from the

¹⁴⁷*The Manuscripts of Charles Haliday, Esq., of Dublin*, p.63, For the background of William O'Carroll see Venning, Tim. "The O'Carrolls of Offaly", p. 192

¹⁴⁸ Lord Lieutenant and Council to the Privy Council, 11th May 1563, Dundalk (SP 63/8/no.45)

¹⁴⁹S. P Henry VIII, Vol.2, pt.3, pp.1-10

¹⁵⁰ Canny, Nicholas, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, p.3

¹⁵¹ *AFM* p.1317, *AU* Vol.3 pp.565-7

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inhabitants of the land or the billeting of troops without payment, while livery was an English word for the billeting of horses.¹⁵² The demands MacCarthy Mór made of his *uirrí*, O'Sullivan Beare, shows the extent of the services that an *uirrí* might have to render to his overlord. O'Sullivan Beare had to serve personally as a marshal in MacCarthy's military campaigns and to do so 'with his whole power.' He also had to maintain billeted soldiers, five for every quarter of arable inhabited land, who would act as bodyguards for MacCarthy. He had to give MacCarthy 2s 6d for every fisher or traders that came to his ports, contribute to the upkeep of MacCarthy's hounds and horses, provide an annual feast for MacCarthy and his entourage and lastly anytime MacCarthy was in O'Sullivan's country, O'Sullivan had to make sure to have sufficient meat and drink for him.¹⁵³

When compared to Tadhg O'Connor, O'Sullivan Beare got off lightly. In 1539, Tadhg signed a treaty with Manus O'Donnell in which he agreed to perform a large number of services for O'Donnell and give up most of his autonomy. O'Connor promised to be a loyal man to O'Donnell and act on O'Donnell's orders in all matters great and small, secular and religious. O'Connor agreed to give O'Donnell possession of the castle and town of Sligo whenever O'Donnell required use of it. O'Connor approved the demolition of Sligo castle if it was in danger of falling into the hands of O'Donnell's enemies. O'Connor also agreed to help O'Donnell impose his overlordship over the rest of north Connacht and maintain any soldiers that O'Donnell sent to be quartered in Sligo. O'Connor had to give O'Donnell the customs and burgage rents of Sligo town and was only to make war and peace with the expressed permission of O'Donnell.¹⁵⁴ According to the *Ceart Uí Néill* which outlined the rights of the O'Neill chieftain, the Maguire chieftain owed his superior 200 cows and had to maintain 200 soldiers. Maguire was also to bring 200 men when O'Neill assembled his forces for an expedition and was fined a cow for every man missing.¹⁵⁵ *Uirríthe*, in return for rendering services, would receive their overlord's protection leading to a saying 'spend me, defend me' which meant that if an overlord taxed his subject he must protect them.¹⁵⁶ This need for an overlord to protect is discernible in a 1526 contract between Connell Mageoghegan and his *uirrí*, Breasal Fox. Annually Fox

¹⁵² Heffernan, David. "Six Tracts on 'Coign and Livery', c. 1568-78." *Analecta Hibernica*, vol. 45, (2014), p.3

¹⁵³ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 1. p.366

¹⁵⁴ Carney, Maura. "Agreement between Ó Domhnaill and Tadhg Ó Conchobhair concerning Sligo Castle (23 June 1539)." *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 3 No.11 (March 1943): pp.282-296

¹⁵⁵ Ó Doibhlin, Éamon. "Ceart Uí Néill: A Discussion and Translation of the Document." *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1970, p.344

¹⁵⁶ Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, pp.104-6, 111-2

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had to provide his overlord with 359 pigs, or sheep if a pig was not available, and in return for this and other services Mageoghegan had to 'do his utmost for the protection and shelter of the Fox, and every person in his country, both small and great.'¹⁵⁷

However, the promise of protection often did not outweigh the demands of an overlord as fulfilling them could put a massive strain on his *uirríthe* and freeholders' resources and alienate them. The chieftain of the O'Shaughnessys, a Galway clan, in 1567 voiced his displeasure with the demands of his overlords, namely the Earls of Clanricard and Thomond, and he told Sidney that he wanted 'to be delivered of the Exactions of both the Erles.'¹⁵⁸ A 1597 surveyor's report claimed that paying for MacCarthy Mor's hounds and huntsmen caused 'all freeholders [to] cry out against it as imposed by extortion and strong hand.'¹⁵⁹ Sustaining a chieftain's soldiers was the most onerous and unpopular demand. While the more general phase coign and livery was used by English contemporaries to refer to the billeting of soldiers so too was the word *buannacht*, anglicised as *bonnacht*, although in some places by the sixteenth century a tax, known as little *bonnacht*, was used in lieu of billeting. The word *bonnacht* was further used to denote a mercenary soldier billeted upon a chieftain's followers.¹⁶⁰ The strain and unpopularity of supporting a chieftain's soldiers can be seen when Turlough Luineach O'Neill hired Scottish mercenaries and billeted them upon his *uirríthe*. During the first half of the 1570s Turlough, utilising his connection to Scotland through his Scottish wife, hired Scottish mercenaries to aid his resistance of a planned colony in east Ulster. O'Cahan struggled to support these troops and was said to be 'wearied with Turloughe Lenoghe's ymposcions' and wished to be 'ridd of Turloghe and the Scottes.' O'Cahan was not alone because Magennis, MacMahon and Maguire expressed similar sentiments towards Turlough demands and thus they all wanted to be free from the 'imposition[s] of thos which beare the name of O'Neill.'¹⁶¹ Native sources also mention the burdensomeness of an overlord's

¹⁵⁷ O'Donovan, John (ed and trans), "Covenant between Mageoghegan and the Fox, with brief historical notices of the two families", in *The Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*. Vol. 1, Dublin, Irish Archaeological Society (1846) p.191-3

¹⁵⁸ Collins, Arthur (ed), *Letters and Memorials of State*. Vol. 1, London: 1746, p.28

¹⁵⁹ Butler, William F.T, "The Lordship of Mac Carthy Mór." *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (1906), p.354.

¹⁶⁰ Empey, C.A and Katherine Simms, "The Ordinances of the White Earl of Ormond and the Problem of Coign in the Late Middle Ages." *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Vol. 75, (1975), p.183

¹⁶¹ Answer of Essex to the doubts expressed about his plan for Ulster (B.M., Add. ms 48015, Yelverton MS, 16), Hayes-McCoy, Gerard. *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland (1565-1603)*. Dublin: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1937, pp.94-129, Canny, Nicholas, "Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and the Changing Face of Gaelic Ulster." *Studia Hibernica* Vol. 10 (1970): pp. 14-5

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demands. A fifteenth century poem for Niall Garbh O'Donnell discusses how his taxation was *trom*, heavy oppressive, and another poem for his brother and successor, Neachtain, encourage him to hire soldiers and 'think not too heavy thy burden of paying hired troops.' Both poems assured their patrons' *uirríthe* and freeholders that bearing these heavy burdens was worth it because it would enable the O'Donnell chieftains to maintain law and order and protect them from outside forces.¹⁶² A sixteenth century history of the MacSweenys suggests that the O'Donnells' followers did not share the poets' enthusiasm as a Rory MacSweeney came to Neachtain and complained that 'all the country thought his maintenance a great oppression.'¹⁶³

An *uirrí's* desire to be independent could lead to him refusing to acknowledge his overlord's authority. The overlord would usual respond by imposing his authority over his reluctant *uirrí*. The actions of Hugh Dubh O'Donnell towards the MacDonoughs in 1526 typifies the treatment that unruly *uirríthe* were likely to receive at the hands of their overlords. For defying his authority, O'Donnell pitched camp at their castle of Collooney and destroyed all their corn. These actions had the desired effect as the MacDonoughs were forced to make peace with O'Donnell and accept the terms that he dictated to them. To ensure that MacDonough would obey the terms of their peace, O'Donnell took hostages from him.¹⁶⁴ Sean Maguire's description of the aftermath of a raid by Shane O'Neill in October 1562 also shows how overlords treated their insolent *uirríthe*. O'Neill came into Maguire's country with a great force and demanded Maguire's obedience and that he forsake the Queen. Maguire rejected O'Neill's demands and O'Neill responded by burning 'all the corn and houses in the east part of the river [Erne]' and 'spared neither church, neither sanctuary and moreover he hath killed above three hundred persons of poor labourers and women and children that were making their harvest in that side of the river.'¹⁶⁵ Maurice Fitzgerald, the lord of the Decies, claimed to have received similar treatment for rejecting the Earl of Desmond's supposed right to overlordship of the Decies. Maurice said that Desmond had 'used hostilitie and open warre...and thereby wasted and destroyed' his land in order to charge him with 'ympositions, services, exactions and

¹⁶² Quoted in Simms, Katherine, "Late Medieval Donegal" in William Nolan et al (eds), *Donegal History and Society*, Dublin, Geography Publications, 1995, p.189

¹⁶³ Quoted in Empey, C.A and Katherine Simms, "The Ordinances of the White Earl of Ormond", pp.181-2

¹⁶⁴ *AFM*, p.1387, *AU*, p.565

¹⁶⁵ John Magwere to the Lord Lieutenant, 20th October 1562 (SP 63/7/no. 34 i), Lord Lieutenant Sussex to the Queen, 15th October 1562, Ardbaccan (SP 63/7/no.29)

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demands.¹⁶⁶ Sometimes an overlord may try to depose an unreliable and insolent *uirrí* and replace him with a more amendable member of the clan. This was what eventually happened to the aforementioned Sean Maguire. In the summer of 1566, Shane O'Neill invaded Fermanagh and expelled Maguire. Maguire's brother, who was described as a servant of O'Neill, was given possession of most of Fermanagh.¹⁶⁷

Uncooperative *uirríthe* were not always easily overpowered by overlords though and on occasions they could defend themselves. Thomas Fitzmaurice, the Baron of Kerry and Lixnaw, resented the Earl of Desmond's claim of overlordship over him and when James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, who was given control of the earldom by Desmond when the latter and his brother were in prison in London in 1568, tried to rein in his vassal by ravaging much of his land and besieging him, Lixnaw sallied out, attacked James' camp and killed three hundred of the besiegers.¹⁶⁸ The poor relations between *uirríthe* and overlords meant that *uirríthe* often viewed their overlord not as someone they owed allegiance, rents and services to but as an enemy. This mentality can be seen in an Eochaidh O'Hussey poem written for Hugh Maguire in about 1589. O'Hussey positioned Maguire's two competing overlords, the O'Donnells and the O'Neills, as enemies that he needed to defend his land from when he wrote that 'Hugh's is the hand that protects Fermanagh; he is the frozen sea against the O'Neills and he is a stone wall against the O'Donnells.'¹⁶⁹ Maurice Fitzgerald of the Decies too saw Desmond as a foe and referred to him as his 'ancient enemy'. Similarly, Donough O'Connor Sligo saw his periodic O'Donnell overlords as an 'ancient enemy of my house.'¹⁷⁰

Uirríthe and freeholders would also abandon or turn against their overlord if he failed to live up to his promise to protect them.¹⁷¹ This happened to Sean Maguire when his followers grew disaffected with him because of his inability to prevent Shane O'Neill's incursions. Maguire complained to the Earl of Sussex that 'all my country are against me' because of Shane's raids and the fear of future ones.¹⁷² Lord Deputy Mountjoy implicitly agreed that it was thought justifiable to withdraw allegiance if not protected when he met

¹⁶⁶ Petition of Sir Maurice Fitzgerald of Dromaney, July 1565 (SP 63/14/no.34)

¹⁶⁷ Lord Deputy Sydney to Cecill, 9th June 1566, Kilmainham (SP 63/18/no.9)

¹⁶⁸ Sir Maurice Fitzgerald to the Lords Justices, 5th August 1568, (SP 63/25/no.70 vi), *AFM*, pp.1625-9

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Carney, James. *The Irish Bardic Poet*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1985, p.20

¹⁷⁰ Donogh O'Connor Sligo to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy. 27th September 1600, Sligo (SP 63/207, pt 5/ no.48), Sir Maurice Fitzgerald to Cecill. 15th May 1568, Dromanye (SP 63/23/no.70)

¹⁷¹ Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, p.114

¹⁷² Shane Maguire to the Lord Lieutenant Sussex, 25th November 1562, Magwyre's castle (SP 63/7/no.48)

with Henry Óg MacShane O'Neill and Art MacBarron O'Neill at the end of the Nine Years' War. The two men thought they had done nothing wrong by joining Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy because 'except they be defended, will they be persuaded that it is a fault to do as they have done.'¹⁷³ Hence as the government did not protect them, they felt they were no longer obliged to remain loyal and serve the crown. Failure to protect as grounds to withdraw one's loyalty was even written into the 1526 agreement between Mageoghegan and Fox. If Mageoghegan failed in his obligations to Fox, as his overlord, then 'he shall not have rent, privilege, or lordship over them, but every man shall be for himself.'¹⁷⁴

The government could exploit the desire of *uirríthe* to be free from their overlord. The government would give an *uirrí* the chance to be independent of his overlord, usually offering them a surrender and regrant arrangement in which they would be absolved of all their obligations to their overlord and instead their allegiance, services and rents were only due to the crown.¹⁷⁵ By losing an *uirrí*, an overlord was losing revenue, either in form of money or cattle, and military manpower especially as an overlord not only lost the soldiers of his former *uirrí* but also more land to billet his mercenaries. The loss of *uirríthe* clearly diminished the strength of a Gaelic chieftain and the military threat he posed. Nicholas Browne noted this in 1597 when he said that the taking away of MacCarthy Mór's *uirríthe*, along with their services and exactions, would prevent him from uniting 'their powers to the disturbing of the Countries quiet.'¹⁷⁶ When a chieftain rebelled, detaching his *uirríthe* from him to cripple his military capabilities was a common and effective crown response. The government did this during Shane O'Neill's rebellion of 1566-7 and by April 1567 Henry Sidney was able to report that Shane's neighbouring *uirríthe* had abandoned him. This left Shane very isolated and his movements restricted, so much so that Sidney claimed that Shane 'were cowped in Tyrone' and would not leave the woods.¹⁷⁷ The first Desmond rebellion was likewise derailed by the loss of followers and shows another method used to detach *uirríthe*, as well as allies, from a rebel. That method was attacking the *uirríthe* who, if not defended by their overlord, would submit to the government. Humphrey Gilbert, who was given the task of putting down the Desmond rebellion, employed this tactic

¹⁷³ Carew Manuscripts, Vol 4, p.300

¹⁷⁴ O'Donovan, John, "Covenant between Mageoghegan and the Fox", p.195

¹⁷⁵ For an example see Carew Manuscript Vol. 1. p.378

¹⁷⁶ Browne, Nicholas. "Munster in A.D. 1597."pp. 66-67

¹⁷⁷ Collins, Arthur, *Letters and Memorials of State*. Vol. 1, p.30

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ruthlessly and it was said that whenever Gilbert entered an ‘enemies Country he killed manne, woman, and child, and spoiled, wasted, and burned, by the grounde all that he might.’¹⁷⁸ These actions compelled the followers and allies of James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, the leader of the rebellion, to desert him. Fitzmaurice’s power was so greatly reduced that Sidney declared in January 1570 that Fitzmaurice was now ‘a bush beggar not having xx knaves of all sorts to follo hym.’¹⁷⁹ This was an exaggeration as Fitzmaurice would not have been able to continue his rebellion for another three years if he had been truly reduced to 20 followers but the sentiment that Fitzmaurice was greatly hamstrung by the loss of many of his followers was indeed correct.

Uirríthe not only helped end rebellions by withdrawing their services from their overlord but would also actively serve against their former masters and this military assistance could prove vital for the suppression of a rebellious chieftain. The extra soldiers they provided were certainly a welcome boost to government forces as sometimes there was a scarcity of English soldiers. This was the case in the first Desmond rebellion when, in August 1571, John Perrott complained that he only had 140 English foot and 40 horse fit for service. Therefore the assistance of vassal lords, such as Maurice Fitzgerald and the Baron of Lixnaw, who wanted to be free of Desmond overlordship was extremely valuable for the government.¹⁸⁰ For example at the same time as Perrott was complaining about a lack of English soldiers, he sent his Irish allies to assist Captain Apsley relieve Dingle which was being besieged. Apsley’s force was enough to intimidate the besiegers as they broke off the siege upon word of his approach. Apsley’s Gaelic allies included Lixnaw who was able to bring 200 men which was more than Perrott had at his disposal, and this exemplifies how substantial a contribution these extra soldiers were.¹⁸¹ The end of Shane O’Neill’s rebellion also displayed how beneficial the military assistance of Gaelic allies could be because Shane O’Neill was not overthrown by an English army but by a Gaelic army led by a former subordinate, Hugh MacManus O’Donnell. Shane had hoped to extend his overlordship to Tyrconnell by installing Hugh MacManus as his puppet chieftain instead of the current chieftain Calvach, who was not willing to be subservient. By the end of 1564 Shane had managed to establish Hugh MacManus in Tyrconnell but he would turn

¹⁷⁸ Churchyard, Thomas, *Churchyarde’s Choise, a General Rehersall of Warres*, London, 1579

¹⁷⁹ Lord Deputy Sidney to Sir William Cecil. 4th January 1570, Drogheda (SP 63/30/no.2)

¹⁸⁰ McCormack, Anthony M. *The Earldom of Desmond: 1463-1583: The Decline and Crisis of a Feudal Lordship*. Dublin: Four Courts, 2005, p.121

¹⁸¹ Sir John Perrot to Lord Justice Fitzwilliam, 14th August 1571, (SP 63/34, no 4 i), Sir John Perrot to Lord Justice Fitzwilliam, 20th August 1571, (SP 63/34, no 4 ii)

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on O'Neill and after Calvach died, Hugh MacManus was elected as the new O'Donnell chieftain and allied with the government. In May 1567, O'Donnell with a small force defeated and routed Shane at the Battle of Farsetmore, forcing a desperate Shane to seek help from his enemies, the MacDonnells of Antrim, who killed him after negotiations broke down.¹⁸²

Allying with the government and assisting their efforts to suppress rebellious chieftains could potentially be very profitable for *uirríthe* and this is best shown by the rise of the Eoghan MacHugh O'Dempsey. O'Dempsey was an *uirrí* of the O'Connors of Faly. From 1560 to 1578 O'Dempsey help defend plantations established by the government in Laois and Offaly from the attacks of his former O'Connor overlords and the O'Mores of Laois. He even participated alongside Francis Cosby and Robert Harpole in their infamous 1578 massacre at Mullaghmast where the O'Mores and members of other Laois clans were killed whilst believing they were to attend a parley. For his services O'Dempsey was richly rewarded with land in the 1563/4 plantation and received more than the other recipients, either Irish or English. He would be rewarded again in 1569 when he was given additional land in Offaly, Laois and Kildare. Thus, O'Dempsey was able to transition from an *uirrí* to the leading Gaelic landowner in the region and a threat to the influence of the other regional powers like the O'Mores, O'Conors and Earls of Kildare. O'Dempsey would however become detested by those he served against and he was killed by the O'Mores in the aftermath of Mullaghmast. But his heir Terrence continued Eoghan's policy of cooperation with the government and was rewarded with a knighthood in 1599 and later created Viscount Clanmalier.¹⁸³

During the Nine Years' War exploiting the divisions in Gaelic society was promoted by some government officials as the only way to overcome the Gaelic confederacy. Geoffrey Fenton once stated that 'without a strong faction to be raised amongst themselves [the Gaelic confederacy], it will be a chargeable work to suppress them' and it would 'trouble the greatest captain in Europe to prevail against these rebels ...without working some of them to Her Majesty's part, and to serve against them.'¹⁸⁴ An unsigned report on the condition of Ireland, written in 1599 for George Carew, also encouraged this strategy because it maintained that 'the best course and greatest policy to

¹⁸² Brady, Ciaran. *Shane O'Neill*, pp.72, 80-2

¹⁸³ Carey, Vincent. "The End of the Gaelic Political Order." pp.231-49

¹⁸⁴ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th May 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt. 2/no.28)

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weaken the rebel, and to end the war, is, to work all the means that may be to make themselves to cut off one another and I do assuredly believe that a thousand pounds spent that way (being with discretion disbursed) will stand Her Majesty in better stead than the sending over of a thousand men.’¹⁸⁵ From London Robert Cecil, the secretary of state of England, also encouraged the exploitation of divisions. In November 1598 he wrote to Thomas Norris, the then President of Munster, and reminded him, ‘you knowe the nature of the Irysh, howe easily they are devyded.’ Cecil then went on to advise Norris to ‘attempt the separation of the pryncipalls, one from another.’¹⁸⁶

The Gaelic confederacy, by containing numerous rival kinsmen and unhappy *uirrítthe*, was fertile ground for this policy and so the government were able to secure the defections of several prominent Gaelic confederates. Yet not all were positive about taking advantage of the dissension within in the Gaelic confederacy and relying on military assistance from defectors. Those who followed this school of thought greatly distrusted the Irish as they thought their natural hatred of the English, their Catholicism and obedience to the Pope meant they could never truly be loyal subjects. Those who were pardoned and joined with the government were often suspected of having ulterior motives. They could possibly just be allying with the government in order to give themselves a brief respite from attacks by crown forces. They could continue to secretly help the Gaelic confederates by providing them with intelligence or arms and munitions which they received from the government. Then when the opportunity presented itself they would betray the government and once again rebel. Therefore, relying on Gaelic allies was seen by some as a dangerous policy and anytime Gaelic allies did contribute to the crown’s war effort, it was explained away as a personal quarrel or for private gain rather than a sign of genuine loyalty to the Queen.

Barnaby Rich held such views and he expressed his disdain for Gaelic allies and their contributions during the Nine Years’ War in his 1610 *A New Description of Ireland*. He thought Gaelic allies only performed meaningful service when there were private interests involved. Otherwise they ‘can performe nothing in the service of his prince, no not against the most basest Rascall, that ever did march under the Title of a Rebell.’ Even if a chieftain did want to genuinely help the government he could not as his followers

¹⁸⁵ A brief declaration of the state wherein Ireland now standeth, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.142)

¹⁸⁶ Sir Robert Cecil to Sir Thomas Norreys, 25th November 1598, Whitehall (SP 63/204 pt. 3/no.169)

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would desert him because they ‘are so vowed and protested to the Pope, that they will not be induced to serve their prince.’ For Rich then ‘the Irish are more dangerous then necessary for his Majestie’s service in Ireland’ and using their assistance made as much sense as a person, who is defending an entry point, closing the ‘wicket’ only to ‘then set open the great gate.’¹⁸⁷ A 1598 treatise, titled *The Supplication of the Blood of the English Most Lamentably Murdered in Ireland, Cryeng out of the Yearth for Revenge* and written by an anonymous English cleric who likely received lands in the Munster plantation, tried to persuade the Queen that the ‘safest course’ for her kingdom, her subjects and herself was to trust none of the Irish because the ‘divell will never be a true servant to god; nor an Irishe papist... a true subject to queen.’ Pardoning them was dangerous as they were ‘subtill foxes’ who only wanted to ‘save their landes’ and by employing them in her forces, she was entertaining ‘rebells in yore bosomes, that disclose yore secretes, furnish the open enemies with all kinde of necessaries, with munitions, with powder, with lead: that watche opportunitie to delliver up yore throates to the butchers kniffes.’ The author did concede that some Irish could be trusted but these are ‘soe fewe as that it is better for you to trust none.’¹⁸⁸ Was there any truth to Rich or the anonymous cleric comments? Were the Gaelic allies a hinderance more than a help? Alternatively, was Fenton correct? If so this would add credence to O’Sullivan Beare’s contention. These questions will be answered in latter chapters.

In conclusion, in 1592 Miler Magrath wrote a report about the state of Ireland and when discussing the divisions in Ulster, he concluded that there were so many that ‘it is evident that there is no country in Ulster, nor in any place in Ireland, where is no people that will take the prince’s part to root out the principal of the country that resist Her Majesty’s assignment.’¹⁸⁹ When looking at Gaelic succession it is no wonder that finding someone willing to take ‘the prince’s part’ was not difficult. The tanistry aspect of Gaelic succession incited conflict because the office of *tánaiste* embodied the crown prince problem. Firstly, the *tánaiste*, had the motivates to overthrow the chieftains. The *tánaiste*, as nominally the designated heir, clearly had ambitions to be chieftain but was unsure if he would get the opportunity. The preference for agnatic seniority meant the *tánaiste* was

¹⁸⁷ Rich, Barnaby. *A New Description of Ireland*, London, 1610, pp.111-4

¹⁸⁸ Maley, Willy, (ed). "The Supplication of the Blood of the English Most Lamentably Murdered in Ireland, Cryeng out of the Yearth for Revenge (1598)." *Analecta Hibernica* Vol. 36 (1995): pp.28-9,36-7, 52

¹⁸⁹ Book set down in writing by the Archbishop of Cashel by Her Majesty’s express commandment, declaring the state of Ireland, 30th May 1592 (SP 63/164/no.47)

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usually of a similar age to the chieftain and this raised doubts over whether or not he would outlive the incumbent and get a chance to rule. Moreover, even if he did survive the chieftain his right to succeed was not absolute and instead an election where another may be chosen followed the death of the chieftain. Therefore, succession through a violent coup might have appeared a more attractive and certain option for a *tánaiste* and within the clan he would have been the best placed to do so as the extra lands and authority he acquired with his office gave him more means to challenge the incumbent. Thus, conflict between chieftain and *tánaiste* was a feature of Gaelic succession and the government could use this to their advantage. Henry Sidney did this when Shane O'Neill rebelled as he looked towards his *tánaiste* and rival, Turlough Luineach, for assistance.

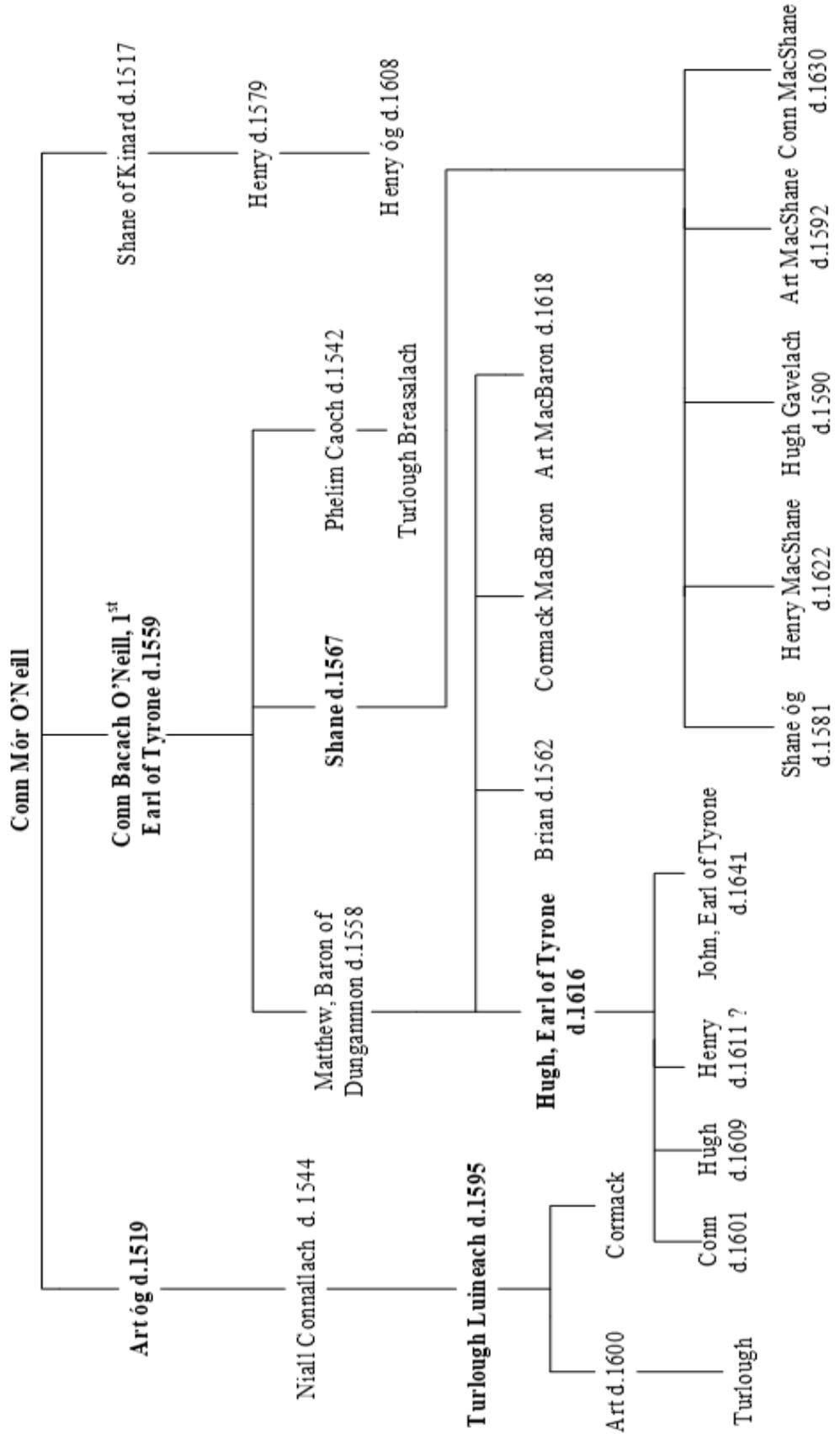
Disputes within a clan extended beyond the chieftain-*tánaiste* rivalry. The whole clan was affected by agnatic seniority because the risk of not outliving one's elders and getting a chance to rule applied to them all. In fact, given the large number of eligible candidates most would suffer this fate and so, there was little reason for any of the *derbfine* to remain patient. Elections and ambiguity over the criteria used to determine who should be chosen was another major fault of Gaelic succession. Some argued that the eldest must succeed and therefore elections were a mere formality as there was only one choice, the oldest candidate. Others could maintain that martial ability should decide the matter. This could lead to quarrels between the eldest candidate, using agnatic seniority to further his claim, and younger claimants, maintaining they are the worthiest. Therefore, the death of a chieftain could be a precarious time as several contenders could emerge leading to a destructive civil war. These civil wars could have long lasting effects as the bitterness between differing factions persisted and the struggle for the chieftainship could last decades and was transgenerational as the O'Carrolls in the sixteenth century show. This meant a clan could contain several factions that had been ingrained for decades and the government could play them off each other when needed. Succession in Gaelic Ireland was further complicated by the attempts to introduce primogeniture. This created another exploitable source of conflict because those using Gaelic succession fell into disputes with those using primogeniture. Conflict was not restricted to internal clan violence. Overlords and their exactions, most notably the maintenance of soldiers, alienated the subordinate clans who had to bear the burden. The chieftains of these clans resented the demands to such an extent that on occasions they would refuse to acknowledge their overlord's authority and this usually provoked a violent response from their overlord. The government

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could take advantage of this by offering *uirríthe* or freeholders the opportunity to be free from their overlord and instead only to be a subject of the Queen. This would cripple the overlord as he lost the resources of his subordinates which were now at the disposal of the government. Given the turmoil within clans and tension between overlords and their *uirríthe* and followers, Magrath's conclusion was certainly well founded.

Genealogy of the O'Neills

Those in bold were
inaugurated chieftains of the
O'Neills



Chapter Two

'There can be no sound friendship between them': Divisions among the O'Neills and O'Donnells.

By the spring of 1593, the Tudor government's attempts to eradicate traditional Gaelic practices in Ulster, and impose English law and government there, had provoked local resistance that marked the beginning Nine Years' War. The precipitating event was the arrival of Captain Humphrey Willis as sheriff of Fermanagh. Willis did little to endear himself to the local population, acting more like a freebooter than a sheriff. The local chieftain, Hugh Maguire, responded by throwing Willis out of his lordship and raiding northern Connacht. Maguire's rebellion would snowball into an Ulster wide rebellion and then a national one with Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and Hugh Rua O'Donnell at the head of the Gaelic confederacy that emerged to halt crown expansion. O'Neill did not openly rebel until February 1595 and fought alongside crown forces against Maguire. His assistance was however disingenuous, and Tyrone was actually supporting and using Maguire and others to fight a proxy war.¹ Before and during the proxy war phase, Tyrone consolidated his power by suppressing or eliminating any rival among his clan who could challenge his power and was predisposed to ally with the government. Tyrone was allegedly so confident in his actions against his rivals that he boasted that the government 'should not find a Conor Ro in Tyrone.' Conor Rua Maguire had aided and fought with crown forces in Fermanagh after Hugh Maguire rebelled so what Tyrone was saying was that there were no O'Neills left for the government to appeal to for help.² He was only partially correct. He was right that at that point that there was no rival for the government to look to, but there were Conor Ruas among the O'Neills biding their time. This chapter will examine the main factions contending for control of the O'Neill lordship and these factions comprised of the incumbent Turlough Luineach O'Neill, the sons of Shane O'Neill, the Dungannon branch headed by Tyrone and the eldest candidate Turlough Breasalach O'Neill. Henry Óg MacShane O'Neill while not a contender for the chieftainship was still an influential member of the clan so the chapter needs to look at his relations with Tyrone also. Next the chapter will show how Tyrone suppressed the other factions to emerge as the dominant force within his clan. The chapter will also show that

¹ For a concise summary of this proxy war see O'Neill, James. "Death in the Lakelands: Tyrone's Proxy War, 1593-4." *History Ireland* Vol.23, No. 2 (March-April 2015), pp. 14-17.

² Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, 27th September 1594, Newry (SP 63/176/no.40)

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the cracks had only been papered over and could be exploited in the future. This chapter will also explore factions within the O'Donnells and how Hugh Rua overcame them to become chieftain.

The O'Neills were the most powerful clan in Ulster and possessed a large lordship that encompassed the modern county of Tyrone, much of Armagh and a portion of south Derry.³ The O'Neills, like most clans, were divided and during the latter half of the sixteenth century, the most prominent division in the O'Neill lordship was between Turlough Luineach O'Neill and Hugh O'Neill. Turlough Luineach's branch of O'Neills dwelt in west Tyrone and they were sometimes referred to as *Sliocht Art Óg* or *Sliocht Art* because they were the descendants of Art Óg O'Neill, chieftain from 1513-19.⁴ Turlough's main residence was at Strabane, where he had built a castle.⁵ Turlough Luineach became chieftain following the death of Shane O'Neill in 1567, a development that worried officials in London and the Queen who did not have much faith in Turlough's loyalty. Consequently they did not want Turlough to become too powerful and to make sure that Turlough's 'government may not grow big and out of ordre,' the Lord Deputy was ordered to divide the O'Neill lordship and give a portion to Hugh O'Neill.⁶ Hugh O'Neill was born around 1550 and was the son of Matthew O'Neill, although Matthew's half-brother, Shane O'Neill, alleged that he was not an O'Neill and was actually the son of Alison and John Kelly, a blacksmith from Dundalk. Shane asserted that when Matthew was about sixteen, his mother began to claim that he was in fact the illegitimate son of Con O'Neill, the chieftain of the O'Neills and the first Earl of Tyrone following a surrender and regrant of his lands in 1542. Con would acknowledge Matthew as his son, designated him his heir and Matthew was given the title of Baron of Dungannon.⁷

The validity of Shane's claims was questionable because he and Matthew were bitter rivals for the O'Neill lordship, so it was in his interests to discredit Matthew's parentage and status as heir. However, someone claiming to be the son of a chieftain later

³ Morgan, Hiram. "Gaelic Lordship and Tudor Conquest: Tír Eoghain, 1541-1603." *History Ireland* Vol.13, No.5 (Sep. - Oct 2005), p.38

⁴ Book set down in writing by the Archbishop of Cashel, 30th May 1592 (SP 63/164/no.47), Walsh, Paul. *The Will and Family of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone*. Dublin: Sign of the Three Candles, 1930, p.68-9

⁵ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years' War in Tudor Ireland*, London, Boydell Press, 1993 pp.90-1

⁶ Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Deputy, 6th July 1567, Richmond (SP 63/21/no.49)

⁷ The answer of Shane O'Neill to the seven articles sent to him by the Privy Council, 7th February 1562 (SP 63/5/no.22)

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in life and being accepted as such was not unheard of in Gaelic Ireland and Kenneth Nicholls described the practice as ‘naming.’⁸ Brian Riabhach O’More was originally thought to be one of the MacLaughlin O’Mores, a small and weak sept, but his mother later told him that he was the son of Rory Óg O’More, a former chieftain from the dominant branch of the clan. An Eoghan O’Rourke was only recognised as the son of the chieftain of the O’Rourkes when he was about 25 even though for some he ‘was never thought his naturall soon.’⁹ Therefore what Shane was alleging was plausible and not highly irregular. In 1558 Matthew was assassinated by Shane’s men and Hugh was sent to the Pale and was fostered by the Hovendens, an English family that had settled in Laois. As a result of this, Hugh was educated ‘amongst the English’ and therefore would have been somewhat anglicised.¹⁰ This and his ease in English company was later brought up by government officials as a reason to back Hugh O’Neill as to opposed to his non-anglicised competitors. In 1579, one of the reasons why Edward Fitton, the vice-treasurer and treasurer-at-war in Ireland, thought Hugh O’Neill should be supported was because he ‘hath been conversant with us and knoweth our language.’¹¹ In 1583 the Lord Justices at Dublin similarly advised the Privy Council that Hugh was the best man to support because of his ‘famylaritye with Englishmen.’¹² During his time in the Pale, O’Neill developed a close relationship with Henry Sidney, who would be appointed Lord Deputy in 1565. The relationship was so close that Sidney later claimed that Hugh had been ‘bred in my house from a little boy.’ This house was Sidney’s residence in Ireland, when he served there between 1556-9 and not his house at Penshurst, in England.¹³ This upbringing in the Pale and his good relationship with Sidney made the young Hugh appear to be a safe choice as a foil for the potentially dangerous Turlough Luineach and so in 1567 he was allotted the barony of Oneilland in Armagh by Sidney and backed by the London government. Queen Elizabeth, following a trip to London by Sidney and Hugh in 1568, was especially impressed with the young Hugh and his ‘disposition to serve us’ so she ordered the Dublin government to help him settle in Armagh while Sidney was absent in London.¹⁴ At this stage of his career, Hugh had his father’s title of Baron of Dungannon.

⁸ Nicholls, K. W. *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, pp.88-90

⁹ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol.4, pp.285-6, Heffernan, David, *'Reform' Treatises on Tudor Ireland*, p.283

¹⁰ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, pp.19-20, 92-3

¹¹ Sir Edward Fyton to Burghley, 8th January 1579, Offaly (SP 63/65/no.12)

¹² Lords Justices to the Privy Council. 14th May 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.29)

¹³ Brady, Ciaran, *A Viceroy's Vindication*, pp.54, 118

¹⁴ *Ibid* pp.54-6, 118, Queen Elizabeth to Lords Justice Fitzwilliam and Weston, 1st March 1568 (SP 63/23/no.63)

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During the early 1570s, the government reaped the benefits of having the young baron in Ulster as he largely lived up to their expectations of being a loyal subject who they could use against Turlough when needed. Dungannon's involvement in the enterprise of Ulster best demonstrates this. The enterprise of Ulster was a privatised colonisation scheme which aimed to colonise east Ulster. The scheme was ultimately a failure because the local chieftains, including Turlough Luineach, fiercely resisted the several attempts to settle in east Ulster.¹⁵ While the enterprise failed, Dungannon emerged from the debacle rather well and he received plenty of plaudits for helping the would-be colonisers against Turlough and the other chieftains. The Earl of Essex for one stated that he found Dungannon 'very forward in service and is the only man of Ulster, that is in my opinion meet to be used and trusted'.¹⁶ Dungannon received more than plaudits and was compensated with £2,786 7s 6d for his troubles so his relationship with the government was mutually beneficial at this point.¹⁷

By this stage Turlough and Dungannon had developed a bitter rivalry over supremacy in the O'Neill lordship, as evident by the fact that Dungannon was described as Turlough's 'mortal enemy'.¹⁸ The rivalry between Turlough and Dungannon's branch of the O'Neills had actually began years prior to Hugh O'Neill's return as Turlough had killed Dungannon's elder brother Brian in 1562.¹⁹ The dispute between Dungannon and Turlough over the O'Neill lordship was another example of how the introduction of primogeniture complicated succession matters as their rivalry was also a conflict between English and Gaelic succession. Turlough's claim was through his election and inauguration as chieftain while Dungannon used his grandfather's surrender and regrant and its provision for primogeniture to further his claim for the O'Neill lordship in the form of an earldom of Tyrone. Thus, Dungannon would argue, that under primogeniture Turlough was a usurper.²⁰ However, Dungannon also recognised the importance of a Gaelic title, as evidenced by his attempt to assume the title in 1583.

¹⁵ For more on the Enterprise of Ulster see: Morgan, Hiram. "The Colonial Venture of Sir Thomas Smith in Ulster, 1571-1575." *The Historical Journal* Vol. 28 No.2 (1985), Heffernan, David, *Walter Devereux, first earl of Essex, and the colonization of north-east Ulster, c.1573-6*, Dublin, Four Court Press

¹⁶ Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to the Privy Council, 20th October 1573, Knockfergus (SP 63/42/no.55)

¹⁷ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.93

¹⁸ Barnabe Googe to Burghley, 15th April 1574, Drogheda (SP 63/45/no.69)

¹⁹ Lord Justice Fytzwylliams to the Privy Council, 14th April 1562, Dublin (SP 63/5/no.84)

²⁰ Particular of Dungannon's suits to the Queen, 7th June 1583, Dublin (SP 63/ 102/no.72), Petition of Henry Hoveden to the Privy Council, 30th June 1585, Dublin (SP 63/117/no.53)



Figure 1. Portrait of Turlough Luineach, April 1574 (SP 63/45/no.60 ii)

Turlough and Dungannon were not the only competitors for the O'Neill lordship and when Turlough became seriously ill at the end of 1578 and it was thought that he could die, Dungannon had two other factions to contend with. Turlough Breasalach was one of the hopefuls for the O'Neill lordship. In 1567 Sidney allocated him the lands of Clanbrassil, in north Armagh, but in 1586 Henry Bagenal, future marshal of the army in Ireland and from an English family who settled at Newry, stated that his country was 'Clanawle', which was located between Armagh and the River Blackwater.²¹ He was the oldest candidate so under the interpretation of Gaelic succession that favoured the eldest of the *derbfine*, Turlough Breasalach was the rightful heir. According Miler Magrath, Turlough Breasalach was himself of this opinion and Captain Henry Malby, son of the president of Connacht Nicholas Malby, claimed that he was 'Taynest to Oneale after the custom of the country.'²² However, there was no evidence that Turlough Breasalach was seen among the O'Neills as *tánaiste* and Malby likely presumed that as eldest Turlough must have been *tánaiste*. His lack of influence certainly suggests that he did not hold a position of authority like the office of *tánaiste*. How inconsequential he was, was evident

²¹ Brady, Ciaran, *A Viceroy's Vindication*, pp.54, 118, Hore, Herbert, (ed). "Marshal Bagenal's Description of Ulster, Anno 1586." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* Vol.2 (1854), p. 150.

²² Book set down in writing by the Archbishop of Cashel, 30th May 1592 (SP 63/164/no.47), A collection of the force and service of Ireland. 8th July 1596 (SP 63/191/no.13 ii)

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during Turlough Luineach's illness in 1578. Turlough Breasalach's chances to succeed in a leadership contest were dismissed and his military weakness was such that Edward Fitton thought it would have been too costly and troublesome to support him.²³ In 1583, official documents again wrote him off as 'old, sencelese and without creddytt in the country.' Turlough Breasalach's weakness was on display when he went to the inauguration site at Tullyhogue following Turlough Luineach's rumoured death in 1583. He encountered the Baron of Dungannon, was forced to back down when confronted by the stronger man and dubiously claimed that he came to support Dungannon and not to be inaugurated as chieftain.²⁴ Ten years later Turlough Breasalach's fortunes had not improved and he was described as being 'not much esteemed' in the O'Neill lordship.²⁵ His weakness meant that Turlough Breasalach was never much of a threat to Dungannon but the other competitors that Hugh O'Neill had to contend with, the sons of Shane O'Neill, were.

Shane O'Neill became chieftain of the O'Neills in 1559 and launched a rebellion against the government in 1566, a rebellion that was derailed when Shane was defeated by the O'Donnells at Farestmore in 1567. This defeat forced a desperate Shane to seek help from the Scottish MacDonnells, who had settled in Antrim, but talks broke down and they killed him.²⁶ Shane left behind a large brood. He possibly had as many as eleven or twelve sons by various women and they were often referred to as the MacShanes. Such promiscuity and large families were not uncommon in Gaelic Ireland. One of Shane's contemporaries, Maolmordha O'Reilly who died in 1566, had 58 grandsons and Turlough O'Donnell, the chieftain of the O'Donnell in the early fifteenth century, had 18 sons by 10 different women. The most prominent of Shane's sons were Shane Óg (died in 1581), Henry, Hugh Geimhleach, Art and Con.²⁷ They had designs on regaining their father's former position and they inherited their father's hatred of the Dungannon branch of the O'Neills and would continue to view Matthew's lineage as illegitimate usurpers, even well into the seventeenth century.²⁸

²³ Sir Edward Fyton to Burghley, 8th January 1579, Offaly (SP 63/65/no.12)

²⁴ Lords Justices to the Privy Council. 14th May 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.29), Lords Justices to Walsyngham, 14th May 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.30)

²⁵ Notes on the state of Ulster. 10th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.11)

²⁶ Brady, Ciaran. *Shane O'Neill*, p.63-5

²⁷ Hayes-McCoy, Gerard. *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland*, pp.149-52, Nicholls, K. W., *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages*, p.12

²⁸ Casway, Jerrold. "Two Phelim O Neills." *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, Vol. 11, No.2 (1985). pp.336-7, A discourse on the entertainment of Scots in Ireland, 24th 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.138)

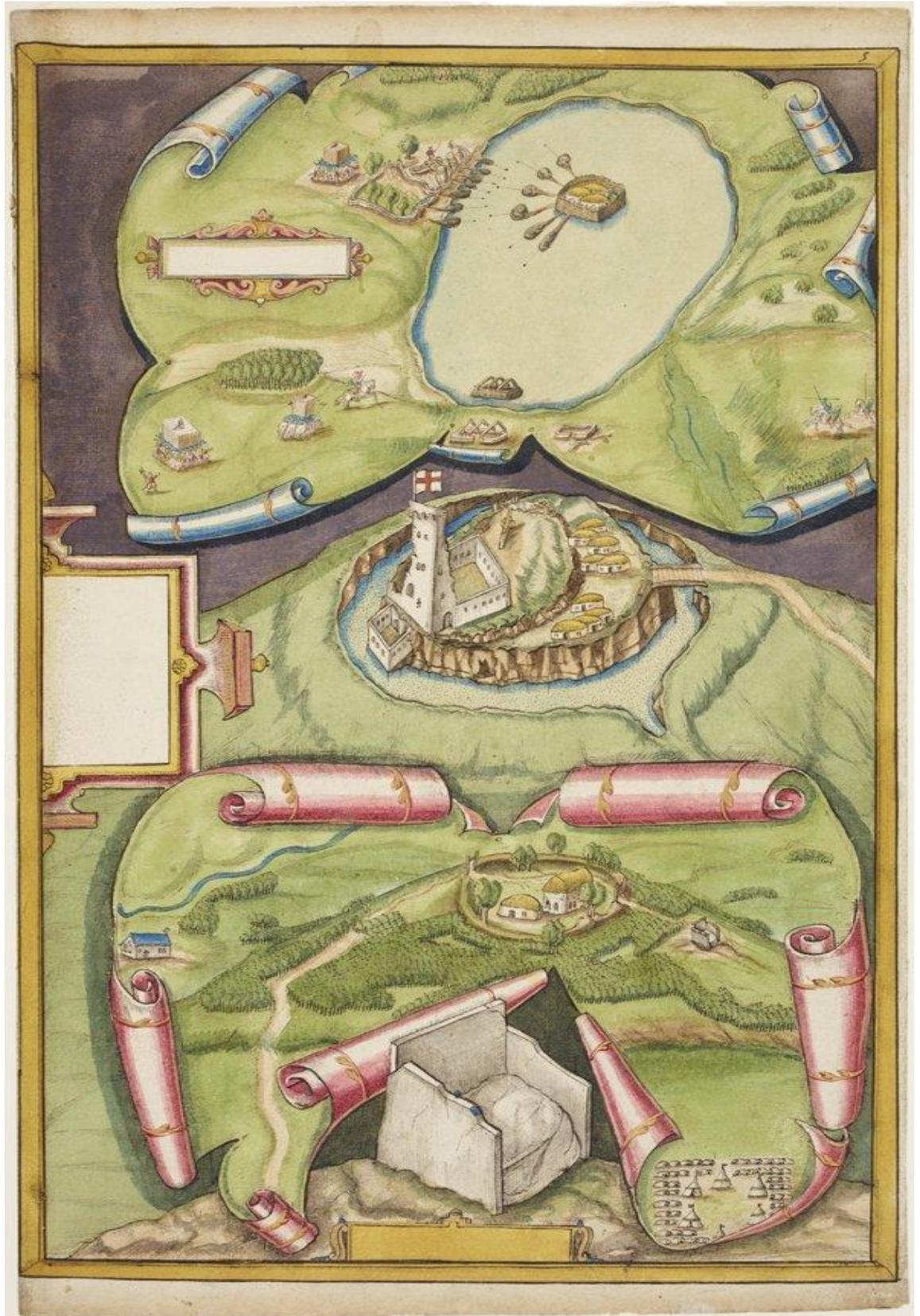


Figure 2. Dungannon and the inauguration cite at Tullyhogue

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To help them achieve their goal, the MacShanes could rely on the support of the O'Donnellys. They were an important clan who were part of the O'Neills' *lucht tige*, their lands were located at present day Castlecaulfield, and traditionally they held the position of marshal, who was responsible for organising the O'Neill's forces.²⁹ The O'Donnellys were the foster family of Shane and his sons and fosterage in Gaelic Ireland was an important political tool that was used to build alliances and could potentially produce a strong lifelong bond between the foster child and his foster family so much so that foster children were said to be closer to their foster family than their blood relatives. John Davies made a note of this strong bond and stated that fosterage 'hath always been a stronger alliance than blood, and the foster-children do love their foster-fathers and their sept more than their own natural parents and kindred, and do participate of their means more frankly, and do adhere unto them in all fortunes with more affection and constancy.'³⁰

Fosterage did not guarantee loyalty, although when one betrayed their foster family it was especially egregious. In 1621 Rickard Burke, the 4th Earl of Clanricard, complained about Ferdorogh O'Kelly refusing to acknowledge his authority as governor of Galway and this was 'the worse in him being my foster brother whose father and mother were true and faithful in all occasions.'³¹ Shane and his offspring did not have such problems with the O'Donnellys as their relationship was an example of the strong attachment fosterage could produce. Shane's foster brother, Dubhaltach O'Donnelly, was described as the 'person most faithful and dear to him in existence' and it was also said that Shane 'does not trust the noblest men of his country, nor his kinsmen or brothers, but his foster brothers of the nation and name of O'Donnell[y].'³² They supported Shane militarily and the annals sources record that many of them died fighting for him at Farestmore in 1567.³³ His sons enjoyed similar support from the O'Donnellys and James Carragh O'Donnelly, in 1585, was described as being 'most devoted to Shane Oneale's sons.'³⁴ The MacShanes were routinely said to have a lot of internal support within the O'Neill lordship as many thought

²⁹ Hill, George. *Historical Account of the Plantation in Ulster at the Commencement of the Seventeenth Century 1608-20*. Belfast, 1877, p.553, Particular of Dungannon's suits to the Queen, 7th June 1583, Dublin (SP 63/ 102/no.72), Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.89

³⁰ Davies, John. "A Discovery Why Ireland Will Never Entirely Be Subdued," in Henry Morley (ed) *Ireland under Elizabeth and James the First*. London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1890, p. 296

³¹ Quoted in Kane, Brendan. *The Politics and Culture of Honour in Britain and Ireland: 1541-1641*. Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010, p.188

³² Reply of Thomas Fettiplace, 16th May 1567, (SP 63/20/no.92), *AFM*, p.1617

³³ *AFM*, p.1617

³⁴ McNeill, Charles (ed), "The Perrot Papers." *Analecta Hibernica* Vol. 12 (1943), p. 27, Particular of Dungannon's suits to the Queen, 7th June 1583, Dublin (SP 63/ 102/no.72)

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they had more right to the O'Neill lordship than Hugh O'Neill because of their descent which suggests that some did take Shane's allegations of Matthew parentage seriously. For example Miler Magrath stated that the MacShanes were 'taken amongst the Irishry to have more right than any other to the principality in that country, for that they have descended by the right line from O'Neill's principal house.'³⁵ Francis Shane stated that in the O'Neill lordship there was a 'natural inclination to the offspring' of Shane O'Neill and a report on the employment of Scots in Ireland mentioned that the MacShanes were 'esteemed generallie by the countrie to have a better right' to the title of O'Neill than Dungannon.³⁶

The connections that made the MacShanes really dangerous were their Scottish ones. Henry MacShane and Shane Og's mother was the Scottish Catherine MacDonnell and Hugh Geimhleach and Art MacShane were the sons of Catherine MacLean. This link to Scotland gave the MacShanes valuable access to Scottish mercenaries, making them serious contenders in any military struggle over succession.³⁷ They displayed how dangerous a threat they could be in the years 1584-5. In the summer of 1584, Hugh Geimhleach and Art MacShane landed at Lough Foyle, following about two years of exile in Scotland. They were accompanied by their MacLean cousins and an estimated force of 3,000 soldiers. Their aim was to establish the MacShanes in Tyrone, depose Turlough Luineach and release Con and Henry MacShane, who were held captive by Turlough Luineach. Unsurprisingly the O'Donnellys joined with the MacShanes but others like the O'Cahan chieftain sided with them, possibly because Henry MacShane had been fostered with the O'Cahans.³⁸ Alternatively, O'Cahan may have joined with the MacShanes because they and their large forces landed at Lough Foyle in O'Cahan's country so if he refused to join them then he and his country would have suffered the consequences. The loss of the O'Cahans and other followers was a major blow to Turlough, whose position was made worse when Dungannon took advantage of his adversary's misfortune and spoiled his land.

John Norris, then the Governor of Munster, made note of Turlough's worsening state, writing that he was 'extremely weakened by the baron and assailed by Shan

³⁵ Book set down in writing by the Archbishop of Cashel, 30th May 1592 (SP 63/164/no.47),

³⁶ *Carew manuscript*, Vol.3, p.201, A discourse on the entertainment of Scots in Ireland, 24th 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.138)

³⁷ Hayes-McCoy, Gerard, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland*, p.152

³⁸ *Carew manuscript* Vol. 2 pp.376-7, McNeill, Charles. "The Perrot Papers." p.6, Notes on the state of Ulster. 10th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.11), Articles of agreement whereby Turlough Lynagh O'Neill engages to supply meal, 18th September 1584, (SP 63/112/no.41 ii)

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O'Neill his sonnes even in the hart of his country, [Turlough] was forced either to flee unto her Majesty for his defence or els faule into the handes of his enemies.³⁹ Turlough chose the Queen. Lord Deputy Perrot execrated Henry MacShane as 'dangerous' and stated that Art MacShane had a 'malicious stomach to this state and [an] affection to the Scots ... and courage to execute mischief.'⁴⁰ Nicholas Malby went even further and called the MacShanes the 'most venomous and hateful persons of this land to the state.'⁴¹ Consequently, Perrot was willing to intervene and prevent Turlough's overthrow by their hands. To do so Perrot travelled to Ulster and also organised shipping to intercept the Scottish ships that landed at Lough Foyle. The Scottish ships fled before Perrot or his ships arrived and took many of the Scottish soldiers with them, leaving the MacShanes with about two hundred. When Perrot arrived in the north, he met with Turlough and many other Ulster chieftains. To prop up Turlough, Perrot gave him 300 soldiers. Turlough handed over Henry MacShane to Perrot and Henry was then detained in Dublin Castle.⁴²

Perrot's journey to Ulster only temporarily quelled the MacShanes as the following year Turlough was once again was on the verge of being overthrown by them. Turlough was in fact so weak that he could no longer sustain the troops he was given the previous year. Perrot still thought 'yt dangerous to suffer the said sonns of Shane Oneale to prevaile' so he once again journeyed to Ulster to meet with the chieftains and 'devise means to pull them [i.e. the MacShanes] down'.⁴³ One device Perrot used to curb the MacShanes was to transfer much of the defence against them from the old and weak Turlough to his son Art and to Hugh O'Neill who Perrot believed had a 'civil disposition.' Perrot negotiated a settlement in which Turlough leased much of his lordship to Art and Hugh for seven years in return for a yearly payment of 1,000 marks. Perrot also met with the MacShanes and apprehended Art, who was seen as the most dangerous MacShane. He would be sent to join his brother in Dublin Castle. Lastly Perrot permitted Turlough and Hugh O'Neill to attack the MacShanes' main supporter, the O'Donnellys.⁴⁴ Overall the emergence of the MacShanes had been good for Hugh O'Neill as he exploited their weakening of Turlough

³⁹ President John Norreys to Burghley, 16th October 1584, Dublin (SP 63/112/no.11)

⁴⁰ McNeill, Charles. "The Perrot Papers." pp.9, 27

⁴¹ Sir N. Malbie to Walsingham, 13th May 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.28)

⁴² McNeill, Charles. "The Perrot Papers." p.9-11, Lord Deputy Perrot to the Privy Council, 15th September 1584, Dunluce (SP 63/111/no.88), President John Norreys to Burghley, 16th October 1584, Dublin (SP 63/112/no.11), Articles of agreement whereby Turlough Lynagh O'Neill engages to supply meal, 18th September 1584, (SP 63/112/no.41 ii)

⁴³ Prendergast, John, and David B. Quinn, (eds). "Calendar of the Irish Council Book, 1581-1586." *Analecta Hibernica*, no.24 (1967), pp.169-70, McNeill, Charles. "The Perrot Papers." pp.26-7

⁴⁴ Ibid

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for his own gain. His circumstances would continue to improve as he was given the title of Earl of Tyrone at the Irish parliament of 1585-6 and in 1587, he visited court where he successfully petitioned for the lands of his grandfather, Con the first Earl of Tyrone. His petitioning was successful for three reasons. He had the law on his side as he was Con's legitimate heir under primogeniture. There was the threat of a Spanish invasion hanging over the London government and during this precarious time they did not want to antagonise the influential Tyrone. Lastly Tyrone had the support of Thomas Butler, the Earl of Ormond, a cousin of the Queen who used his influence to sway her in Tyrone's favour. Ormond tended to support Irish lords against the challenges of English captains, presidents and crown functionaries and given one of those who opposed Tyrone's aggrandisement in 1587 was Perrot, who Ormond was at odds with, this occasion was no different. All Turlough Luineach received as part of the 1587 agreement was a life grant of his possessions.⁴⁵

The fortunes of Hugh O'Neill changed for the worse in 1589, when the MacShanes and Turlough allied. Turlough even released Con MacShane, adopted him as his son and made him responsible for the defence of his people and cattle. Tyrone was under a lot of pressure from this new alliance and George Carew reported that in clashes with the MacShanes he had twice 'escaped very hardly.'⁴⁶ It was not just the military threat of the MacShanes that Tyrone had to worry about as Hugh Geimhleach, upon his return from another period of exile in Scotland, accused Tyrone of helping survivors of the Spanish Armada and conspiring with Spain. Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam largely dismissed the accusations and stated that they derived from the malice of the MacShanes and Turlough Luineach towards Tyrone. Fitzwilliam's dismissal of the allegations also partially stemmed from the government's continued dislike of the MacShanes. Tyrone would get an opportunity to eliminate Hugh Geimhleach at the beginning of 1590, when he was captured by the Maguires and then handed over to Tyrone in exchange for cows and horses. Tyrone subsequently hanged Hugh Geimhleach despite Fitzwilliam's demand that he be given over to the government and the O'Donnellys making large offers for his release. Tyrone was able to evade punishment from Dublin Castle, likely by bribing

⁴⁵ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p.51, Canny, Nicholas, "Taking Sides in Early Modern Ireland: the Case of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone" in Vincent Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann (eds), *Takings Sides: Colonial and Confessional Mentalités in Early Modern Ireland*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, pp.100-1

⁴⁶ *Carew manuscript* Vol. 3 p.13, Sir N. White, Master of the Rolls, to Lord Burghley, 7th April 1589, Dublin (SP 63/143/no.7)

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Fitzwilliam, but he also had to go to London to answer for his actions, which he did successfully.⁴⁷ Following the death of Hugh Geimhleach, the challenge of the MacShanes deteriorated further. Art MacShane died while he, together with his brother Henry and Hugh Rua O'Donnell, escaped from Dublin Castle in the winter of 1591-2. Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh claimed that Art's death was caused by exposure to the winter weather; that Hugh Rua lost his toes to frostbite confirms that the escapees were indeed badly affected by the weather.⁴⁸ The anonymous author of 'A description of Ireland anno 1598', while mixing Art up with Henry, stated that Art fell off a rope when escaping the castle and was fatally wounded by his own knife. Such a wound may not have been self-inflicted. Art's kinsmen, the MacLeans, were under the impression that Art had been murdered following the escape, by the procurement of Tyrone.⁴⁹ Henry MacShane had abandoned Art and Hugh Rua following their break out and made his own way back to Ulster but he and along with his brothers, Con and Brian, were imprisoned by Tyrone.⁵⁰ Tyrone refused to release the MacShanes as he knew they posed a threat and that the government could use them against him, especially as the government's traditional aversion to the MacShanes lessened after the outbreak of the Nine Years' War when it became apparent that Tyrone was far more dangerous.⁵¹

A counterfactual regarding the MacShanes is worth considering; if they did manage to obtain the chieftainship could they remain united? There could only be one chieftain. When Turlough Luineach was dangerously sick in 1578, he appointed Shane Óg O'Neill 'to be chefest of the contrye' after him and in 1583, Henry MacShane was to be advanced to the chieftainship by his Scottish relatives.⁵² Yet during Turlough's sickness in 1578, Tyrone noted dissension among the ranks and he reported that 'Shane Oneiles Sonnes are stryvinge for the country, one with another...and are fallen out stryvinge who of them

⁴⁷ For more on Hugh Geimhleach's murder and Tyrone's defence of his actions see Morgan, Hiram. "Slán Dé Fút Hoíche: Hugh O'Neill's Murders," in David Edwards, Pádraig Lenihan, and Clodagh Tait. *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts, 2010, pp.95-118

⁴⁸ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.19-25, *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3, p.153

⁴⁹ John Auchinross to Robert Bowes, 25th March 1595, Edinburgh (SP 52/55/no.497), Hogan, Edmund, (ed). *A Description of Ireland, and the State Thereof as It Is at This Present in Anno 1598*. Dublin: M.H Gill and Son, 1878, pp.26-7

⁵⁰ Hugh, Earl of Tirone, to the Lord Deputy and Council, 19th February 1594, Dungannon (SP 63/173/no.64 i), State of Ireland, 7th August 1594, (SP 63/175/no.56 i)

⁵¹ Lord Deputy to Burghley, 31st July 1593, Kilmainham (SP 63/170/no.58), Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, 27th September 1594, Newry (SP 63/176/no.40)

⁵² Baron of Dungannon to the Lord Justice Drury, 22nd December 1578, Ballyscanlane (SP 63/65/no.4 ii), Lords Justices to the Privy Council. 14th May 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.29)

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shall be chieftain.⁵³ Therefore if one of the MacShanes became chieftain, it would be doubtful that they could maintain their cohesion and the MacShanes probably would have split into two or more factions. The MacShanes' confinement meant this outcome remained a hypothetical and the government were denied another potential faction to use against Tyrone for now but there was still a MacShane that could potentially pose a problem for Tyrone and that was Henry Óg MacShane O'Neill.

This MacShane was not a descendant of the Shane O'Neill who died in 1567. Rather Henry Óg was a grandson of Shane O'Neill of Kinard, who died in 1517.⁵⁴ Henry Óg seems to have had an up and down relationship with Tyrone. He married a daughter of the Earl and according to Fenton, Henry Óg was 'most dear and inward with the earl.'⁵⁵ Henry Óg was also very active during the early stages of the war, participating in numerous raids and aiding Maguire.⁵⁶ He was therefore part of Tyrone's Gaelic confederacy from the outset and he would have been a valuable component of the confederacy due to his strength. For instance Bagenal described Henry as 'a great man in Tyrone' and a 'gent of great force'.⁵⁷ In 1599 these forces were estimated to be about 200 foot and 40 horse.⁵⁸ Despite his marriage alliance with Tyrone and Fenton's perception that he was close with the Earl, others saw Henry Óg as a man that would 'gladly have bene freed from the Erles government' and the fact that Henry Óg made contact with Tyrone's enemy, Henry Bagenal, almost as soon as Maguire rebelled would indicate that he was not fully committed to his father-in-law or the Gaelic confederacy. According to Bagenal, Henry Óg met with him at Newry and bemoaned his 'miserable servitude under him [i.e. Tyrone].' Henry Óg never appeared to have any pretensions to be chieftain and these complaints about servitude indicate that he simply wished to be independent of Tyrone and free from the exactions imposed on him.

Bagenal went on to claim that Henry Óg informed him of Tyrone's sending his brother, Cormac MacBaron, and his son, Con, to Fermanagh to assist Maguire expel Captain Willis. Bagenal then stated that Henry Óg was later told by Cormac that he too

⁵³ Baron of Dungannon to the Lord Justice Drury, 22nd December 1578, Ballyscanlane (SP 63/65/no.4 ii)

⁵⁴ Casway, Jerrold. "Two Phelim O Neills.": pp. 331-4.

⁵⁵ Walsh, Paul. *The Will and Family of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone*. p.35, Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 2nd August 1594, Dublin (SP 63/175/no.36)

⁵⁶ Sir Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy, 1st May 1594, Dundalk (SP 63/174/no.37 viii), Declaration of Sir Edward Herbert and Captain Humfrey Wyllis to the Lord Deputy, 24th June 1594, (SP 63/175/no.13 v)

⁵⁷ Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, 24th May 1593, Muckno (SP63/169/no.49 v), Declaration of Patrick M'Arte Moyle M'Mahon, 15th June 1593 Dundalk (SP 63/175/no.23 ii)

⁵⁸ An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599, (SP 63/205/no.31)

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needed to go to Fermanagh with his troop of horse and help Maguire. Henry Óg allegedly refused, saying he did not want to kill the Queen's soldiers and would not go unless Tyrone went in person to Fermanagh or sent him a letter telling him to go. Cormac replied that Tyrone had ordered that he go but Henry Óg feigned some excuse and went to the Newry to meet with Bagenal instead. Bagenal also claimed that Henry Óg's adherence to Tyrone was largely because of threats and fear. Henry Óg was worried that he would suffer the same fate as Hugh Geimhleach and that he could not attend another planned meeting between him and Bagenal because Tyrone warned him that if he did, he would lose his life and goods.⁵⁹ Henry Óg would deny much of Bagenal's recollection of their meeting, when confronted by the Lord Deputy and Irish council in June 1593. The Lord Deputy and council were at Dundalk examining allegations that Tyrone was aiding Maguire and conspiring with Spain. Henry also denied that he had informed Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon, an enemy of Tyrone, of the foreign conspiracy with Spain. Henry Óg would admit that he told Bagenal about Con and Cormac MacBaron's going to Fermanagh but not that Tyrone sent them or that they approached him. Henry Óg also admitted that he complained about being overburdened by Tyrone's exactions.⁶⁰ This was an important admission as it shows that Henry Óg did resent somewhat being under the rule of Tyrone, thus making it more likely that he could be tempted to abandon Tyrone if the government offered him the chance to hold his lands from the Queen instead.

Henry Óg's denials and adherence to Tyrone, as Bagenal claimed, was because he feared to oppose Tyrone and this fear was fully justified, as evident by the assassination of Phelim MacTurlough O'Neill. Around the same time that Henry Óg and Bagenal were supposed to meet, the O'Hagans, who had fostered Tyrone in his youth, killed Phelim. This was likely done on Tyrone's orders. Phelim was of the Clandeboye O'Neills and had allied with Bagenal. Phelim's allying with Tyrone's enemy likely prompted his assassination so going against Tyrone and joining with Bagenal was indeed very dangerous and Henry Óg was right to fear for his safety.⁶¹ This fear explains Henry Óg's dismissal of Bagenal's recollection of their meeting and the speeches that would have incriminated Tyrone. If Henry Óg's loyalty to Tyrone was just because of fear then he would likely forsake Tyrone

⁵⁹ Certain things told to Marshal Bagenal, 18th June 1593 (SP63/170/no.23 vii), Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, 27th September 1594, Newry (SP 63/176/no.40)

⁶⁰ Certain things told to Marshal Bagenal, 18th June 1593 (SP63/170/no.23 vii), Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, pp.146-9

⁶¹ Morgan, Hiram. "Slán Dé Fút Hoíche: Hugh O'Neill's Murders." pp.108-10

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if he had assurances from the government that he would be protected or as Bagenal put it: 'if he saw likelihood after to be upholden by her Majesty's forces.'⁶² Henry Óg said as much towards the end of the war when he met with Lord Deputy Mountjoy.⁶³ Further evidence of Henry Óg's uncertain allegiance to his father-in-law was that Tyrone himself was unsure of Henry and in July 1595, Tyrone even imprisoned him because he was concerned about his favouring Bagenal and Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon.⁶⁴ Unlike the other MacShanes, Henry Óg was not imprisoned for long and by December of that year it was reported that he had helped take a government garrison at Monaghan and that he was again 'of good reckoning' with Tyrone.⁶⁵ Yet, the fact that he was imprisoned in the first place, along with his meeting with Bagenal, made it clear that his loyalty to his father-in-law was not certain and that he was liable to defect to the government.

By 1593 Turlough Luineach would cease to be a viable competitor to Tyrone and Turlough's downfall was prompted by the escape of Hugh Rua O'Donnell from Dublin Castle in the winter of 1591-2. Tyrone had been a long-time ally of Hugh Rua's father and chieftain of the O'Donnells, Hugh MacManus, and Tyrone married a daughter of Hugh MacManus in 1574. The two men were both enemies of Turlough Luineach and it was this shared hatred that brought the two men together. Tyrone's marriage to O'Donnell's daughter produced at least three children, Hugh, Henry and Alice. The alliance between Tyrone and Hugh MacManus was further cemented when the two made an agreement to marry their children, Hugh Rua and Rose O'Neill.⁶⁶ The alliance between Tyrone and the O'Donnells was a break in tradition because their clans were usually bitter rivals who vied with each other for regional hegemony. Their feuding greatly helped the crown because it meant that the two clans kept each other in check and thus they were less of a danger to the government. Their feud also meant that when one clan proved to be rebellious, the government could enlist the other clan to help put down their rival. Tyrone, by allying with the powerful O'Donnells, removed a potentially dangerous tool that could be used against him and actually changed the O'Donnells from a hindrance into his greatest support so much so that the Tyrone-O'Donnell alliance was the foundation on which the Gaelic confederacy was built. The significance and danger of the alliance was not lost on the

⁶² Sir H. Bagenal to Burghley, 27th September 1594, Newry (SP 63/176/no.40)

⁶³ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol.4, p.300

⁶⁴ Examination of Pat. O'Donello, 12th July 1595, Newry (SP 63/181/no.50 i)

⁶⁵ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 26th December 1595, Dublin (SP 63/185/no.28)

⁶⁶ Lyons, Mary Ann. "The Wives of Hugh O'Neill, Second Earl of Tyrone." *Dúiche Néill*, Vol.16 (2007), pp. 44-6

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government. Fenton's comments best sum up how the change in the O'Neill-O'Donnell relationship made Tyrone a much greater threat. Fenton stated that the O'Donnells were 'always at defiance with the O'Neyles and a great brydle to curbe them even in their greatest height, yt is now combined with the erle and a strong elbow to him'.⁶⁷ Perrot knew the danger of this alliance and his kidnapping and imprisoning of Hugh Rua in 1587 was partly because he wanted to stifle the dangerous alliance.⁶⁸

The Irish too were aware that the Tyrone-O'Donnell alliance was of momentous significance, that it was the cornerstone of the Gaelic confederacy and the key to its success. This can be discerned from the response of one of Tyrone's followers to a comment from Garret Moore, the son of Edward Moore of Mellifont.⁶⁹ In March 1594, Moore was trying to dissuade Tyrone from rebelling. He warned Tyrone that he was not as powerful as Shane O'Neill whose rebellion had failed. An unnamed follower of Tyrone replied, 'when Shane O'Neill was overthrown we had Tirconnell our enemy, but now we are joined together.'⁷⁰ This clearly shows that the confederates knew that the Tyrone-O'Donnell alliance was a game changer and without that alliance, the Gaelic confederacy would be put down like Shane O'Neill. That being said, the help that Tyrone received from the O'Donnells initially was not enough to topple Turlough Luineach because Hugh MacManus was a relatively weak leader, whose lordship was divided, and he struggled greatly to keep hold of it. He therefore could not provide Tyrone with enough assistance and the two were defeated on occasions by Turlough, most notably at Carriclea in 1588.⁷¹ Following his escape, Hugh Rua replaced his father as chieftain and he soon proved to be a far more effective leader. According to Ó Cléirigh, Hugh Rua, immediately following his inauguration in 1592, raided Turlough Luineach's lands and did so again a week later. Hugh Rua encountered and attacked Turlough and his forces. Turlough was forced to retreat and seek refuge at Castle Roe, a castle belonging to his *uirríthe* the O'Cahans. Hugh Rua besieged the castle but Rory O'Cahan had been a foster-father of his and that bond enabled him to convince Hugh Rua to give up the siege.⁷² Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam however downplayed Hugh Rua's attack and stated that he suffered losses and took little

⁶⁷ Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 7th May 1594, Dublin (SP 63/174/no.43)

⁶⁸ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol. 3, pp.285-6

⁶⁹ Stout, Geraldine, et al. "Mellifont Abbey, Co. Louth: a Study of Its Post-Dissolution Architecture 1540–1727." *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, Vol.116 C, (2016), p. 196

⁷⁰ Journal of the proceedings, 8th - 15th March 1594 (SP 63/173/no.89 i)

⁷¹ *AFM*, pp.1867-9, The examination of John Benyon, 6th May 1588 (SP 63/135/no.22 i)

⁷² *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.43-7

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prey. Hugh Rua would continue to put pressure on Turlough and the following year Turlough was complaining about Hugh Rua taking 2000 cows from him.⁷³ Tyrone had not been idle and at the same time as Hugh Rua was attacking Turlough from the west, Tyrone was attacking Turlough from the east and in the summer of 1592 Turlough complained that Tyrone committed 'far greater prey and spoils' than ever before.⁷⁴ In April 1593, Turlough was still complaining to the government about Tyrone spoiling his country.⁷⁵

The two-pronged attack from Hugh Rua and Tyrone caused Turlough's power to quickly disintegrate. Turlough's followers deserted him and even his son Art joined Tyrone and became 'an instrument against him.' By May 1593, Turlough Luineach's position had grown so dire that he was forced to make an agreement with Tyrone, in which he conceded the O'Neill lordship to Tyrone in return for an annual pension of £2,000. Turlough would complain that he signed the agreement under duress.⁷⁶ In June the treaty would be given a veneer of government authorisation when another agreement between Tyrone and Turlough was made before the Dublin government. Under this agreement Turlough would retain Strabane and the surrounding district but gave up control of the rest of the O'Neill lordship to Tyrone. Henceforth he would contribute to Hugh O'Neill *pro rata* as others in the lordship did. Like the first agreement Turlough would be compensated with a yearly pension of £2,000 and the money for this would be taken from Tyrone's government allowance for a company of horse and rents from Maguire. Tyrone would make up any shortfall by giving Turlough cattle, with each cow equivalent to 20s. Tyrone was also supposed to protect Turlough from the O'Donnells.⁷⁷ After this agreement, Turlough was so weak that he was no longer a viable choice for the government to use against the Earl unless backed by a large English force. He was so feeble that Tyrone viewed him 'as a dead man not hable to stand against him.'⁷⁸ When the Lord Deputy wrote to Turlough in 1595 and tried to encourage him to fight Tyrone, Turlough confessed that it was a fool's errand to expect anything from him because 'he standeth deprived by the erle of all his followers.'⁷⁹ Turlough Luineach would eventually die in September 1595 and Tyrone was

⁷³ Lord Deputy to Burghley, 2nd June 1592, Kilmainham (SP 63/165/no.3), Declaration of Thadie Nolan, one of Her Majesty's pursuivants, 13th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no. 23 vi)

⁷⁴ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 13th June 1592, Dublin (SP 63/165/no.6)

⁷⁵ *APC*, Vol.24, p.190

⁷⁶ Lord Deputy to Burghley, 17th May 1593, Dublin (SP 63/169/no.41)

⁷⁷ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol.3, pp.74-5, Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, pp.110-1

⁷⁸ Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 7th May 1594, Dublin (SP 63/174/no.43),

⁷⁹ Sir R. Lane to Burghley, July 1595 (SP 63/181/no.54)

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inaugurated as the chieftain of the O'Neills at the traditional site at Tullyhogue.⁸⁰ It is of note that Tyrone, despite his power and Turlough's weakness, could not just take the title of O'Neill as there does seem to be a taboo about taking a Gaelic title while the current chieftain was alive and had not abdicated, although there were exceptions to this. Oweny O'Carroll for example was inaugurated and took the title of O'Carroll even though the current chieftain, Ferganainm O'Carroll, had not given up the chieftainship.⁸¹ Tyrone was not as nonchalant about being inaugurated while the current chieftain retained his title. Thus, Tyrone looked to bribe Turlough to surrender his title by offering to restore the 2,000 cattle taken by O'Donnell but Turlough refused, so Tyrone was forced to wait.⁸²

The fall of Turlough was a blow to the government. Initially Tyrone had been used to counteract Turlough, but his growing power meant that by the late 1580s and early 1590s some had hoped Turlough could neutralise the increasing strength of the Earl. Before Tyrone went to court in 1587 Perrot advised the Privy council to divided up the O'Neill lordship and strengthen Turlough Luineach by making him the Earl of Omagh.⁸³ The following the year Perrot celebrated Turlough's defeat of Tyrone at Carricklea, declaring that that the 'overthrow given the earl by Turlough O'Neill's small company hath done much good in the North as anything that happened these nine years, for it hath abated the earl's edge much.'⁸⁴ Turlough's demise was thus lamented as it upset the equilibrium in the O'Neill lordship and allowed Tyrone's influence to grow. Bagenal in 1594 complained that if 'matters had bene kept in some equal balance' war could have been avoided.⁸⁵ Nicholas Browne in 1597 bemoaned that Turlough had not been 'cherished' and Mathias Holmes, one of the first fellows at Trinity College, writing to the Earl of Essex in 1596 similarly regretted that 'one of the Oneales had not been suffered to have grown in Ulster as strong as he, that one thistle might have sucked the juice from the other.'⁸⁶ William Piers, a servitor with decades of experience in Ireland, decried Turlough Luineach's decline. When Turlough Luineach was chieftain and held much of the O'Neill lordship, Ulster was less dangerous to the government. Back then Tyrone was not able build up as

⁸⁰ Sir H. Bagenall to [Burghley], September 1595, Newry (SP 63/183/no.19)

⁸¹ See Chapter One

⁸² Declaration of Thadie Nolan, one of Her Majesty's pursuivants, 13th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no. 23 vi)

⁸³ Lord Deputy Perrot to the Privy Council, 5th March 1587, Dublin (SP 63/128/no.74)

⁸⁴ Quoted in Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.103-5

⁸⁵ Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, 27th September 1594, Newry (SP 63/176/no.40)

⁸⁶ Ford, Alan. *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590-1641*. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1997, p.161
Salisbury manuscript, Vol.6, p.531, Nicholas Browne to Burghley, 18th June 1597 (SP 63/199/no.109),

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large a force as he could in 1594 because ‘Tyrlogh Lenogh did curbe him of the great scope of land he now possesseth.’⁸⁷

Yet there remained a threat to Tyrone from the *Sliocht Art Óg* in the form of Turlough’s son, Art. Art had turbulent relationship with his father. He could be a loyal son and did, on occasions, assist his father in his attempts to retain control of the O’Neill lordship. For instance, in 1588 Tyrone complained to the government that Art and his brother had made several incursions into his country at the behest of their father. Art was also at his father’s side when he defeated Tyrone at Carricklea.⁸⁸ The next year though, it was reported that Turlough disowned Art for conspiring to kill him and marrying Tyrone’s daughter.⁸⁹ This marriage does not seem to have taken place or if it did then it must not have lasted very long as Art was later married to a Maguire.⁹⁰ In 1593 Art turned on his father again and joined Tyrone. Art probably knew his aging father was a spent force and that it would be safer and more advantageous to adhere to Tyrone. Following his defection, Art seemed to be committed to Tyrone and it appears that Tyrone tried to further strengthen his relationship with Art by fosterage as it reported that Art was fostering Tyrone’s son and heir.⁹¹ There were signs though that Art’s commitment to Tyrone was transient. Shortly after Art joined with Tyrone, Fitzwilliam stated that Art ‘maie for the time make fair weather with him’ but ‘there cann be no sound friendship between them.’ According to Fitzwilliam, there was some lingering bad blood between the two from the times when Art was loyal to his father and fought against Tyrone, a period when ‘horrible murders’ were committed by both sides, including the killing of a young son of Art, whom Art was said to have ‘dearly loved.’ Fitzwilliam therefore believed that in the future, Art could be detached from Tyrone and used against the Earl if backed by the government.⁹² Even without this bad blood it was questionable that Art would be anything more than just a temporary ally of Tyrone. If Art was to be a long-term supporter of Tyrone, it would have required him to have no interest in emulating his father, which was an unlikely example of modesty for the eldest son of a chieftain. Art was no exception and a 1593 report on the state of Ulster makes it clear that Art would side with the government if it provided him

⁸⁷ Capt. W. Piers to Burghley, 6th November 1594, Dublin (SP 63/177/no.4)

⁸⁸ *Carew manuscript* Vol. 2, pp.466-7, *AFM*, pp.1867-9

⁸⁹ Sir N. White, Master of the Rolls, to Lord Burghley, 7th April 1589, Dublin (SP 63/143/no.7)

⁹⁰ Walsh, Paul. *The Will and Family of Hugh O'Neill*, pp.33-46, Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 15th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.104)

⁹¹ Note of intelligences received out of the North, 20th May 1594, (SP 63/174/no.55)

⁹² Lord Deputy to Burghley, 31st July 1593, Kilmainham (SP 63/170/no.58)

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with an opportunity to follow in his father's footsteps and control the O'Neill lordship. The report stated that Art or his brother would leave Tyrone if they 'may conceive any hope by her Majesty's favor to succeed the said Sir Tirlagh.'⁹³

Moreover by remaining with Tyrone, Art would be treated as just a regular follower as the Earl made it clear in 1596 that Art 'shall hold his lands from him as the rest of the gentlemen in Tyrone doth.'⁹⁴ Art being a regular follower of Tyrone would also have meant that he was subjected to the usual burdensome exactions that followers of a chieftain had to endure. In the spring of 1592 Art did express some contempt towards being subjected to Tyrone's exactions. Art travelled to Dublin to seek assurances of the lands he was granted as part of the crown's 1587 agreement with Tyrone. Some lands were reserved for Art following Turlough Luineach's death, the lands of Art's grandfather Niall Connallach and his father's castle at Strabane, and Art was also to provide the same services for the Earl as his grandfather had for the 1st Earl of Tyrone.⁹⁵ The government had previously held an inquisition into the scope of the lands of the 1st Earl of Tyrone and Niall Connallach and what services Niall Connallach's heirs owed the Earls of Tyrone. Art was unhappy with the findings because 'he was unwilling to accept an estate of so small land with such services.' These services were paying 'bonnaught' to Tyrone and being a part of his rising out when he was on crown business.⁹⁶ The rising out was the summoning and assembly of the freeholders of a country for a general hosting or levy so Art and his men were obliged to serve under Tyrone for the Queen's service when needed.⁹⁷ When Art joined with Tyrone in 1593, Tyrone may have given him an estate large enough to placate him for the time being but with Tyrone viewing Art as a regular follower, Art would not be exempt from Tyrone's exactions. His ambition, desire to be free from Tyrone's exactions and animosity towards the Earl meant Art was a probable defector and an obvious target for the government.

The O'Donnell lordship of Tyrconnell, which encompassed roughly modern Co. Donegal, also suffered from internal divisions. The foremost rift in the lordship was between the descendants of Calvach O'Donnell and Hugh MacManus O'Donnell's branch

⁹³ Notes on the state of Ulster, 10th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.11)

⁹⁴ *Carew manuscripts* Vol.3 p.164

⁹⁵ Morgan, Hiram. *Tyrone's Rebellion*, pp.77-8,102

⁹⁶ Record of the inquisition of the Earl of Tyrone's lands, 10th June 1588 (SP 63/135/no.34), Mr. Solicitor Wilbraham's brief declaration, May 1592 (SP 63/164/no.36 i)

⁹⁷ Hayes-McCoy, G.A, "Army of Ulster, 1593-1601." *The Irish Sword* Vol.1 No.2 (1950): pp.105-6

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of the family. The origins of this rivalry date back to 1566 when Calvach, the then chieftain of the O'Donnells, died after a fall from a horse and his brother Hugh MacManus was elected as his replacement.⁹⁸ Calvach's eldest son 'Conn looked to be captain of the country' and desired to be chieftain so much that when his father was imprisoned by Shane O'Neill in 1561, Con allegedly refused to pay the ransom in order to remain *de facto* chieftain in his father's absence.⁹⁹ Con not only wanted to possess Tyrconnell but also had a strong claim under English law because his father had availed of a surrender and regrant arrangement, receiving letters patent for Tyrconnell in the process. Therefore, Con and his progeny were entitled to Tyrconnell under primogeniture and Hugh MacManus's election could be seen as an unlawful usurpation. This was the opinion of Miler Magrath, who stated in 1592 that Hugh MacManus had 'usurped' the Tyrconnell lordship from Con and his descendants.¹⁰⁰ This does seem to be the thinking of Calvach's descendants as well because in 1608 Calvach's grandson, Niall Garbh, when demanding Tyrconnell used his grandfather's letters patent to further his claim.¹⁰¹ In 1566 Con was not in a position to stake his claim following his father's death because he was being held captive by Shane O'Neill at that time.¹⁰² Worse still for Con, the government recognised Hugh MacManus's election as chieftain so government support for Con's claim was out of the question. Hugh MacManus was elected during Shane O'Neill's rebellion, when the government needed allies in the north to assist the struggling garrison at Derry, where sickness wreaked havoc. Therefore, when Hugh MacManus emerged as chieftain and displayed his willingness to help against Shane, Sidney and the government were more than willing to acknowledge him as Calvach's successor in return for his assistance, without any regard given to Con.¹⁰³ The move was justified given the fact that it was Hugh MacManus and his victory at Farssetmore that derailed Shane's rebellion.

⁹⁸ Lord Deputy Sidney to Privy Council. 18th January 1567, Kilmainham (SP 63/20/no.13)

⁹⁹ Ó'Domhnaill, Adhamhnán, 'Niall Garbh Ó'Domhnaill (1569-1626): A man more sinned against than sinner', *Donegal Annual*, Vol. 53 (2001), p.17, Brady, Ciaran, *A Viceroy's Vindication?* p.56, McGettigan, Darren. *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, p.33

¹⁰⁰ The state of Ireland, 30th May 1592 (SP 63/164/no.47)

¹⁰¹ *CSPI 1606-8*, p.530

¹⁰² Sir Thomas Cusake's advice to the Lord Justice Arnold, 13th June 1564, (SP 63/11/no.11), Thomas Lancaster to Sir William Cecil. 31st May 1567, Drogheda (SP 63/20/no. 97), *AFM*, p.599

¹⁰³ Lord Deputy Sidney to Privy Council. 18th January 1567, Kilmainham (SP 63/20/no.13), Collins, Arthur, *Letters and Memorials of State*, Vol 1, p.28, Colonel Edward Sentlo to Lord Deputy Sidney. 8th February 1567, Derry (SP 63/20/no.28), Lord Treasurer Winchester and Edward Basshe to Lord Deputy Sidney. 26th March 1567 (SP 63/20/no.54)

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Once Shane's rebellion ended and Con was released there was, as Sidney pointed out, 'great likelihood of great warres' between Hugh MacManus and Con for control of Tyrconnell. To prevent this Sidney intervened and acted as an arbitrator. An agreement between the two was reached in which Con was given the castles of Lifford and Finn along with their accompanying land. Con was also made 'Thanist.' In return Con agreed to recognise Hugh MacManus as chieftain and hand over to him other castles in his possession such as Donegal.¹⁰⁴ Preventing war was not the only benefit for the government because the rivalry provided them with another occasion to practice their favoured tactic of establishing divisions and this would give them a tool, Con, to thwart Hugh MacManus in case he proved to be unreliable. The Dublin government was confident that Con could greatly hinder his uncle because his position as *tánaiste* gave him more of a following than if he relied on English letters patent alone. They noted, as St. Leger and Tremayne observed (see chapter one), that the introduction of primogeniture would cause resentment among those it disinherited. Therefore, they thought it profitable to allow Con the office of *tánaiste* as his followers would not feel that by supporting Con they were threatening their own 'inheritance.' The Dublin government referred to Gaelic succession as 'Barbarowse' yet they were still willing to allow Con the position of *tánaiste*. Once more government officials displayed that their approach to Gaelic succession was often pragmatic and opportunistic.¹⁰⁵ Sidney's intervention did not end the dispute between the two and soon there were complaints by Con that the agreement was not being observed by his uncle.¹⁰⁶ Yet there were also signs that the two could cooperate. They joined together and invaded Turlough Luineach O'Neill's country in 1568 and Hugh MacManus's son, Hugh Rua, was fostered with Con for a period, likely in the mid to late 1570s.¹⁰⁷ However over the next decade friction between the two persisted and possession of Lifford, which traded hands on a number of occasions (sometimes through violence), proved to be an especially contentious issue.¹⁰⁸ Therefore the threat of war regularly loomed and in 1576, Sidney once again had to intervene to prevent violence between the two 'mortal enemies.' Sidney's intervention led to the men coming to another accord in which Con's possession of Lifford

¹⁰⁴ Brady, Ciaran, *A Viceroy's Vindication?* p.56, A friend to Sir W. Fylzvjylliams. 13th September 1567, Drogheda (SP 63/21/no. 94 i), Lords Justice Weston and Fitzwilliam and Council to Queen Elizabeth, 30th October 1567, Dublin (SP 63/22/no.16),

¹⁰⁵ Lords Justices and Council to the Queen. 23th January 1568, Dublin (SP 63/23/no.16)

¹⁰⁶ Lords Justice Weston and Fitzwilliam and Council to Queen Elizabeth, 30th October 1567, Dublin (SP 63/22/no.16),

¹⁰⁷ Lords Justice Weston and Fitzwilliam to Queen Elizabeth, 16th July 1568, Dublin. (SP 63/25/no. 45), *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.55

¹⁰⁸ Sydney to the Privy Council. 15th June 1576, Dublin (SP 63/55/no.58),

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and position as *tánaiste* was reaffirmed.¹⁰⁹ If one accepts the crown prince problem, appointing Con heir apparent and strengthening him by giving him lands and castles meant Sidney, instead of mollifying Con, just further encouraged him to overthrow Hugh MacManus. To do so Con would have the backing of Turlough Luineach because in the 1570s the two became closely allied with each other and by 1574 Con was described by the Earl of Essex as a ‘deare friend’ of Turlough.¹¹⁰ No doubt the philosophy of the enemy of my enemy is my friend underpinned this alliance, an alliance that was extremely valuable to Con.

A definitive split between the two O’Donnells appears to have taken place in 1579 when Con accompanied Turlough Luineach on a raid of Inishowen, much to the surprise of Hugh MacManus.¹¹¹ This was followed by a more serious conflict in 1581, a conflict that appears to have broken out because of Con’s ambition to depose his rival. The *Annals of the Four Masters* state that it was at Con’s behest that Turlough went to war with Hugh MacManus, while the Irish council claimed Con was the ‘only cause of the quarrel.’ Lord Deputy Arthur Grey blamed Con’s ‘ambicion and desire to have the captency’ for the outbreak of violence.¹¹² Turlough and Con heavily defeated Hugh MacManus in the summer of 1581, near Raphoe, with some estimates putting his casualties as high as 600.¹¹³ The defeat was bad enough that Hugh MacManus needed to ask for government help and there were serious concerns among the Dublin government that he would be completely overthrown by the Turlough-Con coalition. At this point Hugh MacManus was seen as a loyal subject, while Turlough was viewed as dangerous so the Dublin government wanted to avoid Hugh MacManus’ overthrow and restrain the troublesome Turlough. To curb Turlough and his ally Con, Grey organised a two-pronged attack. Forces under Nicolas Malby were sent from Connacht to Tyrconnell and the Lord Deputy himself went to the Blackwater in Armagh. This was enough to intimidate Turlough, who after some talks with government officials agreed to refrain from using violence towards Hugh MacManus.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to the Privy Council. 8th October 1574, Dublin (SP63/48/no.3)

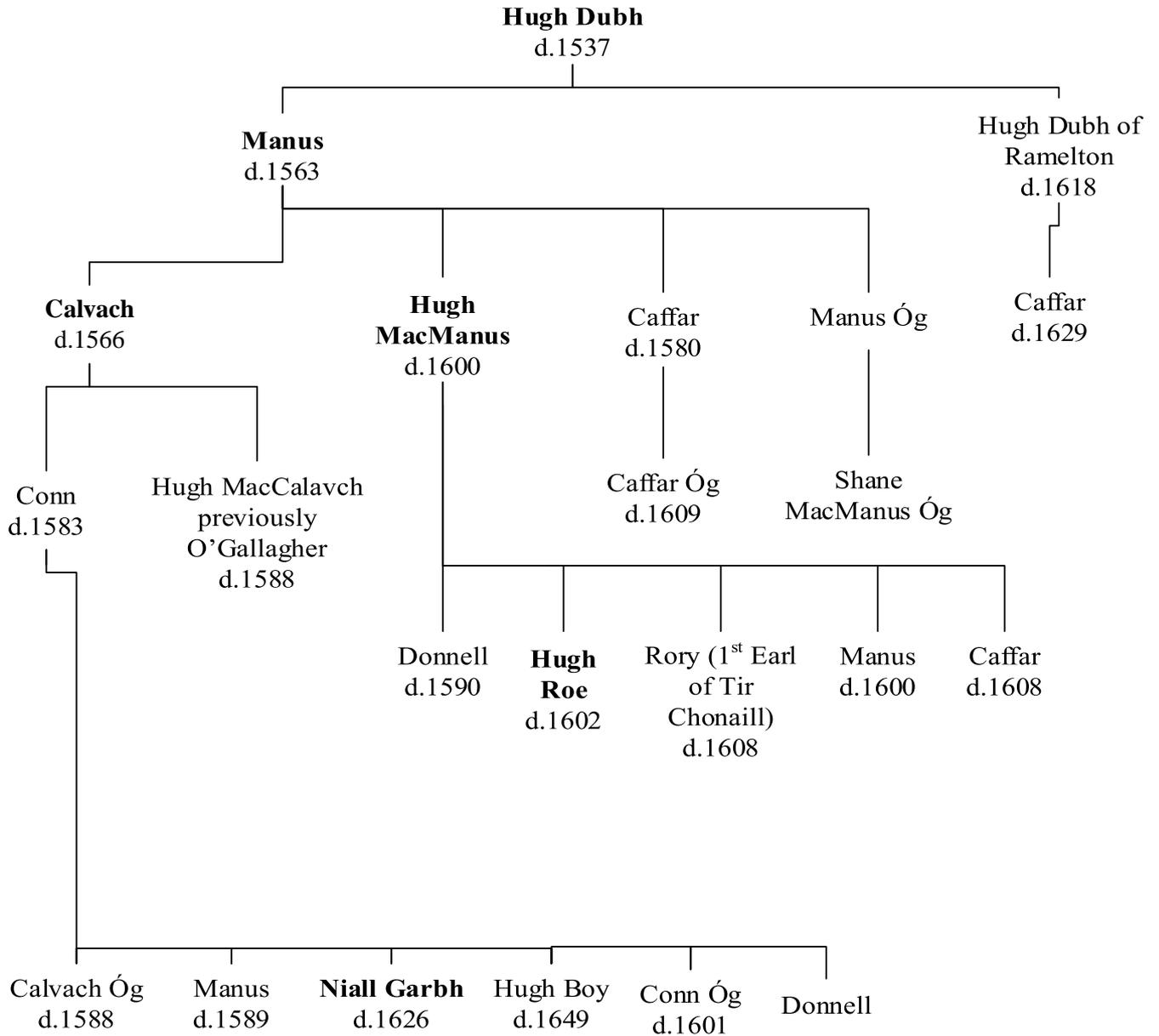
¹¹¹ O’Donnell to the Lord Deputy, 1579 (SP 63/66/ no.50 ii)

¹¹² *AFM* pp.1765-9, Lord Deputy Grey to the Privy Council. 12th August 1581, Dublin (SP 63/85/no.13), Articles by Capt W. Pers for the reformation of the North. 10th August 1581 (SP 63/85/no.7)

¹¹³ *AFM* pp.1765-9, Lord Deputy to Privy Council, 10th July 1581, Dublin (SP 63/84/no.10), Wallop to Walsyngham, 17th July 1581, Dublin (SP 63/84/no.23).

¹¹⁴ Lord Deputy to the Queen, 10th August 1581, Dublin (SP 63/85/no.5), Lord Deputy Grey to the Privy Council. 12th August 1581, Dublin (SP 63/85/no.13), The peace between the Lord Deputy and Council and Turlough Lynagh O’Neill. 2nd August 1581(SP 63/85/no. 13 ii)

The Genealogy of the O'Donnells



Those in **bold** were an inaugurated chieftain of the O'Donnells

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This only gave Hugh MacManus a brief respite as the following year he was once again under pressure from Con and Turlough and was, according to Malby, ‘utterlie undone.’ Con was in such a strong position that he was able to invade north Connacht, where he looked to impose the O’Donnells’ traditional claim of overlordship. Furthermore, Con was now so dominant that his men referred to him as the O’Donnell, a title that Con said he would have in spite of the whole world.¹¹⁵ Fortunately for Hugh MacManus, Con died in 1583. Con’s death is an interesting illustration of an ageing crown prince as discussed by Tullock. If Con had remained inactive and waited for Hugh MacManus to die, he would never have attained the chieftainship and seeking it the way he did, through force, was more certain.¹¹⁶

Con’s death only temporarily abated the threat of the descendants of Calvach as their cause was next taken up by Hugh MacCalvach O’Donnell. He was another ‘supposed base son’ who changed parentage later in life. He was originally known as Hugh O’Gallagher and believed to be the son of the dean of Raphoe before claiming to be a son of Calvach.¹¹⁷ Hugh MacCalvach emerged as a serious contender for Tyrconnell after he helped the government against the Scottish MacDonnells at the beginning of 1586. This won the favour of Lord Deputy Perrot, who secured him a pension and likely saw him as a potential counterbalance to Hugh MacManus, of whom he was growing suspicious. Hugh MacCalvach further strengthened himself by imitating Con and allying with Turlough Luineach. He was also backed by other descendants of Calvach, including Con’s sons but it is not certain whether it was because they saw him as a son of Calvach and his rightful successor or if they were simply too weak to oppose him.¹¹⁸ Regardless, the support that Hugh MacCalvach had amassed allowed him to threaten Hugh MacManus’ control of Tyrconnell so much so that Tyrone complained that his father-in-law had been almost expelled from his own lordship by MacCalvach.¹¹⁹ The fortunes of Hugh MacManus deteriorated further in May 1588 when he and Tyrone were soundly defeated by Turlough and Hugh MacCalvach at Carricklea.¹²⁰ Following the defeat, Hugh MacManus’s control of Tyrconnell would have been in real jeopardy if not for the intervention of his wife Iníon Dubh. She was the daughter of James MacDonnell of Dunyveg and this connection to

¹¹⁵ Sir N. Malbie to Walsingham. 12th July 1582, Roscommon (SP 63/94/no.20)

¹¹⁶ *AFM*, p.1793

¹¹⁷ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3, p.152-3

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, Sir R. Byngam to Burghley, 12th December 1586, Dublin (SP 63/127/no26), *AFM*, p.1867-73

¹¹⁹ Hugh, Earl of Tirone, to Walsingham. 10th December 1587, Dundalk (SP 63/132/no.31)

¹²⁰ *AFM*, pp.1867-9

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Scotland gave her access to Scottish mercenaries and a contingent of them were said to be ‘constantly in her service and pay, and who were in attendance on her in every place’.¹²¹ These mercenaries enabled Iníon Dubh to be a powerful political player in the region and her primary political goal was to see her son, Hugh Rua, replace his aging father as chieftain.¹²² Those plans had to be postponed when, in 1587, Hugh Rua was kidnapped by the government and then imprisoned in Dublin Castle. Perrot’s reasoning for this was that he distrusted Hugh MacManus because he failed to pay rent and send the pledges he promised, he was procuring Scottish mercenaries through Iníon Dubh and his *uirríthe*, the MacSweenys, had been assisting disloyal subjects like Gráinne O’Malley. Hugh Rua was ‘matched in marriage with the greatest in Ulster [i.e Tyrone]’ so by imprisoning the young O’Donnell, Perrot was checking the growing influence of Tyrone. Hugh Rua would remain in Dublin until the winter of 1591/2 when he escaped.¹²³

In the intervening years it was largely left up to Iníon Dubh and her ever present bodyguard of Scottish mercenaries to ward off the attempts of rival factions to overthrow her husband and block her son’s path to the chieftainship because Hugh MacManus was becoming too old and weak to rule and lead his country. Shortly after Carricklea, Hugh MacCalvach happened to pass through Mongavlin, where Iníon Dubh’s chief residence was. She heard that he was in the vicinity and sent her Scottish bodyguards to assassinate him, which they did.¹²⁴ Following this, the prospects of the descendants of Calvach went into decline. Con’s two eldest living sons were killed and Turlough switched his support from the descendants of Calvach to Donal O’Donnell, an illegitimate son of Hugh MacManus who sought to depose his father. With Turlough’s help Donal became the dominant force in Tyrconnell which was described in 1590 as being at his ‘pleasure.’¹²⁵ Iníon Dubh once again took action to safeguard her son’s path to the chieftainship. She gathered the forces loyal to her husband and in combination with her Scottish mercenaries, they defeated and killed Donal in September 1590, in a battle near Glencolmcille in south-west Tyrconnell.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Ibid, p.1873

¹²² Ibid p.1891, Hayes-MacCoy, G. A. *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland*, pp.207-8

¹²³ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol. 3, pp.285-6, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.19-31

¹²⁴ *AFM*, pp. 1859-65, 1873, 1891,1913-25

¹²⁵ Ibid pp. 1867,1881, Sir N. White to Burghley. 29th January 1590, Dublin (SP 63/150/no.27)

¹²⁶ *AFM*, p 1891

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Iníon Dubh's actions meant that Hugh Rua, following his escape from Dublin, was able to replace his father, who resigned his position in favour of his son. However, his inauguration was not universally supported. The descendants of Calvach had not given up on their ambition to reclaim the chieftainship of Tyrconnell and they were now being led by Niall Garbh O'Donnell, Con O'Donnell's eldest living son. He displayed his opposition towards Hugh Rua by snubbing his inauguration ceremony and instead he went to Dublin to complain to the government about Hugh Rua, likely hoping to gain government support for his claim for Tyrconnell as well. Hugh Rua moved quickly to block Niall Garbh from getting government support. He wrote to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam and stated that he could not defend himself from Niall Garbh's complaints in letters so he required a meeting with the Lord Deputy to answer these accusations. He also reassured Fitzwilliam that he had no intention of being a disloyal subject following his reception of the title of O'Donnell, an action which angered Fitzwilliam because O'Donnell did it without consent from the government. O'Donnell claimed that he never wanted the title but it was offered to him by his father and his chief followers, who advised him that the country would not assist him if he refused.¹²⁷ Fitzwilliam and the Irish council responded by agreeing to give O'Donnell a protection for two months and requested that he to come to them and submit, which O'Donnell did at Dundalk in August 1592. According to Captain Thomas Lee, Hugh Rua's submission was facilitated by a £500 bribe paid to Fitzwilliam. Hugh Rua's reconciliation with the government was a blow for Niall Garbh. It meant that government support to overthrow his rival was now no longer an option. Even worse Turlough Luineach's diminishing position meant an alliance with him was no longer of much use.¹²⁸ Without a strong external ally, Niall Garbh had little chance of ousting his rival who was backed by powerful allies like Tyrone and Maguire. These adverse circumstances forced Niall Garbh to take the prudent course of action and so he yielded to Hugh Rua's authority, which consequently meant he became part of the embryonic Gaelic confederacy. In return Niall Garbh does seem to have been given land or at the very least allowed to retain it because under Hugh Rua he held a territory stretching from the townland of Leaght, just north of the River Finn, to the north entrance of Barnesmore gap. He also possessed Castlefinn but

¹²⁷ Hugh Roe O'Donnell, to the Lord Deputy and Council. 26th April 1592, Scarwholes (SP 63/165/no.6 i), Hugh Roe O'Donnell, chief of his name, to the Lord Deputy. 18th May 1592, Kilmacrenan, (SP 63/165/no. 6 ii)

¹²⁸ Morgan, Hiram. *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p.134

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was denied the much-coveted castle at Lifford.¹²⁹ This was not enough for Niall Garbh and Ó Cléirigh made it clear that Niall submitted to Hugh Roe reluctantly. Ó Cléirigh maintained, albeit he had the benefit of hindsight, that Niall Garbh's submission was not a result of 'real love... but it was wholly through fear'.¹³⁰ Niall Garbh's allegiance to Hugh Rua was thus very tenuous and could only endure as long as Niall Garbh feared and lacked the means to challenge the *status quo*. As a result, Niall was highly susceptible to defect to the government if it gave him an opportunity to win Tyrconnell.

Niall Garbh was not the only competitor Hugh Rua had to contend with. The other was Hugh Dubh O'Donnell. Hugh Dubh was based in Ramelton and was an uncle of Hugh Rua's father. He was the eldest hopeful for the title of O'Donnell so for some who viewed Gaelic succession as strictly by agnatic seniority he was entitled to succeed. Miler Magrath for one stated that under Gaelic succession Hugh Dubh should have been chieftain and Hugh Rua was a usurper.¹³¹ Even Ó Cléirigh with his favouritism towards Hugh Rua had to concede that Hugh Dubh, as the most senior candidate, was 'thought most likely to be at the head of the territory' after Hugh MacManus.¹³² Hugh Rua was born in 1572 so he was quite young when he became chieftain in 1592. The fact that O'Hussey's inauguration poem to Hugh Rua centred around his youth and how it should not stop him from becoming chieftain does suggest that there was a concern over the issue of seniority that needed to be addressed and dismissed.¹³³

Yet, while Hugh Dubh possessed a strong claim to Tyrconnell he lacked strength. His own forces were estimated to be about 60 foot and 20 horse, not enough to seriously threaten Hugh MacManus or his son without powerful allies outside Tyrconnell, which he did not have.¹³⁴ Therefore, in the previous decades he had never really emerged as a threat to Hugh MacManus and was overshadowed by the descendants of Calvach. A 1593 report on the state of Ulster indicates that Hugh MacManus had largely kept Hugh Dubh in check as he prosecuted him and forced him 'to flie from one part of the country to another.' Yet the same report also highlights that Hugh Dubh could pose a serious threat to Hugh Rua. He was said to be the most valiant man in Tyrconnell, still had a substantial territory and

¹²⁹ *A repertory*, pp.24-5, 59-60, *AFM*, p.2347-9, The names of all the chief places of strength in O'Dogherty's country called Ennisowen, 12th April 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.9)

¹³⁰ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.55

¹³¹ The state of Ireland. 30th May 1592 (SP 63/164/no.47)

¹³² *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.53

¹³³ See chapter one, p.36

¹³⁴ A collection of the force and service of Ireland. 8th July 1596 (SP 63/191/no.13 ii)

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was well beloved. Therefore, it was thought that, with government assistance, Hugh Dubh may overthrow Hugh Rua.¹³⁵ Consequently Hugh Rua had to rein in his granduncle, who had immediately shown his contempt and opposition to Hugh Rua by boycotting his inauguration ceremony.¹³⁶ Hugh Dubh had managed to gain possession of the strategically important Belleek castle. Hugh Rua, using Maguire as a pretend mediator, procured a ‘feigned treaty of friendship’ with Hugh Dubh which allowed him to seize Belleek and execute sixteen of Hugh Dubh’s followers. After this loss Hugh Dubh was ‘so brought on his knees that he was enforced to accept of the accord offered him by the saide Hugh Ro Odonel.’¹³⁷ Hugh Dubh would not seriously threaten the young O’Donnell thereafter and his failure to attain the chieftainship would gall him for the rest of his life as his elegy reflects. His elegy, by Ferghal Óg Mac an Bhaird, was bitter and chided Tyrconnell and the O’Donnells for not making him chieftain, stating that ‘one cannot depend on Conall’s race since they gave him not the lordship.’¹³⁸ Following the collapse of Hugh Dubh’s challenge, Hugh Rua had for now at least neutralised the threat of his rival kinsmen but potential danger from Niall Garbh was still there.

In conclusion, the O’Neill and O’Donnell lordships had many divisions that were a result of the complex succession situation in Gaelic Ireland. Among the O’Neills there was Turlough Luineach, the current chieftain, Hugh O’Neill, a candidate who was using primogeniture to further his claim, Turlough Breasalach, who used the argument that as eldest of the clan he should be successor, and the MacShanes who also thought one of their faction should be chieftain. Tyrone used coercive measures to suppress his rivals and emerge as the dominant party among the O’Neills, eventually becoming chieftain. He, with some help from his O’Donnell allies, was able to weaken Turlough Luineach to insignificance. Turlough’s son, Art, took up his father’s mantle as opponent to Tyrone but the Earl’s strength meant that for the moment, Art had to adhere to Tyrone. Hugh Geimhleach was executed by Tyrone and his brothers imprisoned, ending the MacShane threat for now. Turlough Breasalach never really developed into a serious contender for the chieftainship. Lastly there was Henry Óg MacShane O’Neill. He did not desire to become the O’Neill but his allegiance to Tyrone was far from certain as he wished to be

¹³⁵Notes on the state of Ulster. 10th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.11)

¹³⁶ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.53-5

¹³⁷ Ralph Lane to Burghley. 25th March 1593, Ballymote (SP 63/168/no.77)

¹³⁸ McKenna, Lambert (ed and trans). “Elegy on Aodh Óg Ó Domhnaill.” *Irish Monthly*, Vol. 48, No. 562, (1920), pp. 207–209.

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independent and would defect if assured of military support from the government. Tyrconnell too suffered from internal divisions. There was the chieftain of the O'Donnells, Hugh MacManus, and his son and successor Hugh Rua, the descendants of Calvach, who could use primogeniture to further their claim, and Hugh Dubh who as the eldest candidate and used seniority to exert his right to the chieftainship. There was also briefly Donal O'Donnell, a member of the *derbfine* who tried to use his strength and an alliance with Turlough Luineach to take over Tyrconnell but his push for the lordship was cut short by Iníon Dubh. Hugh Rua was able to quash Hugh Dubh as a competitor but the descendent of Calvach in the form of Niall Garbh still presented a possible problem for the chieftain and a potential ally for the government in the future.

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'The absolute commander of all the north of Ireland': The formation of the Gaelic confederacy in a divided Ulster

In April 1594, a treatise by George Carew warned of the power that Tyrone enjoyed: 'at this present by reason of his greate alyances, and as well for friendship, [and] feare, [he is] the absolute commander of all the northe of Ireland.'¹ 'Friendship' and 'fear' is a good description of how Tyrone brought many of the Ulster chieftains and their clans under his rule and into the Gaelic confederacy. This chapter will explore how Tyrone, through 'fear' and 'friendship' formed his Gaelic confederacy in Ulster. To achieve this, the chapter will examine individually the major clans in Ulster and how they were brought into the confederacy. These clans consist of the Maguires, O'Cahans, MacMahons, O'Reillys, O'Neills of the Fews, O'Hanlons, Magennis and the O'Neills of North and South Clondeboy. Several of these clans were blighted by internal divisions. In Fermanagh Hugh Maguire was challenged by Conor Rua Maguire, in 1589 four MacMahons hoped to succeed Ross MacMahon after his death and there was a three-way struggle among the O'Reillys over East Breifne. In North Clondeboy, Shane MacBrian O'Neill was first opposed by Hugh Óg O'Neill and then by his brother Niall MacHugh O'Neill. South Clondeboy was divided between Niall MacBrian Faghartach O'Neill and his cousin Eoghan MacHugh O'Neill. The chapter will examine the background of these succession disputes. Overcoming the rifts within clans was a difficult challenge because there could only be one chieftain. If Tyrone allied and supported one faction, he would in turn alienate another. Some of these alienated factions rejected Tyrone and his Gaelic confederacy and sought to take advantage of the conflict in Ulster by siding with the government; hoping that they would be rewarded with their clans' lordship or at least be given some extra land at the expense of their rival. During the early stages of the war for instance, Conor Rua Maguire and Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon both wanted to oust their rivals by fighting alongside the government.

The chapter will show how Tyrone managed to suppress these squabbling factions and unite them under his authority through coercive measures such as raids or threats. It will also show that Tyrone used less violent methods to secure loyalty. He could offer

¹ Treatise on Ireland by Sir George Carewe, April 1594 (SP 63/174/no.13 i)

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rewards of land or establish marriage or foster alliances. Yet Tyrone could ultimately not fully expunge the succession disputes and the chapter will show that these rivalries only lay dormant and could be revived and exploited by the government later. Divided clans were not the only problem that Tyrone had to contend with. The clans of Ulster traditionally opposed the O'Neills' attempts to impose their overlordship. The expansion of the crown into Ulster and the conduct of local government officials such as sheriffs caused resentment. This led to some forgoing their traditional hostility to O'Neill overlordship and allying with Tyrone in order to halt the government's extension further north. Others however still loathed O'Neill interference and wished to remain independent. Tyrone thus had to use force to compel these holdouts. The chapter will examine each clan's relationship with the O'Neills and Tyrone and how the Earl was able to bring previously hostile clans under his remit. Lastly the chapter will examine Hugh Rua O'Donnell's relationships with his *uirríthe*, especially his relationship with O'Doherty of Inishowen. Relations between O'Doherty and O'Donnell were poor as O'Doherty vehemently opposed O'Donnell overlordship. Therefore, Hugh Rua had to constrain O'Doherty into acknowledging his right to overlordship of Inishowen.

The Maguires were one of the most powerful clans in Ulster, arguably the strongest clan after the O'Neills and O'Donnells.² They possessed a substantial force which, in 1599, was estimated to be about 600 foot and 100 horse or about a tenth of Tyrone's foot and seven percent of his horse.³ The Maguire lordship comprised roughly modern Co. Fermanagh and unfortunately for the Maguires, their lordship was positioned beside the more powerful O'Neills and O'Donnells, who fought for overlordship of Fermanagh. In the early sixteenth century, this dispute over Fermanagh was one of the causes of military conflict between the two clans. The O'Donnells managed to win several victories over the O'Neills during this period, causing the O'Neills to cede Fermanagh to them. The O'Donnells certainly appeared to exercise their right as overlord because the Maguire chieftain was mentioned as accompanying the O'Donnell chieftain on his military campaigns. O'Donnell also billeted his men in Fermanagh and was part of the Maguire chieftain's inauguration in 1527.⁴ However in the mid and latter sixteenth century, the O'Neills re-emerged as the primary overlords of Fermanagh and when Turlough Luineach

² Notes by the Archbishop of Cashel, October 1600 (SP 63/ 207 pt.5/no.93 i)

³ An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)

⁴ *AFM*, pp.1315-7,1329,1383,1387-91, Thos. Cusack, Chancellor of Ireland, to the Earl of Warwick, 27th September 1551, Lismullin (SP 61/3/no.52)

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became chieftain, he had no plans of relinquishing the O'Neills' claim to the Maguire lordship. He petitioned the government for overlordship of Fermanagh and sent word to Maguire, telling him that he must be his 'servant and subject.'⁵ The Maguire chieftain was Cúchonnacht Maguire and during his tenure he strongly rejected O'Neill overlordship. He would regularly complain to the government about Turlough Luineach's rule and asked to solely depend on and be a subject of the Queen. In 1585, for example, he told the sheriff of Cavan that he wanted to be discharged from O'Neill's authority and that he would rather be a 'prisoner with yor lord and he and his countrie and folwers to be under englysishe government, then to be at lybertty and under the bondage of o nealls commandment.'⁶ Maguire's opposition to Turlough was partially caused by the usual unpopular exactions imposed on *uirríthe*. Turlough's extensive use of Scottish mercenaries and his billeting them on his *uirríthe* was especially irksome. In 1572, 300 were reported to have been cessed in Fermanagh and according to the Earl of Essex, the mercenaries hired by Turlough were 'moste chargeable to the country where they be hired and therefore hated by such as bear the burden.'⁷

Maguire's opposition to Turlough Luineach meant that Turlough would often have to use violence and threats to compel Maguire to observe his authority.⁸ The government gave little help and in 1575 Essex, during the enterprise of Ulster, made peace with Turlough Luineach and gave him suzerainty over Maguire. Essex's reasoning was that they could not defend Maguire from Turlough so it was better, for the time being, to allow Turlough authority over Maguire.⁹ In 1585 Cúchonnacht made another attempt to rid himself of Turlough and depend solely on the government. He surrendered his land and the letters patent he received stated that he was to pay rent solely to the Queen 'as soon as he shall be discharged from contribution to Tirlagh O'Neile.' However, as with Essex, separating Maguire from O'Neill was deferred and in 1587 the government gave Turlough a life interest in Fermanagh and the right to 'exercise his superiority over Maguyer'¹⁰

⁵Cuconnacht Maguire to Lords Justice Weston and Fitzwilliam, 2nd November 1567, Enniskillen (SP 63/22/no.25 iii), Turlough Luineach O'Neill to Lord Deputy Sidney, 13th December 1567, Benburb (SP 63/22/no.44)

⁶ Henry Duke, Sheriff of Cavan, to the Lord Deputy, 1st March 1585, Castle Jordan (SP 63/115/no.4)

⁷ Answer of Essex to the doubts expressed about his plan for Ulster (B.M., Add. ms 48015, Yelverton mss, Vol. 16), Harry Barnewall to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 1572 (SP 63/37/no.59 i) Considerations which moved Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to consent to articles, 1575 (SP 63/52/no.48 xix)

⁸ Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to the Privy Council, 10th March 1575, Dublin (SP 63/50/no.4)

⁹ Articles of peace concluded between Walter Devereux, earl of Essex and Turlough Luineach, 27th June 1575, (SP 63/52/no.45), Considerations which moved Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to consent to articles, 1575 (SP 63/52/no.48 xix)

¹⁰ *The Irish Fiants*, Vol.2, pp.679, 722, Vol.3 pp.15-16

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Turlough would carry on using military measures to bring Maguire to heel. In one clash between Maguire and Turlough's forces in 1588, more than 20 men were reported to have been killed.¹¹ Cúchonnacht also had to contend with the Earl of Tyrone, who was trying to extend his influence into Fermanagh and his allies, the O'Donnells, were raiding Fermanagh in order to 'compell Magwire to be at the Erles [Tyrone] commandment.'¹² Maguire wanted to be defended from not only 'o'nell's tyranny' but also 'all his nacyion' so had little interest in being under any O'Neill.¹³ Tyrone failed to extend his influence into Fermanagh at Turlough's expense and instead Maguire was forced to make an accord with Turlough in February 1589.¹⁴

Less than six months later Cúchonnacht died and his son, Hugh Maguire, replaced him as chieftain.¹⁵ O'Hussey's poem for Hugh telling him that he must protect Fermanagh from O'Donnell and O'Neill suggests that he shared some of the traditional hostility towards the Maguires' overlords.¹⁶ Expressing these pretensions in poetry was one thing, acting on them was another and when Maguire became chieftain the reality of his plight caused him to drift towards Tyrone. Hugh did not share his father's pro-government leanings and prior to the outbreak of the Nine Years' War he already had shown signs of antagonism towards the crown. Shortly after he became chieftain his loyalty was questioned and in 1590, it was said that 'Magwire will not abide [a] sheriff nor civill officer.' Maguire would later allege that he was so determined not to have a sheriff or other government official in Fermanagh that he bribed Fitzwilliam and others with 300 cows and also gave 150 cows to Henry Bagenal in order to delay the introduction of a sheriff for a year.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, Maguire reacted violently and rebelled when the new sheriff, Humphrey Willis, arrived in Fermanagh with 100 soldiers and their dependents and proceeded to 'live on the spoile of the Countrey.'¹⁸ Maguire also accused Willis of murdering of one of his clan and using his head as a 'football.' Willis was not the only negative experience Maguire had of crown officials as those based in areas neighbouring Fermanagh also interfered with the Maguire chieftain. He complained that Richard

¹¹ Patrick Foxe to Walsyngham, 2nd October 1588, Dublin (SP 63/137/no.4)

¹² Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy, 9th January 1588, Castle Jordan (SP 63/133/no.10)

¹³ Articles exhibited to the Lords of Her Majesty's Privy Council by Sir William Fytzwylliam, 23rd December 1587, (SP 63/132/no.49) Connasious Maguier to Malbie, 25th March 1583, Enniskillen (SP 63/101/no.16 i)

¹⁴ Salomon Farenan, Sir Tirlagh O'Neill's man, to the L. Deputy, 18th February 1589, (SP 63/142/no.12 ii)

¹⁵ *AFM*, pp.1875-7

¹⁶ See chapter one

¹⁷ The forces of the doubtful persons in the provinces, December 1589 (SP 63/149/no.33 i), Lawrence Taffe to Sir J. Perrot, 24th February 1590, Ardee (SP 63/150/no.71), *Carew Manuscripts* Vol.3 p.156

¹⁸ Moryson, Fynes. *An Itinerary*, London, 1617, Vol. 2, pp.188-9

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Bingham, president of Connacht, and his family had invaded Fermanagh on several occasions. During one of these invasions Maguire alleged that the Bingham family killed men, women and children, took 3,000 cows along with other livestock and seized certain women for ransom.¹⁹ This pushed Hugh Maguire towards Tyrone because his pleas for help from Dublin were ignored and so the only alternative for aid against the Bingham family was the Earl and his military resources. An intercepted letter from Maguire to Tyrone confirms that Maguire did indeed turn to Tyrone to complain about the Bingham family as he told the Earl that they had ‘done us hurt and wrong continually.’²⁰

Tyrone’s military support was crucial for Maguire if he wished to defend himself from predators like Bingham and Willis and stop government encroachment into his territory. This can be seen by how heavily Maguire relied on Tyrone when he first rebelled. For example, Maguire was said to have been hard pressed for soldiers until he received reinforcements from Tyrone, after which he was able to force Willis and his men to retreat and seek refuge in a church. After a week, thanks to the intervention of Tyrone, they negotiated safe conduct out of Fermanagh. Bingham stated that Maguire ‘must of necessitye relye upon him [i.e. Tyrone] and the greatest force which Maguire now hath is of the Erles folowers out of Tyrone.’²¹ This reliance on Tyrone’s military assistance did not just start when Willis entered Fermanagh because Maguire needed it to secure the chieftainship because he faced opposition from Conor Rua Maguire. This was another case of a dispute between the eldest candidate and a younger member of the *derbfine*. Conor Rua was the elder aspirant, so he thought that under Gaelic succession he was entitled to succeed and according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, when Cúchonnacht died Conor Rua went to the Maguire’s inauguration site near Lisnaskea. He left one shoe, a message declaring that he thought that he should be chieftain and that he planned to be inaugurated the next day. Hugh Maguire would not give way so he appealed to Donal O’Donnell, the bastard son of Hugh MacManus, who installed Hugh as chieftain before Conor Rua had a chance to be inaugurated.²²

However, a 1593 report on the state of Ulster claimed that Conor Rua was actually inaugurated as chieftain by the usual ‘customs and ceremonies of the country’ but he was

¹⁹ *Carew manuscripts*, Vol. 3 pp.155-6

²⁰ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone’s rebellion*, p.144

²¹ O’Neill, James, *The Nine Years War*, p.26, The Examination of Moris O’Skanlon, 19th June 1593, Dundalk (SP 63/170/no.23 xiii), Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, 19th September 1593, Athlone (SP 63/171/no.36)

²² *AFM*, pp.1875-7

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deposed by Tyrone and Hugh MacManus O'Donnell, who then installed Hugh as chieftain.²³ The latter description of events is more probable. Tyrone and Hugh Maguire had made a marriage pact prior to Cúchonnacht's death. Maguire agreed to marry Tyrone's daughter when she was of age. In 1589 she was said to be about eight.²⁴ It is not certain when this marriage took place. When Maguire rebelled in the spring of 1593, William Cecil, Lord Burghley and Elizabeth's chief advisor, stated that he was married to a daughter of Tyrone but Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam was unsure if Maguire had married Tyrone's daughter or was just planning to. In August 1594, Maguire was said to be just promised to Tyrone's daughter.²⁵ Regardless of when the marriage took place, it was unlikely that Tyrone would not have aided his prospective son-in-law nor stayed out of an important succession dispute where he could install his own client as chieftain. It should be noted that there was a blood link between Maguire and Tyrone. The two men were first cousins as Tyrone's mother was a Maguire and Fitzwilliam thought 'being his cosen' was one of the reasons why Tyrone held influence over Maguire.²⁶

While there were conflicting reports of how Hugh became chieftain, both agreed that Conor Rua felt that he should be chieftain because of his seniority and that he resented Hugh Maguire and his 'usurpation.' Therefore, when Hugh Maguire rebelled, Conor Rua was a potential ally for the government because he would 'doubtlesse willingly embrace any advantages to crosse the said Sir Hugh [Maguire]' and regain his right.²⁷ This proved to be the case as Conor Rua joined Henry Bagenal when he entered Monaghan and Fermanagh in September 1593, with the aim of putting down Hugh Maguire's rebellion. Bagenal raided and spoiled Fermanagh and, along with Tyrone who was still ostensibly loyal, defeated Hugh Maguire's forces at a ford near Belleek on 10th October. Bagenal would break up his force on 22nd October, after nearly a month of campaigning in Fermanagh.²⁸ The Dublin government was impressed with Conor Rua's contribution to the Fermanagh campaign and how he stood 'firme for her majestie, following the Armie in person and doing manie good offices in the service as in guiding, killing and burning.'²⁹

²³ Notes on the state of Ulster, 10th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.11)

²⁴ Plot for the province of Ulster to be reduced, 19th June 1589, (SP 63/145/no.16)

²⁵ Declaration by Patrick M'Art Moyle [M'Mahon], 21st April 1593, (SP 63/169/no.23 iii), Lord Deputy to Burghley, 17th May 1593, Dublin (SP 63/169/no.41), Presumptions against the Earl of Tirone's loyalty, August 1594, (SP 63/175/no.83)

²⁶ Lord Deputy to Burghley, 17th May 1593, Dublin (SP 63/169/no.41)

²⁷ Notes on the state of Ulster, 10th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.11)

²⁸ O'Neill, James. "Death in the Lakelands: Tyrone's Proxy War, 1593-4." pp.14-5

²⁹ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 16th November 1593, Dublin (SP 63/172/no.18)

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Following Bagenal's expedition, Conor Rua agreed to maintain 100 government soldiers in his country but overall the government forces in Fermanagh were small.³⁰ Consequently Conor Rua was extremely vulnerable and his country was attacked on numerous occasions by Hugh Maguire and the Gaelic confederates.³¹ Conor Rua's perilous position caused some to suspect that he would not remain loyal for much longer. In April 1594 Bagenal, who had praised Conor Rua previously for helping him during his Fermanagh campaign, now viewed Conor Rua as a 'barbarous fellowe and weak natured.' He was concerned that Conor Rua would not remain faithful because 'therles forces [are] so mighty on every side' and Tyrone had made overtures to Conor Rua. Further suspicion was caused by Conor Rua's falling out with Captain John Dowdall, who remained in Fermanagh following Bagenal's campaign in order to mop up any remaining resistance and he captured the important castle at Enniskillen.³² Dowdall thought Conor Rua may have been secretly allied with the confederates but he and Bagenal were being unfair to Conor Rua as other events suggest that he had not abandoned the government. Soon after they expressed their suspicions the confederates came to Conor Rua's lands and 'took a prey from....Conor roe Maguires people.' During another incursion, Conor Rua and his son recovered some cows from the Gaelic confederates and killed 14 of them and even Dowdall commended them for that action.³³ By the summer of 1594, the Gaelic confederates' continuous attacks on Conor Rua had taken their toll and in June a letter from him to the Lord Deputy conveys how bad things had gotten. Conor Rua stated that his people had 'fledd to the enemy and the country utterly desolate.' He could barely support himself, let alone the government forces cessed upon him so he asked for an alternative way to provide for their sustenance. He also begged for reinforcements because 'we are but a handfull in respect of their multitude.'³⁴ Conor Rua's letter exhibits the difficult situation those who opposed Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy found themselves in. There were not enough government forces on the ground at that point to provide an adequate defence for any Gaelic allies. Thus, Conor Rua and others were in predicament, either join the Gaelic confederacy or face possible death or expulsion. Conor Rua was not given the help he required and so he decided to opt for the former. In September he met

³⁰ Connor Roe Maguire to the Lord Deputy, 5th February 1594 (SP 63/173/no.35 ii)

³¹ Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, 15th February 1594, Athlone (SP 63/173/no.28), Capt. Thomas Henshawe to the Lord Deputy, 19th April 1594, Monaghan (SP 63/174/no.18 vii)

³² Sir Henry Bagenal to the Lord Deputy, 21st April 1594, Newry (SP 63/174/no.18 ix)

³³ Capt. John Dowdall to the Lord Deputy, 20th April 1594, (SP 63/174/no.18 xi), Captain Thomas Henshawe to [the Lord Deputy?], 30th April 1594, Monaghan (SP 63/174/no.37 vii)

³⁴ Connor Roe Maguire to the Lord Deputy, 1st June 1594, The Knock (SP 63/175/no. 5 xv)

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Hugh Maguire at Dungannon and Bagenal reported that the two were able to come to some sort of agreement in which Tyrone acted as surety.³⁵ Conor Rua's decision to join with Hugh Maguire and the Gaelic confederacy did not indicate that he gave up on his ambition to be chieftain, but it was merely an act of self-preservation. Therefore, he would continue to be willing to 'embrace any advantages to crosse' Hugh Maguire but for now Conor Rua was part of the Gaelic confederacy.

The O'Cahan lordship covered all of modern Co. Derry except for the barony of Loughinsholin. O'Cahan was an *uirrí* of the O'Neills and some thought they were the O'Neills most important *uirríthe*. John Dymmok called the O'Cahans the 'cheefest of O'Neils Vraughts [i.e. *uirríthe*]' and in 1602 the Lord Deputy described the O'Cahans as 'the greatest uriaght in Ulster.'³⁶ The O'Cahan chieftain's involvement in the inauguration of an O'Neill symbolises this importance. The O'Cahan chieftain had the job of throwing a shoe over the prospective chieftain's head during his inauguration ceremony and the purpose of the shoe was to symbolise the hope that the new chieftain would continue to walk in the footsteps of his predecessors.³⁷ One factor that made the O'Cahans an important *uirríthe* was their horse, which were considered by some to be the O'Neills' best.³⁸ The O'Cahans certainly could contribute a substantial number, 200 or about 15 percent of Tyrone's cavalry.³⁹

Prior to the Nine Years' War the O'Cahans' relationship with their overlord was similar to that of Cúchonnacht Maguire and so the O'Cahan chieftain was identified on several occasions as a chieftain who wished to be independent of the O'Neills. During the enterprise of Ulster, Essex said that the O'Cahan chieftain was tired of Turlough's exactions, especially supporting his Scottish mercenaries, so he offered to depend on and

³⁵ Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, 27th September 1594, Newry (SP 63/176/no.40)

³⁶ Dymmok, John. *A Treatise of Ireland*, Richard Butler (ed), Dublin: Irish Archaeological Society, 1842, p. 25, The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, 11th October 1602, Dublin (SP 63/212/no.46)

³⁷ Hayes-McCoy, Gerald, "The Making of an O'Neill: A View of the Ceremony at Tullaghoge, Co. Tyrone." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 33 (1970), p.91, Fitzpatrick, Elizabeth. *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp.122-4, 142-4

³⁸ Hogan, Edmund. *A Description of Ireland*, p.28

³⁹ An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)



Figure 3: A 1602 depiction of the inauguration of an O'Neill chief at Tullyhogue. O'Cahan is on the right, holding aloft a shoe

serve the Queen in order to be 'ridd of Turloghe and the Scottes.'⁴⁰ In 1587 O'Cahan, along with Maguire, were thought 'upon the least incouragement from the governor of that realm they will depend upon Her Majesty, and neyther beare Scot nor Irish either to Tirlagh or to the Erle of Tyrone.'⁴¹ Yet the government never managed to separate the O'Cahans from Turlough Luineach and they again confirmed Turlough's right for life to overlordship of O'Cahan in 1587. What is more in 1591 O'Cahan's country was actually deemed to be part of the newly shired county of Tyrone and this scuppered earlier plans for its sperate creation as the county Coleraine.⁴²

Despite their reservations about O'Neill overlordship, in June 1593 Rory O'Cahan, the chieftain of the O'Cahans, and his son received Tyrone at Castle Roe and acknowledged him as their overlord, thus becoming part of the emerging Gaelic confederacy.⁴³ The O'Cahans were linked with the two Gaelic confederate leaders via fosterage and this may have been a factor in their decision to adhere to Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy. Tyrone fostered a son of Rory O'Cahan and Hugh Rua O'Donnell was a foster son of Rory. Ó Cléirigh's claim that Rory was able to convince Hugh Rua to call off his siege at Castle Roe, while Turlough Luineach was there, suggests that O'Donnell's

⁴⁰ Answer of Essex to the doubts expressed about his plan for Ulster (B.M, Add. ms 48015, Yelverton mss, Vol. 16)

⁴¹ Articles exhibited to the Lords of Her Majesty's Privy Council by Sir William Fytzwylliam, 23rd December 1587 (SP 63/132/no.49)

⁴² *The Irish Fiants*, Vol. 3 pp.15-6, Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.76

⁴³ The speeches of Randall M'Neece, 30th June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.41 iii)

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fosterage with the O’Cahans had produced a strong bond.⁴⁴ A further bond between Rory O’Cahan and the O’Donnells was a marriage alliance. O’Cahan’s son, Donal Ballach, was married to Hugh Rua’s sister.⁴⁵ While the O’Cahans’ ties with Tyrone and O’Donnell may have played a part in their decision to join the Gaelic confederacy, the reality was that they had little choice in the matter. Their position in Derry, far from any government garrison and beside both Tyrone and O’Donnell, left them isolated and in a vulnerable position, easily attacked by either of the confederate leaders. The O’Cahan chieftain later highlighted this predicament in 1602.⁴⁶ Furthermore by 1593 Turlough’s power was practically gone and the MacShanes’ influence was waning. This left the O’Cahans with no other O’Neill faction with which to align. The O’Cahans could not resist Tyrone by themselves and with no other viable alternatives, the safe choice was to observe his authority.

The MacMahon of Oriel (or Co. Monaghan after it was shired in 1585) was another *uirrí* who had a history of trying to become independent of the O’Neills. The MacMahon chieftain, like the O’Cahan and Maguire chieftain, approached the government during the 1570s and offered to ‘yeld rent and service to Her Majesty if he maie be delivered from [Turlough Luineach] Oneills servitude.’⁴⁷ Tyrone also had an interest in Monaghan and tried to extend his influence to the region by a marriage alliance. Ross MacMahon was elected chieftain in 1579 and married Tyrone’s daughter. Tyrone did appear to have some influence over his son-in-law as shortly after his election Tyrone brought him to Armagh to meet with Lord Justice William Drury. Tyrone vouched for the new MacMahon chieftain and promised to make sure ‘that he [i.e. Ross] shall continue of loyall and dutifull behavior towards her highness.’ This helped convince Drury to accept Ross’s offer of submission and acknowledge his claim to the MacMahon lordship.⁴⁸ Tyrone’s increase in power in the mid-1580s allowed him to further cement his influence in Monaghan at the expense of Turlough Luineach. In 1586 Bagenal made note of this changing power dynamic and stated that Ross MacMahon was ‘sometyme contributory to Tur. Oneyle, and

⁴⁴ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.47, Plot for the province of Ulster to be reduced, 19th June 1589, (SP 63/145/no.16)

⁴⁵ Casway, Jerrold. "The Decline and Fate of Dónal Ballagh O’Cahan and His Family," in Micheal O’Siochru (ed), *Kingdoms in Crisis Ireland in the 1640s*, Dublin: Four Courts, 2001, p.48

⁴⁶ O’Cahan to Sir Arthur Chichester, 21st June 1602 (SP 63/211 pt.2/no.60 a)

⁴⁷ Lord Deputy Sydney’s requests to be propounded in Council, 22nd December 1575 (SP 63/54/no.22), Answer of Essex to the doubts expressed about his plan for Ulster (B.M., Add. ms 48015, Yelverton mss, Vol. 16)

⁴⁸ Lord Justice Drury to Burghley, 11th February 1579, Dublin (SP 63/65/no.36)

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now is left to the government of the Earle of Tyrone.' Bagenal also noted that Ross' relationship with his father-in-law had soured and he, like his predecessors, wished to be free from O'Neill overlordship and was 'very desirous to yeld onlie to the Queen, and to be governed after the English manner.'⁴⁹ In 1587 Ross wrote to Lord Deputy Perrot and offered to pay an annual rent of 400 'choice beeves' to the Queen so he might be freed from the O'Neills.⁵⁰ Perrot obliged and so Ross availed of a surrender and regrant arrangement in 1587, freeing him from Tyrone, abolishing Gaelic succession and establishing primogeniture in Monaghan.⁵¹ By this stage Perrot no longer trusted Tyrone so his facilitation of Ross' surrender and regrant was partially an attempt to weaken him. Tyrone was none too pleased to lose Ross, one of his 'best helps.'⁵²

Tyrone was not willing to give up his influence in Monaghan so easily and he tried to intimidate Ross into re-acknowledging his authority. He raided Ross' lands and supported his rival, Brian MacHugh Óg MacMahon.⁵³ Tyrone's actions appeared to have had the desired effect as Ross was said by Henry Duke, sheriff of Cavan, to be obeying Tyrone by the beginning of 1588.⁵⁴ The following year Ross took a very anti-government stance. He killed a captain and some soldiers who had been placed in his country, refused to admit a sheriff and raided the Pale and according to Nicholas White, master of the rolls, Tyrone was behind Ross' actions. Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam responded by launching a two-pronged offensive into Monaghan, one force under him and the other under Henry Bagenal. The attack devastated the country so badly that Ross complained that government's forces had 'not left a house in my country unburnt, nor grayne of corne unburnt or spoyled.' This attack forced Ross to agree to allow a sheriff into his country and in May 1589 Ross, along with other Ulster chieftains including Tyrone, met the Lord Deputy at Drogheda and submitted.⁵⁵ Ross died shortly after.

Following Ross's death in 1589 there was, as usual, a succession dispute. Ross had no sons so his brother, Hugh Rua MacMahon, went to Dublin and used his brother's letters patent and primogeniture to argue that he should inherit his brother's land. Fitzwilliam had other plans as he abided by Sidney's 'infallible principle' that the best way to subdue a

⁴⁹ Hore, Herbert. "Marshal Bagenal's Description of Ulster," p.146

⁵⁰ Mr. Henry Duke to Lord Burghley, 19th February 1587, Dublin (SP 63/128/no.48)

⁵¹ *The Irish Fiants*, Vol. 3, pp.10-1

⁵² Hugh, Earl of Tirone, to Walsyngham, 10th December 1587, Dundalk (SP 63/132/no.31)

⁵³ Lord Deputy Sir John Perrot to Walsyngham, 9th August 1587, Dublin (SP 63/130/no.63), Sir Ross M'Mahon to the Lord Deputy, 26th July 1587 (SP 63/130/no.63 ii)

⁵⁴ Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy, 9th January 1588, Castle Jordan (SP 63/133/no.10)

⁵⁵ Sir N. White, Master of the Rolls, to Lord Burghley, 7th April 1589, Dublin (SP 63/143/no.7), Shirley, Evelyn Philip. *The History of the County of Monaghan*. London, Pickering, 1879, pp 78-80

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Gaelic lordship was to weaken it by a division or as he put it ‘I suppose it an easier matter to mastre and make partie in a force devided, then united.’⁵⁶ Carew agreed that Monaghan should be ‘divided into small lordships, [so] that unworthy race will be the less able to do mischief.’⁵⁷ Fitzwilliam brought three competitors for Monaghan to Dublin to join Hugh Rua and according to O’Sullivan Beare, they were Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon, Brian MacHugh Óg of the MacMahons of Dartry and Ever MacCooley, who was from a branch of MacMahons based in Farney. Fitzwilliam tried to convince the four men to agree to a division of their lordship and made some progress with Hugh Rua, but the others refused to accept a division. Fitzwilliam gave up and decided to observe primogeniture and back Hugh Rua. Fitzwilliam reinforced Hugh Rua with 400 foot and 40 horse and sent him back to Monaghan but Hugh Rua would not be unopposed upon his return.⁵⁸ Hugh Rua’s main competitor was Brian McHugh Óg. Theoretically he had no right to the MacMahon lordship or the title of MacMahon because he was outside the *derbfine*.⁵⁹ However Brian had something that was more useful than right and that was the backing of Tyrone, Maguire and O’Rourke with whose help he was able to muster an estimated 1,000 men. This enabled Brian to have himself inaugurated as chieftain.⁶⁰ These soldiers enabled him to beat back Hugh Rua and his government reinforcements, who were later forced to retire to their former garrisons due to a lack of supplies.⁶¹

The next mention of Monaghan was Hugh Rua’s imprisonment by Fitzwilliam for hiring Scottish mercenaries, raiding his neighbours, disobeying and trying to undermine the sheriff, aiding and abetting murderers and thieves.⁶² Hugh Rua was found guilty and executed in October 1590.⁶³ Hugh Rua’s execution gave Fitzwilliam the opportunity to put his plan to divide Monaghan into action because Hugh Rua’s crimes were deemed to be treasonous and so his lands were forfeited to the crown. In 1591 the MacMahon lordship was divided between seven chief lords, six of them were MacMahons and one was the

⁵⁶ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 7th August 1589, Kilmainham (SP 63/146/no.5), Lord Deputy to the Privy Council, 2nd March 1590, Dublin (SP 63/151/no.2)

⁵⁷ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3 p.45

⁵⁸ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 7th August 1589, Kilmainham (SP 63/146/no.5), Privy Council to Lord Deputy, 19th November 1589 (SP 63/148/no.14), O’Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.41

⁵⁹ See Chapter one

⁶⁰ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 7th August 1589, Kilmainham (SP 63/146/no.5), *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3 p.13, *ALC*, Vol.2 p.495

⁶¹ Sir Henry Duke to Sir John Perrot, 24th August 1589, Castle Jordan (SP 63/146/no.12)

⁶² Matter that [Hugh Roe] McMahan is to be charged, February 1590 (SP 63/151/no.2 i)

⁶³ For more on Hugh Roe’s execution see: Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, pp.61-70, Mac Duinnshleibhe, Peadar. "The Legal Murder of Aodh Rua McMahan, 1590." *Clogher Record*, Vol 1. Issue 3 (1955), pp. 39-52

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chieftain of the MacKennas, a minor clan in Monaghan.⁶⁴ Weakening the MacMahons was not the only aim of the Monaghan settlement as it also looked to introduce English law, government and landownership into the MacMahon lordship.⁶⁵ Captain Thomas Henshaw was made seneschal of Monaghan, established in Monaghan town and given 100 soldiers. Primogeniture was to be observed and nearly 300 of the lesser landowners were established as freeholders. These freeholders held their lands from the Queen and only owed their superior lord a monetary rent as ‘forbidden, by open proclamacion, the chief lords to exacte or take exaccions or impositions of her Majesty’s freeholder.’ According to Fitzwilliam the freeholders told him that they thought the new rent ‘demanded of them, is not a tenth part of that imposicon which yerlie was extorted and laid upon them.’⁶⁶ Church or Termon lands in Monaghan were allotted to servitors, mostly Palesmen but the most prominent recipient of land was Henry Bagenal, who was given the lands of Muckno.⁶⁷

The whole Monaghan affair sent shock waves through Ulster. Hugh Rua’s trial was alleged to have been a show trial engineered by Fitzwilliam. In 1596 for example Brian MacHugh Óg claimed that nine of the jurors were detained without food for 24 hours until eventually they relented and came to the verdict Fitzwilliam wanted, guilty. The other four jurors were soldiers who Fitzwilliam knew he could rely on and thus they were allowed to come and go as they pleased.⁶⁸ The following year Tyrone stated that Hugh Rua’s execution was ‘grounded upon mallice, and not upon eny just cause.’⁶⁹ It is difficult to ascertain the validity of the claims against Fitzwilliam given they come from hostile sources but the impact Monaghan had and that it was a cause of the war was undeniable. It pushed others in Ulster towards Tyrone because it spread fear throughout the province as others were worried that they may suffer the same fate. Captain Thomas Lee noted this and stated that Hugh Rua’s execution had ‘bred such terror in other great lords of the like measure, as maketh them stand upon those terms which now they do.’⁷⁰ The effects of the execution and division of Monaghan were obviously felt most by the MacMahons. Brian MacHugh Óg was the main loser of the settlement. He had been inaugurated as a chieftain

⁶⁴ Shirley, Evelyn Philip. *The History of the County of Monaghan*, p.90

⁶⁵ For more on the details of the division see: Duffy, Patrick. "The Territorial Organisation of Gaelic Landownership pp.57-83

⁶⁶ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 25th October 1591, (SP 63/160/no.43)

⁶⁷ Shirley, Evelyn Philip. *The History of the County of Monaghan*, p.91

⁶⁸ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, p.63

⁶⁹ Morgan, Hiram (ed), “The 1597 Ceasefire Documents.” *Dúiche Néill*, Vol.11 (1997), p.20. Accessed at <https://celt.ucc.ie/Ceasefire.pdf>

⁷⁰ Lee, Thomas, "A Brief Declaration of the Government of Ireland," in John Lodge *Desiderata curiosa Hibernica*, Vol.1, Dublin, 1772, p.96

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of the MacMahons but now was merely one of seven chief lords. He no longer had any control over the lesser landowners in Monaghan and would be subjected to interference from a sheriff and a seneschal. The introduction of Palesmen and others into Monaghan was also unpopular and Brian viewed it as an attempt to disinherit the native people, although the lands the servitors were given were church lands, which were supposed to be outside the control of the MacMahon chieftain.⁷¹ Brian was part of the Gaelic confederacy from the beginning of the war and undoing the Monaghan settlement and regaining the full MacMahon lordship was likely his main motivation. Tyrone was said to have promised Brian ‘that he should have the whole countie to himself’ and an intelligence report from Henry Duke, then a commander on the Pale border with Ulster, further suggests that Brian and the other MacMahons joined the Gaelic confederacy so they could return Monaghan to the pre-settlement *status quo*. Brian and the other Gaelic confederates reportedly promised to continue their rebellion until they were given their lands ‘as they formerly had it’ and all the MacMahons were giving back ‘all such landes as is wrongfully given from them unto others that ought not of right to have it’, which was most likely a reference to those Palesmen and others given land in the Monaghan settlement.⁷² Tyrone tried to further strengthen his relationship with Brian MacHugh Óg by a marriage alliance and so, Brian married another of Tyrone’s daughters.⁷³

Another prominent member of the MacMahons was Ever MacCooley MacMahon. The leader of his lineage was known as the captain of Farney, a position Ever attained in about 1577. The Farney MacMahons were followers of the MacMahon chieftain but they had a history of refusing to be subservient, which consequently meant sometimes also opposing the MacMahon’s overlord, the O’Neill chieftain. This led to much conflict between the three. For example, in 1562 the Farney MacMahons actually killed the MacMahon chieftain and in 1568, Turlough Luineach and the MacMahon chieftain joined together and burned Farney, likely hoping to force the captain of Farney to observe the MacMahon chieftain’s authority and pay him rent.⁷⁴ Ever was aware of this historical animosity and mentioned it in a 1592 petition to the Queen: the O’Neills were ‘always enemies to the Captains of Farney.’⁷⁵ Ever, like his predecessors, had a poor relationship

⁷¹ *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol. 3, p.157, Duffy, Patrick. "The Territorial Organisation of Gaelic Landownership, p.61

⁷² Declaration of Patrick M'Arte Moyle M'Mahon before the Lord Deputy and Council, 15th June 1593, Dundalk (SP 63/170/no.23 ii), Advertisements from Sir Henry Duke, 7th June 1594, (SP 63/175/no.5 xxi)

⁷³ Walsh, Paul. *The Will and Family of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone*, p.40

⁷⁴ Shirley, Evelyn Philip. *The History of the County of Monaghan*, pp.42,45-6

⁷⁵ Petition of Ever McMahon to Queen Elizabeth, 10th December 1592 (SP 63/167/no.32)

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with the MacMahon chieftains. In his petition he claimed that for refusing to pay rent to MacMahon, he was imprisoned and had two of his brothers killed. Ever was not released until he gave pledges, promised to pay rent and be obedient. Ever and the Farney MacMahons' ill will towards the O'Neills and other MacMahons meant they often sided with government against them and Ever was no different. Ever made sure to highlight this in his petition, saying that his family had always been loyal and he listed his service for the government against rebellious MacMahons, including Brian MacHugh Óg.⁷⁶ Ever was also commended by his neighbours in the Pale and the Dublin government for his loyalty, service and 'civility.'⁷⁷

Ever and his ancestors were rewarded little for their loyalty. In 1576 the Earl of Essex was granted territory in Monaghan, territory which included Farney. The government could do this because the lands were deemed to have been Shane O'Neill's. Shane had been attained so the government were able to dispense with Farney as they pleased. The Earls of Essex interfered little in Farney so Ever was largely content with the situation and Essex's possession of Farney meant it was exempted from the 1591 Monaghan settlement. The harmony in Farney would be disturbed when Essex decided to lease Farney to John Talbot of Castle Ring, in Louth, for an annual rent of £250. Ever was instead allotted lands in the barony of Cremourne as part of the Monaghan settlement. Ever had no interest in swapping his ancestral home for Cremourne, even offering Essex £300 in annual rent for Farney, an offer that was rejected. John Talbot expelled Ever from Farney, destroying his corn and goods to value of £1,000 in the process. Ever then went to London in 1592 to petition for the return of Farney but his efforts proved to be fruitless and he returned to Ireland.⁷⁸ Ever was left utterly destitute and not even able to enjoy Cremourne because an Art MacRory MacMahon 'with strong hand withhold the possession thereof from Euer McCollo.'⁷⁹ Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy gave a desperate and near landless Ever an opportunity to regain Farney so he, for the time being, joined them and his sons were especially active at the beginning of the war. Unsurprisingly John Talbot's estates in Farney and around Castle Ring became a target for them and the

⁷⁶ Note of services by Ewer M'Mahon, January 1593 (SP 63/168/no.6 i)

⁷⁷ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 5th January 1593, (SP 63/168/no.2), Viscount of Gormanston, Baron of Louth and Sir John Bellew, 28th March 1593, Dublin (SP 63/169/no. 10 i), The Lord of Slane to Burghley, 31st March 1593, Slane (SP 63/169/no.10 ii)

⁷⁸ Petition of Ever McMahon to Queen Elizabeth, 10th December 1592 (SP 63/167/no.32), *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3, pp.157-8,

⁷⁹ Davies, John, *Historical Tracts: By Sir John Davies*, George Chalmers (ed), London, 1786 pp. 235-6

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other Gaelic confederates.⁸⁰ In October 1594 Ever, his followers and his cattle resettled in Farney with help from Tyrone's brother, Cormac MacBaron, who left 40 horse and 180 foot in Farney to aid Ever. This caused many of Talbot's followers to flee to Ever who was clearly reaping the benefits of his decision to align with Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy.⁸¹

Not all of the MacMahons were part of the Gaelic confederacy at the beginning of the Nine Years' War and the most prominent holdout was Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon, the sheriff of Monaghan. From the very beginning, when Maguire expelled Willis from Fermanagh, Patrick opposed the Gaelic confederates. He informed the government of the Ulster wide conspiracy that was forming, their appeal to the Spanish for help and that Tyrone was involved but his accusations could not be proven at that point.⁸² Patrick provided military assistance and was part of Bagenal's expedition into Monaghan and Fermanagh, which took place between September-October 1593. Patrick was commended for his service against Maguire and it was said he served 'dutifully and valiantly.' His motivation for allying with the government was clearly a hope that he would be rewarded with the MacMahon lordship or at least made the most powerful MacMahon. A letter from Patrick to the government, after Bagenal's expedition, clearly demonstrates that he hoped service with government forces would help him realise his ambition. Patrick asked that his service not be forgotten if any land was taken from Brian MacHugh Óg or any other rebel in Monaghan and a new division of the county made. The government conceded that Patrick's service deserved a reward, such as more land, but it was reluctant to let any MacMahon grow 'great over the rest.'⁸³

Patrick would continue to serve against Brian and the Gaelic confederates. In 1594 his men raided Cormac MacBaron's territory and on another occasion Patrick was wounded in the neck by a horse staff when trying to recover a prey from Brian MacHugh Óg and Ever McCooley's sons.⁸⁴ Patrick was praised for this loyalty and service and in June 1595 he was once again extolled as he 'most loyally and valiantly', took a large prey from Gaelic confederates and resupplied the Monaghan garrison 'in spite of the rebel in

⁸⁰ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 15th September 1593, (SP 63/171/no.33), Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 16th November 1593, Dublin (SP 63/172/no.18)

⁸¹ Thomas Baron of Slane to [the Lord Deputy], 12th October 1594, Slane (SP 63/176/no.60 xi)

⁸² Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, pp.146-53

⁸³ Patrick M'Arte Moyle M'Mahon to the Lord Deputy and Council, 19th November 1593 (SP 63/172/no.18 viii)

⁸⁴ Captain Thomas Henshawe to [the Lord Deputy?], 30th April 1594, Monaghan (SP 63/174/no.37 vii)
Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy and Council, 29th July 1594, Dungannon (SP 63/175/no.35 xi)

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his greatest forces.’ The Lord Deputy was so impressed with Patrick that he increased his allowance for 15 horse to 25 and gave an allowance for 16 horse to one of Patrick’s principal followers.⁸⁵ Patrick at this point displayed how useful the assistance of Gaelic allies could be. However, by the end of 1595, Patrick demonstrated the perils of relying on Gaelic allies. Patrick went over to the Gaelic confederacy and orchestrated the betrayal of the garrison at Monaghan by ‘corrupting’ the soldiers, who handed over the garrison to the confederates without resistance.⁸⁶ Tyrone’s use of a carrot and stick won over Patrick. Tyrone’s forces raided Patrick’s lands while at the same time he offered Patrick land and support if he joined the Gaelic confederacy. By the end of 1595 the prospects of the government in Ulster were poor and Patrick likely thought it was best to join the confederacy and get what he could from Tyrone, rather than face possible destruction at his hands. Patrick did benefit from this decision because over a year after he betrayed Monaghan, he was said to have ‘ever since been countenanced by gift of lande and livinge by therle being before that the Erles mortall enemy’.⁸⁷ Yet mortal enemies do not become friends so easily. Patrick was therefore far from a secure ally of Tyrone and Brian MacHugh Óg and could defect if the crown’s fortunes in Ulster improved and Patrick could be better defended and rewarded for his defection. Patrick’s joining the Gaelic confederacy meant that, for the moment at least, the main parties in Monaghan were all now aligned with Tyrone.

Another prominent clan in Ulster were the O’Reillys of East Breifne. The O’Neills traditionally looked to claim rights of overlordship in East Breifne and when Turlough Luineach became chieftain he was no different, demanding from the government the right to exact tribute from the O’Reillys. The O’Reillys usually opposed such claims and looked to the government for support.⁸⁸ This was what Hugh Connallach O’Reilly did when he sent his eldest son, Shane, to London to formally surrender his lordship in 1568. In return the government promised to protect and free O’Reilly and his male heirs ‘from exaccions,

⁸⁵ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3, p.116, Captain Thomas Henshaw to the Lord Deputy, 27th July 1594, Monaghan (SP 63/175/no.35 xii)

⁸⁶ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 26th December 1595, Dublin (SP 63/185/no.28)

⁸⁷ Captain Thomas Henshaw to the Lord Deputy, 27th July 1594, Monaghan (SP 63/175/no.35 xii), The causes why the E. of Tyrone will not come to Dundalk, circa 1597, (Cotton Titus B/XII/ no.120/folio 527), Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley 24th December 1595, Dublin (SP 63/185/no.26)

⁸⁸ Lords Justice Weston and Fitzwilliam and Council to Queen Elizabeth, 10th December 1567, Dublin (SP 63/22/no. 36) For a summary of the O’Reillys and their relationship with the O’Neills and the government see Brady, Ciaran. "The O’Reillys of East Breifne and the Problem of 'Surrender and Regrant'." *Breifne* Vol.6 No.23 (1985), pp. 233-62

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servitude and oppressions of all other[s].⁸⁹ Theoretically the O'Reillys should have been free from the O'Neills but Turlough Luineach would continue to press his claims in East Breifne. For instance, in 1580 O'Reilly complained that he had received a letter from Turlough, demanding that he and his best followers join his forces and if he refused Turlough threatened to invade East Breifne.⁹⁰ East Breifne was in fact invaded by Turlough on a number of occasions, although O'Reilly was quite successful in resisting the O'Neill chieftain. In 1571 he repulsed an incursion by Turlough and in 1581 his sons defeated a much larger O'Neill raiding party, under the command of Shane Óg O'Neill and Con MacShane O'Neill who were both part of Turlough's retinue at the time.⁹¹ In 1572 Turlough Luineach did appear to have briefly exerted some authority over O'Reilly as it was reported that he sent Turlough his 'rising out.'⁹² For the most part though, O'Reilly remained loyal to the government and independent of the O'Neills. As a result, he was often applauded by the government for his faithfulness and service. Fitzwilliam once stated that he found O'Reilly 'of all the Irishrie, moste obedient and faythefull and reddiest to serve Her Majesty' and Nicholas Malby echoed this sentiment, saying that there was not 'a better yrish subject in the land than O reilly is.'⁹³ Hugh O'Reilly died in 1583 and a succession dispute ensued.

When Hugh was grievously ill in February 1583, his son Shane went to Dublin and used his father's surrender of his lordship and its supposed introduction of primogeniture to argue that he should be his father's successor. Shane's argument was undermined by the fact that he had no letters patent because none were ever issued. Instead Shane only had a 1568 letter, from the Queen to Lord Deputy Sidney, which stated that Hugh and his heirs were to receive letters patent for East Breifne.⁹⁴ His uncle Edmund also went to Dublin to state his case for the O'Reilly lordship. He used the interpretation of Gaelic succession that claimed that the eldest of the clan was entitled to succeed to argue that he was the lawful heir. Furthermore, Edmund's position as *tánaiste* had previously been recognised by the

⁸⁹ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Sidney, 24th February 1568, Westminster (SP 63/23/no.51), Brady, Ciaran. "The O'Reillys of East Breifne, p.240

⁹⁰ Sir Hugh O'Reilly to the Lord Deputy and Council, 3rd September 1580 (SP 63/76/no.5)

⁹¹ Lord Justice Fitzwilliam and Council to Queen Elizabeth, 4th January 1572, Dublin (SP 63/35/no.3), G. Fenton to Burghley, 21st September 1581, Mellifont (SP 63/85/no.54)

⁹² Nicholas Bagenal to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 16th June 1572 (SP 63/36/no.48 i)

⁹³ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 27th 1572 February, Dublin (SP 63/35/no. 24) Sir N. Malbie to Burghley, 21st September 1581, Dublin (SP 63/85/no.51)

⁹⁴ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Sidney, 24th February 1568, Westminster (SP 63/23/no.51), Lord Justices to Walsyngham, 25th March 1583, Dublin (SP 63/100/no.50), Waterhous to Walsyngham, 4th June 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.66)

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government. Edmund even received letters patent in 1567, confirming him as ‘tanist of the country of the Breyney, receiving the fees, commodities and advantages incident of the office.’ This was yet another instance which highlights the government’s inconsistent attitude towards Gaelic succession and titles. Edmund’s letters patent were deemed to be null and void by the government because of the subsequent outlawing of Gaelic succession and Gaelic titles in shired ground like East Breifne, or Co. Cavan after it was shired.⁹⁵ The last major competitor for the O’Reilly lordship was Shane’s brother Philip. Philip could use the alternative interpretation of Gaelic succession which held that the ‘worthiest’ should succeed rather than the eldest. A poem written for Philip suggests that this was his justification for his claim. The poem argued that a chieftain was not chosen because of his seniority and instead his ability to rule was more important. The poem then goes on to list Philip’s good qualities and achievements, especially those of a warlike nature, to demonstrate that he had the virtues needed to be chieftain.⁹⁶ The poem is not pure flattery as Philip had built a reputation for military skill and bravery, even among government officials. For example, in 1596 the Lord Deputy described Philip as ‘a man of great courage and spirit’.⁹⁷ Philip knew he had no claim to the O’Reilly lordship under English law so he did not go to Dublin to argue his case. Instead it was reported that he had recruited men from the O’Donnells to defend his claim by force.⁹⁸

In Dublin events played out much like they did when Ross MacMahon died. East Breifne’s location on the border between the Pale and Ulster and the strength of the O’Reillys, in 1599 they had an estimated force of 500 foot and 100 horse, meant that they posed a serious threat to the Pale. The Dublin government was keen to subdue that threat. Therefore, it thought it was best to implement their favoured tactic of divide and conquer so that East Breifne would ‘be weakened and made fitter to be overruled by the state whatsoever hereafter shoulde fall out.’⁹⁹ However Dublin Castle waited for instructions from London. In the meantime, Edmund sent an agent to London and Shane himself soon followed so he could defend his claim. Shane was in a better position because he was the eldest legitimate son and several government officials backed him. The Lord Justices, Adam Loftus and Henry Wallop, wrote to London and praised Shane because he was

⁹⁵Ibid, *Fiants, Ire., Eliz.* No.1047,1206

⁹⁶ Carney, James. *Poems on the O’Reillys*, pp.208-12

⁹⁷ The Lord Deputy to the Privy Council, 14th October 1596, Dublin (SP 63/194/no.15)

⁹⁸ Wallop to Sir Lucas Dillon, 22nd February 1583, Dublin (SP 63/99/no. 72)

⁹⁹ Lord Justices to Walsyngham, 25th March 1583, Dublin (SP 63/100/no.50), An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)

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‘addicted to civility and good order as fewe we knowe of his nacion’ and he ‘liveth of his own lands and industry after the English manner, speaketh the English tongue, maintains no thieves nor idle men about him’ and he and his followers had not harmed Her Majesty’s subjects. Edmund on the other hand was a bastard, ‘barbarous’, could not speak English, surrounded himself with thieves and idle men and his sons had done much harm in the Pale.¹⁰⁰ However, Shane was thought to be very strong due to his connections, through marriage and blood, in both Ulster and the Pale. Shane’s strength meant that London was worried about the consequences of him falling ‘into anie course of disobedience’ and so, they did not want to make him too strong. Their preferred strategy was a division with Shane being given preferential treatment due to his civility and previous loyalty. London would however leave it to the Dublin government to proceed how they saw fit.¹⁰¹

Shane refused to agree to a division both while in London and upon his returned to Ireland in August 1583. Without any chance of a division, the Dublin government decided to back Shane, the presumed safer choice and rightful heir under primogeniture, and they established him in East Breifne. Edmund was allowed to keep the lands and commodities that accompanied the position of *tánaiste* and was to receive a pension paid by Shane. Edmund agreed to the arrangement tentatively and said he would return home and ‘have some experience of his nephew’s usage of him’¹⁰² His nephew must not have treated him very well because by November the arrangement had broken down and the two competitors began recruiting men from outside their lordship. The government was forced to send 100 foot and 50 horse to assist Shane and a delegation was also sent to treat with Edmund. This force was enough to persuade Edmund to submit.¹⁰³ This did not end the dispute and in November 1584 Shane, Edmund and Philip went to Dublin to try and resolve the succession controversy. The new Lord Deputy, John Perrot, was able to negotiate a settlement and finally achieve the government’s goal of dividing East Breifne.¹⁰⁴ Shane must have realised that he could not overcome his uncle and brother so it was best to consent to a division and reach an accommodation with them. Edmund and Philip probably knew that without government assistance they could not become chieftain, so it was best to get what they could in a division of the lordship. Seven baronies were divided between

¹⁰⁰ Lords Justices to Walsyngham, 4th June 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.60), Wallop to Walsyngham, 4th June 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.64), Waterhous to Walsyngham, 4th June 1583, Dublin (SP 63/102/no.66), Sir N. Malbie to Burghley, 16th June 1583, Galway (SP 63/102/no.80)

¹⁰¹ Privy Council to the Lords Justices, 2nd July 1583 (SP 63/103/no.3)

¹⁰² Lord Justices to the Privy Council, 12th September 1583, Dublin (SP 63/104/no.69)

¹⁰³ Lords Justices to the Privy Council, 7th November 1583, Dublin (SP 63/105/no.58)

¹⁰⁴ Lord Deputy Perrot to Walsyngham, 16th November 1584, Dublin (SP 63/112/no.72)

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the O'Reillys. Shane was given four baronies, Edmund one, Philip one and the remaining barony was divided between other O'Reillys.¹⁰⁵

When war broke out the divided O'Reillys were not quick to join the Gaelic confederacy. In August 1594, East Breifne was described as being in 'good obedience' but 'greatly afflicted' by the Gaelic confederates.¹⁰⁶ A few months prior a letter from Shane to the government conveyed the perilous position of the O'Reillys. Shane complained about being surrounded by enemies. Maguire and O'Rourke lay with a great force to the northwest and all Tyrone's followers were to the northeast. These were all threatening to invade his country which was already almost completely destroyed.¹⁰⁷ No major invasion took place then, but it did in February 1595 when Cavan town was raided and all burned except two castles.¹⁰⁸ The O'Reillys could not withstand this pressure indefinitely and by the beginning of 1596, the crown began to lose control. Philip defected to the Gaelic confederacy in January and he quickly became a 'chief councillor' among them.¹⁰⁹ It was actually surprising that it took that long for Philip to join with the Gaelic confederates given he had a history of rebellious activity and good reason to resent the government. He was imprisoned by Perrot in 1585 and not released until 1592.¹¹⁰ Philip alleged that he had to pay a large sum to secure his freedom and that such extortion was a cause for his eventual rebelling.¹¹¹ Joining Tyrone also gave Philip the chance to depose his brother and establish himself as the O'Reilly. This was probably another motivation behind Philip's decision to join the Gaelic confederacy because as soon as he revolted it was reported that he hoped to command all East Breifne. Tyrone, according to a local clergyman, advised him to do so and to deal with his brother as he had dealt with Turlough Luineach, by forcing him into retirement.¹¹²

Shane and Edmund soon followed Philip's lead and joined the Gaelic confederacy. Philip was the *de facto* leader though as a parley Edmund had with Captains Willis and

¹⁰⁵ Cunningham, Bernadette. "The Anglicization of East Breifne: The O'Reilly's and the Emergence of County Cavan," in Raymond Gillespie (ed), *Cavan: Essays on the History of an Irish County*. Dublin: Irish Academic, 1995, p.66

¹⁰⁶ State of Ireland, 7th August 1594 (SP 63/175/no. 56 i)

¹⁰⁷ Sir John O'Reilly to the Lord Deputy 24th May 1594, Cavan (SP 63/175/no. 5 v)

¹⁰⁸ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 26th February 1595, Dublin (SP 63/178/no.54)

¹⁰⁹ *Carew Manuscript* Vol. 3 p.141, Letter from a man employed to discover the traitors to the Lord Deputy, March 1595 (SP 63/178/no.87)

¹¹⁰ Brady, Ciaran. "The End of the O'Reilly Lordship, 1584-1610," in David Edwards (ed), *Regions and Rulers in Ireland: 1100 – 1650*, Dublin: Four Courts, 2004, p.182, *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 1, pp.169,173.

¹¹¹ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3 pp.142-3, Answer of the Lord Deputy Russell to the Articles of 11 March, May 1596 (SP 63/189/no. 46 xii)

¹¹² Lord Deputy Russell to Burghley, 26th January 1596, Dublin (SP 63/186/no.23) Declaration of Cahil O'Gone, a clergyman of the Brenny, before the Bishop of Meath, 24th February 1596 (SP 63/186/no.86 xix)

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Flower shows. During the parley Edmund and many other Cavan men told the captains that they were ‘all upon Phillip’s word.’ Philip was with Tyrone at the time and they said that they would be at war or peace depending on Tyrone’s intent.¹¹³ Shane, Edmund and any others in Cavan who previously opposed Philip likely joined the Gaelic confederacy because they knew that it was pointless and dangerous to resist Philip and his new allies. However, resentment of the government appears to have also been a factor. Resentment had been building up for years following the introduction of sheriffs in 1584, first Henry Duke who was succeeded by Edward Herbert in 1589. Their actions alienated the local populace as they commandeered food, lodgings, goods, services and executed a number of O’Reillys over the years. One of these executions was seen as especially egregious and the *Annals of Loch Cé* bemoaned the killing of a Brian O’Reilly in 1589 as ‘treachery’ and ‘a prodigious calamity in respect of bounty and nobility.’ Crown sources on the other hand dismissed Brian as a notorious traitor with a £20 price on his head. Crown soldiers may have also contributed to the dislike of the government. In 1590 Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam cessed soldiers in Cavan and in 1594 soldiers had been sent to guard Cavan but the O’Reillys soon refused to maintain them which suggests that the soldiers were quite burdensome and unpopular.¹¹⁴ Edmund displayed this anger towards local government officials and soldiers at the parley with Willis and Flower when he threatened to ‘leave my curse with anie of my children that will ever suffer either solider or Englishman [to] come to within the Bryenie’.¹¹⁵ This feeling was not confined to Edmund as the rest of the O’Reillys were said to have sworn ‘to shake off[f] English lawes and keep owt English officers.’¹¹⁶

Cavan and the O’Reillys may have been part of the Gaelic confederacy by January 1596 but the divisions were still a problem. Shane may have joined with Tyrone but he was old and sickly. His eldest son, Maolmordha, was a different proposition and he thought that he was the rightful heir due to primogeniture, making him a rival of Philip and Edmund. He could potentially seek government assistance to secure his ‘rightful’

¹¹³ Captains Humphrey Willis and George Flower to the Lord Deputy, 25th January 1596 (SP 63/186/no.86 iii)

¹¹⁴ Brady, Ciaran. "The End of the O'Reilly Lordship, 1584-1610." p.183, Brady, Ciaran. "The O'Reillys of East Breifne and the Problem of 'Surrender and Regrant'." p.259-60, *Observations of matters seeming to be out of order in Ireland*, 3rd December (SP 63/196/no.2), *ALC*, Vol.2, p.503, Cunningham, Bernadette. "The Anglicization of East Breifne," p.67

Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 26th February 1595, Dublin (SP 63/178/no.54)

¹¹⁵ Captains Humphrey Willis and George Flower to the Lord Deputy, 25th January 1596 (SP 63/186/no.86 iii)

¹¹⁶ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 9th February 1596, Dublin (SP 63/186/no.51)

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inheritance when his father died and this was made more likely by the fact that Maolmordha was married to Caitlin Butler, a niece of the influential Earl of Ormond who was a staunch supporter of the government. Maolmordha had a good relationship with Ormond and met him in Kilkenny at the end of 1595. Ormond told Maolmordha that he should make himself as strong as he could but if all the O'Reillys were forced to join with Tyrone then he should do the same and he could get a pardon later. Thus, Maolmordha likely joined the Gaelic confederacy with the intent to defect and seek that pardon when the time was right and secure the O'Reilly lordship or at least his father's lands after he died. Therefore, Shane's death could possibly cause a lot of strife and this was highlighted in February 1595 when Shane was ill and it was thought that he would die. The government was warned by the Baron of Dunsany that Philip thought that he should possess Cavan but Edmund, because of his seniority, wanted 'no worse share than the best.' Shane's sons too had their sights on the O'Reilly lordship with Maolmordha using primogeniture to forward his claim. Consequently, when Shane died 'there will grow such trouble as an hundred thousand pounds will hardly appease'.¹¹⁷ Since the O'Reillys were now part of the Gaelic confederacy, it was Tyrone who would have deal with the dangerous aftermath of Shane's death when it occurred.

In south Armagh there was a branch of O'Neills was located in an area known as the Fews. This line would develop a rivalry with the O'Neills of Tyrone, initially fighting over the position of O'Neill chieftain. By the latter half of the 16th century the Fews O'Neills were no longer realistic competitors for the chieftainship and simply wished to be independent of the Tyrone O'Neills who forcefully tried to impose their suzerainty over the Fews. The Fews O'Neills' rivalry with the Tyrone O'Neills meant they were potential allies for the government whenever the Tyrone O'Neills proved to be rebellious and they did on occasions side with the crown. One of these occasions was during Shane O'Neill's rebellion when Hugh Mór O'Neill of the Fews defected to the government.¹¹⁸ When Turlough Luineach became chieftain he claimed the Fews and did occasionally exercise his right as an overlord. In 1580 for instance Turlough entered the Fews and 'taketh his urriaghés of all, which for fear they yield.'¹¹⁹ By the mid-1580s the Fews was recognised

¹¹⁷ Declaration of Cahil O'Gone, a clergyman of the Brenny, before the Bishop of Meath, 24th February 1596 (SP 63//no.86 xix), The Baron of Dunsany to Burghley, February 1595, (SP 63/178/no.65)

¹¹⁸ For a summary of the history of the O'Neills of the Fews see Ó Fiaich, Tomás, "The O'Neills of the Fews." *Seanchas Ard Mhacha* Vol. 7 No.1(1973), pp.1-64

¹¹⁹ Chancellor Gerrarde to Burghley, 14th September 1580, Dublin (SP 63/76/no.30)

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by the government as being under the Earl of Tyrone.¹²⁰ The chieftain of the Fews during this period was Turlough MacHenry O'Neill, Tyrone's half-brother.¹²¹ Turlough MacHenry would appear to have been quite loyal and dutiful to his half-brother. In 1588 he was part of a force sent to Cavan with the aim of bringing the O'Reillys under Tyrone's command. In 1590 Fenton stated that Turlough MacHenry was a dangerous man who was 'wholie devoted to thearle' and four years later Fenton said that Turlough was of those who were 'most deare and inward with the Erle'.¹²² Lord Deputy William Russell thought that Turlough MacHenry's son was as good a pledge for Tyrone as any, excluding Tyrone's own sons, which further suggests that Turlough MacHenry was viewed as being close and important to his half-brother.¹²³ When war broke out Turlough MacHenry was part of Tyrone's Gaelic confederacy and not long after Maguire rebelled, Turlough raided Cavan.¹²⁴ While Turlough was part of the Gaelic confederacy and seen as very committed to Tyrone, there were previously signs of potential tension between the half-brothers. In 1586 it was reported that Turlough MacHenry was in 'noe way affected to the Earle, if hee were not overruled by his strength and authority.' In that same year Henry Bagenal stated that the chieftains of Armagh wanted to be independent of Tyrone and depend on the Queen instead.¹²⁵ Furthermore in February 1590 it was reported that Turlough MacHenry told his followers not to sow their corn because of 'sum pryvat quarrell between him and his brother Therle.'¹²⁶ It seems then that Turlough MacHenry was not completely happy being under Tyrone and did harbour some aspirations of being independent, making him a potential defector and ally of the crown.

In Armagh there was also a territory known as Orior which was under the control of the O'Hanlons. Like the Fews, Orior was acknowledged as being under Tyrone's authority by the government in the mid-1580s.¹²⁷ The chieftain at this time was Eochaidh O'Hanlon and he was married to Tyrone's sister.¹²⁸ There seems to have been little love

¹²⁰ Prendergast, John, and David B. Quinn, eds. "Calendar of the Irish Council Book, 1581-1586." p.160

¹²¹ Ó Fiaich, Tomás. "The O'Neills of the Fews." p.25

¹²² Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy, 9th January 1588, Castle Jordan (SP 63/133/no. 10), Notes of point wherein the Earl of Tirone is to be restrained, drawn out by Sir G. Fenton, May 1590 (SP 63/152/no.41 i), Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 2nd August 1594, (SP 63/175/no.36)

¹²³ Lord Deputy to [Unknown], April 1594 (SP 63/174/no.8)

¹²⁴ Lord Deputy to Burghley 29th May 1593, Kilmainham (SP 63/169/no.50), Weston to John Puckering, 9th March 1594 (SP 63/173/no.81)

¹²⁵ Hore, Herbert. "Marshal Bagenal's Description of Ulster, Anno 1586" pp.148, The description of the Realm of Ireland, 1597 (SP 63/201/no.157) While this document is listed as being written in 1597, the majority of it was written in about 1586 with some additional notes from years up to 1597.

¹²⁶ Lawrence Taffe to Sir J. Perrot, 24th February 1590, Ardee (SP 63/150/no.71),

¹²⁷ Prendergast, John, and David B. Quinn, eds. "Calendar of the Irish Council Book, 1581-1586." p.160

¹²⁸ Plot for the province of Ulster to be reduced, 19th June 1589, (SP 63/145/no.16)

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between the brothers-in-law and so O'Hanlon was eager to be free from Tyrone. In 1587 O'Hanlon achieved this aim as he surrendered his land and was exempted from Tyrone's command.¹²⁹ This loss greatly perturbed Tyrone as he not only lost control over O'Hanlon but also lost ground to his rivals, the Bagenals of Newry. They had settled in Ulster in the early 1550s when Nicholas Bagenal was granted lands in and around Newry. They were an ambitious and influential family. Nicholas was made Marshal of the Army in 1566, appointed chief commissioner of Ulster in 1577 which was rather a hollow title but did come with a stipend of £100 and he had a seat on the council at Dublin. Henry succeeded his father as Marshal and took over his seat at council in 1590 and the next year he was appointed to his father's old position of chief commissioner. The Bagenals had the same goal as Tyrone, to become the leading magnate in the north and thus the two clashed as each tried to increase their influence in the province at the expense of the other. Moreover, their rivalry intensified and became even more personal after the recently widowed Tyrone, hoping to neutralise the Bagenals, married Henry's sister Mabel without his consent in 1591.¹³⁰

The proximity of Orior to both Tyrone at Dungannon and the Bagenals at Newry meant that O'Hanlon got caught up in the Tyrone-Bagenal rivalry, with both factions vying with each other for influence in Orior.¹³¹ The freeing of O'Hanlon from Tyrone in 1587 enabled the Bagenals to increase their influence in Orior. In 1589 O'Hanlon was part of Henry Bagenal's force sent to Monaghan to deal with Ross MacMahon. Ross' actions at this time were being directed by Tyrone and so Bagenal's invasion of Monaghan can be seen as an extension of the Tyrone-Bagenal rivalry. By assisting Bagenal against MacMahon, Tyrone's proxy, O'Hanlon displayed that his allegiance lay with Bagenal and the government.¹³² This allegiance meant that following the outbreak of hostilities, O'Hanlon refrained from joining the Gaelic confederacy and Captain Thomas Lee would remark on how O'Hanlon was one of the few friends that the Queen had left in Ulster.¹³³ However in March 1594 it was reported that O'Hanlon had combined with Tyrone and later it was said that O'Hanlon gave Tyrone a 'buying' which was a payment to secure the

¹²⁹ *The Irish Fiants*, Vol.3 pp.22,37, Hugh, Earl of Tirone, to Walsingham, 10th December 1587, Dundalk (SP 63/132/no.31)

¹³⁰ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, pp.34,79

¹³¹ Heffernan, David, *'Reform' Treatises*, p.269,

¹³² Plot by Sir Edward Waterhous, 7th April 1587, Dublin (SP 63/129/no.3) Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.61, see footnotes

¹³³ Lee, Thomas, "A Brief Declaration of the Government of Ireland," in John Lodge *Desiderata curiosa Hibernica*, Vol.1, Dublin, 1772, pp.140-1

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protection and assistance of the person to whom it was made. O'Hanlon was forced to combine with the confederates because of their growing strength and his defencelessness. Bagenal stressed this when commenting on O'Hanlon's allying with Tyrone. He stated that O'Hanlon did not join Tyrone because of 'anie love' for him but because he saw 'no forces to make defence sent hither' and when forces are sent Bagenal was sure that O'Hanlon 'will soon revoke that combynacion.'¹³⁴ In August 1594 the government was of a similar view as they were sure that while O'Hanlon gave Tyrone a buying he was still steadfast to the Queen.¹³⁵ Clearly O'Hanlon was only loosely associated with the Gaelic confederacy and ready to end that loose association as soon as government troops arrived on the ground.

Just east of O'Hanlon there was the Magennis territory of Iveagh which was located in south Down. Hugh Magennis was chieftain for much of the latter half of the sixteenth century and he spent much of his career trying to become independent of the O'Neills. During the enterprise of Ulster, Magennis appealed to Essex for a surrender and regrant of his lordship so he could be free from Turlough Luineach and his impositions.¹³⁶ Magennis would also claim that if given letters patent for his land, he would not join with Turlough and others opposing the enterprise, even if all he had left was his 'boy and my horse, for her Majesty will I serve all the days of my lif.'¹³⁷ No surrender and regrant of Iveagh was forthcoming at this point though. Over the years Magennis would suffer for rejecting Turlough as his overlord because Turlough would respond with violence. One of Turlough Luineach's most devastating raids of Iveagh occurred in 1580 when he seized 400 cattle, 60 mares, 200 swine and 300 sheep. Turlough also killed 16 men and sent labourers to cut all Magennis' corn. Not long after this attack, Magennis reportedly joined Turlough and subsequent attacks forced Magennis to sporadically yield to Turlough's authority.¹³⁸ In 1583 Magennis finally surrendered his lordship and acquired letters patent so, officially at least, he was free from O'Neill overlordship.

Unfortunately for Magennis, Tyrone now was violently attempting to bring Iveagh under his sway. In July 1586 Magennis went to Dublin and complained that since he obtained his letters patent he had received many injuries especially recently as Tyrone's

¹³⁴ Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, 20th March 1594, Newry (SP 63/173/no. 98 i), Sir H. Bagenall to [Unknown], 30th May 1594, Newry (SP 63/175/no.5 xii), Nicholls, K. W. *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, pp.46-7

¹³⁵ *Carew Manuscript* Vol.3 p.93

¹³⁶ Answer of Essex to the doubts expressed about his plan for Ulster (B.M., Add. ms 48015, Yelverton mss, Vol. 16),

¹³⁷ Hugh Magennis to Walter Devereux, earl of Essex, 12th December 1573, Rathfriland (SP 63/43/no.12)

¹³⁸ Hugh Magennis to Lord Deputy Grey, 29th August 1580, Narrow Water (SP 63/75/no.75), Treasurer Wallop to Walsyngham, 9th September 1580, Dublin (SP 63/76/no.21)

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brethren and followers 'have murdered, wounded and in warlik maner in the night burned and praied upon divers [of] his [i.e. Magennis] best followers and servants and spoiled one Iland and a town of his.'¹³⁹ Tyrone continued to coerce Magennis and by the end of 1586 Magennis was said to have succumbed and briefly became Tyrone's man.¹⁴⁰ Tyrone's actions in Iveagh were, as in Orior, part of the Bagenal-Tyrone rivalry as both sought to bring Iveagh under their influence at the expense of their rival.¹⁴¹ The Bagenals had more clout in Iveagh as Magennis had become quite friendly and reliant on them. Nicholas Bagenal helped Magennis acquire his letters patent by petitioning on his behalf and Magennis would describe Henry as his 'good frend.'¹⁴² Magennis would further display where his loyalties lay in 1589 when he, like O'Hanlon, accompanied Henry Bagenal on his campaign against Ross MacMahon. Additionally, Magennis was praised for being 'civil' and anglicised. Henry Bagenal commended Magennis for living 'cyvillie and English-like in his house and every festivall daie weareth the Englishe garments.' Turlough Luineach was also alleged to have pejoratively referred to Magennis as being 'more than half-English.'¹⁴³

When the Nine Years' War began Magennis's trajectory was much like O'Hanlon's. His good relations with the Bagenals and his dislike of O'Neill overlordship meant that he resisted joining the Gaelic confederacy and Thomas Lee said that alongside O'Hanlon, Magennis was one of the few friends that the Queen had in Ulster. Magennis could not hold out for long though and he allied with Tyrone at the same time as O'Hanlon and for the same reason.¹⁴⁴ This was a prudent move given the fate of Magennis' neighbour to the north, Ever MacRory Magennis of Kilwarlin. In March 1594 Tyrone demanded that Ever yield to his authority. Ever refused and Tyrone responded by sending his trusty nephew, Brian MacArt O'Neill, to Kilwarlin. Brian raided and pillaged Kilwarlin and threatened Ever, who continued to refuse to serve Tyrone. By August 1594 Ever had been forced to flee to Dublin and appeal for help, using Henry Bagenal to intercede on his behalf.

¹³⁹ Mr. Solicitor Roger Wilbraham to Burghley, 9th July 1586, (SP 63/125/no.11), *The Irish Fiants*, Vol. 2, pp.590, 607

¹⁴⁰ Hore, Herbert. "Marshal Bagenal's Description of Ulster, Anno 1586", pp. 159-60, Lord Chancellor Loftus, Sir Nicholas Bagenall, and Sir Richard Byngam, to Burghley, 28th January 1587, Dublin (SP 63/no.20)

¹⁴¹ Heffernan, David, *'Reform' Treatises*, p.269

¹⁴² Sir Hugh Magneisse [Magennis] to the Privy Council, 13th May 1586, Narrow Water (SP 63/124/no.17)

¹⁴³ Hore, Herbert. "Marshal Bagenal's Description of Ulster, Anno 1586", p.152, *The Walsingham Letter-book or Register of Ireland, May 1578 to December 1579*. James Hogan, and N. McNeill O'Farrell (eds), Dublin, Stationery Office, 1959, p.189

¹⁴⁴ Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, 20th March 1594, Newry (SP 63/173/no. 98 i), Lee, Thomas, "A Brief Declaration of the Government of Ireland.", pp.140-1

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Ever received little help and was killed by Brian MacArt upon his return to Ulster.¹⁴⁵ By joining with Tyrone and giving him a buying, Hugh Magennis avoided the fate of Ever but his association with Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy remained tenuous.¹⁴⁶ Magennis' son, Art Rua, however married one of Tyrone's daughters and Bagenal thought that Art had great 'affection to his trayterous father en law' and obeyed him rather than his father.¹⁴⁷

Modern north Co. Down and south Co. Antrim was known as Clandeboye and at one time the Clandeboye O'Neills contended with the Tyrone O'Neills over hegemony of Ulster but by the sixteenth century its fortunes had declined and the lordship split into two, North and South Clandeboye, with both now simply wanting to remain independent of the Tyrone O'Neills.¹⁴⁸ In North Clandeboye, located in south Antrim, Brian MacPhelim O'Neill became chieftain in about 1556 and he continued the traditional opposition to the Tyrone O'Neills. During Shane O'Neill's rebellion he sided with the government and they lauded him as a man that 'hath longest and moost constantlie stand on your Majesty's parte like a trew subiect.'¹⁴⁹ When Turlough Luineach became chieftain, Brian persisted in his opposition to the Tyrone O'Neills along with his father-in-law, Brian Carrach O'Neill.¹⁵⁰ The enterprise of Ulster changed Brian MacPhelim's attitude towards Turlough. Clandeboye and the Ards peninsula were granted to a Thomas Smith and were to be colonised as part of the enterprise. Needless to say, Brian was not happy with his land being given away to would-be colonisers and thus he was pushed towards the then militant and anti-government Turlough, with whose help Brian successfully prevented the establishment of a new colony.¹⁵¹ In 1574 Brian submitted and met the Earl of Essex, who replaced Smith as the driving force behind the enterprise, at Belfast in October. Essex massacred 200 of Brian's followers and apprehended Brian and his wife. Brian would later be executed and his brother, Hugh MacPheilm, replaced him as chieftain.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ For more on the murder of Ever see Morgan, Hiram. "Slán Dé Fút Hoíche: Hugh O'Neill's Murders," pp.113-4

¹⁴⁶ *Carew Manuscript* Vol.3 p.93, Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, 20th March 1594, Newry (SP 63/173/no.98 i)

¹⁴⁷ Marshal Bagenall to Burghley, 4th March 1595, Newry (SP 63/178/no.70)

¹⁴⁸ Nicholls, K. W. *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, pp.158-61, *New History of Ireland*. Vol.3, pp.17-8

¹⁴⁹ Lords Justice Weston and Fitzwilliam and Council to Queen Elizabeth, 30th October 1567, Dublin (SP 63/22/no.16)

¹⁵⁰ Turlough Luineach O'Neill to Captains Piers and Malby, 20th January 1568, Benburb (SP 63/23/no. 32ii), Captains Piers and Malby to Lords Justice Fitzwilliam and Weston, 9th March 1568, Carrickfergus (SP 63/23/no.74 v)

¹⁵¹ Morgan, Hiram. "The Colonial Venture of Sir Thomas Smith in Ulster, 1571-1575.", p. 262-3, 265, 271-2, Morton, R.C, "The Enterprise of Ulster." *History Today* Vol. 17 No.2 (1967): 114-21

¹⁵² Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 14th November 1574 (SP 63/48/no. 52iii), Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to the Privy Council, 24th November 1574, Dublin (SP 63/48/no.57)

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After Hugh died in 1583 a succession dispute ensued. There were three competitors for North Clondeboye. One of the competitors was Con MacNeill Óg, chieftain of South Clondeboye and he wished to reunite the two Clondeboye lordships. Dublin Castle would never permit the reunification of Clondeboye as it went against their policy of keeping the Gaelic Irish weak and divided. Con's claim was consequently dismissed. The other two contenders were Brian MacPhelim's son Shane and Hugh MacPhelim's son Hugh Óg. Shane MacBrian was seen by the Dublin government as the 'best disposed to civility and good order,' while Hugh Óg was young, wilful and not to be trusted. Therefore, the government was willing to ignore primogeniture and back Shane MacBrian. Shane was granted North Clondeboye with a portion reserved for Hugh Óg.¹⁵³ This did not come close to resolving the succession dispute and by 1586 there had been 'greate slaughter on bothe partes often commytted.'¹⁵⁴

By 1589 the situation had not improved and North Clondeboye was said to have been nearly depopulated as a result of the succession dispute between Shane and Hugh MacPhelim's sons, now headed by Niall MacHugh O'Neill. North Clondeboye was another battleground in the Tyrone-Bagenal rivalry. Tyrone backed Niall MacHugh who was said to 'dependeth greatlie upon on the Earl of Tyrone' and 'verie weeke of himself if he were not fostered by those of Tyrone.'¹⁵⁵ Shane would in turn rely on the government and Henry Bagenal. In July 1591 for instance, Niall MacHugh attempted to banish Shane from North Clondeboye but Bagenal 'settled Shane in better strength in his country than before he was' and even returned to Shane the prey that had been taken from him.¹⁵⁶ When the Nine Years' War commenced Niall MacHugh was still dependent on Tyrone and he cut ties with the government garrison at Carrickfergus in July 1593 after advice from Tyrone and the promise of help from Brian MacArt and the O'Hagans. At the beginning of 1594, Niall reportedly accompanied Brian MacArt when he raided Bagenal's lands, took Bagenal's stud and then threatened the town of Carrickfergus.¹⁵⁷ Shane MacBrian remained loyal to the government but Tyrone was making moves to draw him into the Gaelic confederacy. In March 1594 Tyrone sent one of the O'Hagans to Belfast to confer

¹⁵³ Lord Justices to the Privy Council, 29th April 1583, (SP 63/101/no. 43), Lords Justices to the Privy Council, 23rd August 1583, Dublin (SP 63/104/no.28), *The Irish Fiants*, Vol. 2, p.588

¹⁵⁴ Hore, Herbert. "Marshal Bagenal's Description of Ulster, Anno 1586" p.154

¹⁵⁵ Reservations to be remembered in dividing North Clondeboy, January 1589, (SP 63/140/no.61), Mr. Solicitor Wilbraham to Burghley, 7th September 1593, Dublin (SP 63/171/no.30)

¹⁵⁶ *Carew Manuscript* Vol.3, p.57

¹⁵⁷ Capt. Charles Eggarton to the Lord Deputy, 8th July 1593, Knockfergus (SP 63/170/no.41 iv), Charles Eggarton, Constable of Knockfergus, to the Lord Deputy, 6th March 1594, Knockfergus (SP 63//no.)

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with Shane. O'Hagan told Shane that he must join Tyrone and not to trust any Englishman, and reminded him of how his father was betrayed by Essex. He claimed that the English had planned to do the same to Tyrone. If Shane joined Tyrone, O'Hagan said that Tyrone would make him as great a lord over Clandeboye as his father had been. Shane responded by conceding that if Tyrone had all Ulster under him then he 'must be under him as well as the rest, or ells must leave the Northe.'¹⁵⁸ Shane clearly knew if he refused Tyrone's overtures then there would be dire consequences. By May the reluctant Shane took a pragmatic approach and yielded to Tyrone's authority. He gave Tyrone pledges and took a prey from Carrickfergus.¹⁵⁹ Tyrone may have brought North Clandeboye under his sphere of influence but there was still the problem of the major rift in the lordship. The government had been trying to mend the rift for about a decade but failed. Now Tyrone had the difficult task of keeping the two factions content. Making promises to one, like his vow to make Shane a great lord, could disaffect the other and push them towards the government. Moreover, Tyrone had to worry about another reluctant Gaelic confederate in form of Shane MacBrian, who was inclined to side with the government when given an opportunity and was only part of the confederacy because of pragmatism.

South Clandeboye, located in modern day north Co. Down, was as divided as its northern equivalent. In 1590 Con MacNeill Óg died and he was replaced by his nephew Niall MacBrian Faghartach O'Neill. Niall MacBrian's chieftainship was challenged by his first cousin Eoghan MacHugh O'Neill.¹⁶⁰ When the Nine Years' War began Eoghan MacHugh turned to Tyrone for help overthrowing his rival. In May 1593 Tyrone sent Brian MacArt, and 500 men to assist Eoghan either kill or drive Niall out of Clandeboye. Eoghan might have succeeded if Niall had not been reinforced by the government's garrison at Carrickfergus.¹⁶¹ Niall did not receive much of a reprieve as Eoghan and his confederate allies were unrelenting in their attacks. In March 1594 James MacSorley Buí MacDonnell took 200 cows from Niall. James MacSorley was one of the Scottish MacDonnells who began settling in the Glens in northeast Antrim in the fifteenth century. In the latter half of the sixteenth the Irish branch had become its own entity under James' father, Sorley Buí. James MacSorley's actions were being directed by Tyrone and it was reported that James

¹⁵⁸ Examination of Shane M'Brian, 14th March 1594 (SP 63/173/no.92 v)

¹⁵⁹ Capt. Robert Bethell to Sir Henry Bagenall, 27th April 1594, Castlereagh (SP 63/174/no.37 i), Ever M'Rorie, Captain of Kyllwarlyne, to the Lord Deputy, 29th April 1594, Castletown (SP 63/174/no.37 iv)

¹⁶⁰ For the family tree of the O'Neills of South Clandeboye see *A New History of Ireland*, Vol.9, p.144

¹⁶¹ Captain Charles Eggarton and John Dalway to the Lord Deputy, 1st June 1593, camp at Comber (SP 63/170/no.5 v), Neale M'Brian Fearto O'Neill to the Lord Deputy, 1st June 1593, camp at Comber (SP 63/170/no.5 vi)

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did nothing unless instructed to by Tyrone.¹⁶² Niall MacBrián's position worsened as his neighbours began to drift towards the Gaelic confederacy and by April 1594, Niall was the only loyal chieftain in east Ulster, leaving him dangerously isolated. Bagenal was confident though that Niall would remain loyal if supported by the government, but he did not receive that support.¹⁶³ By June all his cattle were gone and his tenants fled. He was so poor that he could no longer maintain fifty soldiers under a Captain Bethell. He was given an ultimatum by Tyrone, become his man or be replaced by Eoghan MacHugh. Niall begged the government for assistance, saying that he would never forsake the Queen but if not given help then he was sure that he and his followers would be destroyed.¹⁶⁴ Again adequate support was not forthcoming and by the winter of 1594 Niall MacBrián had been ousted and Tyrone installed Eoghan MacHugh in his place. The landless and utterly desperate Niall had little option but to submit to Tyrone. He agreed to obey Tyrone, maintain his *bonnachts*, send him his rising out and deliver a pledge. In return Niall was reinstated as chieftain of South Clondeboye by the Gaelic confederates in November 1594. The government's limited military presence in Ulster had cost them another ally and their inability to provide assistance shows that while the Tudor government's resources were vast, they were not unlimited. In recompense for losing South Clondeboye, Eoghan MacHugh was given the Dufferin which was just south of South Clondeboye and had been under Randal Bereton until he lost control of the territory due to the rebellion.¹⁶⁵ Tyrone faced the same problem in South Clondeboye, as he did in the North. In Niall MacBrián Tyrone had a reluctant ally who leaned heavily towards the government and so was liable to defect. Tyrone also had to worry about keeping the competitor who lost out satisfied as well. Tyrone hoped that the Dufferin would be enough to appease Eoghan but the simple reality was that Eoghan allied with Tyrone to obtain South Clondeboye and not the smaller Dufferin. If he could no longer achieve his goal by siding with Tyrone, then the only other option for him was to defect to the government if they offered him the lordship. Eoghan was therefore susceptible to defect to the government. Keeping South Clondeboye loyal and firmly under his control was another tricky assignment for Tyrone.

¹⁶² Charles Eggerton, Constable of Knockfergus, to the Lord Deputy, 6th March 1594, Knockfergus (SP 63/173/no.76), Quinn, D.B and K.W. Nicholls, 'Ireland in 1534' in *A New History of Ireland*. Vol. 3, p.17, Hill, James Michael, "The Rift within Clan Ian Mor: The Antrim and Dunyveg MacDonnells, 1590- 1603", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1993), pp. 865-879

¹⁶³ Sir H. Bagenal to the Lord Deputy, 21st April 1594, (SP 63/174/no.18 ix)

¹⁶⁴ Brian Fertaghe O'Neill to the Lord Deputy, 4th June 1594, Castlereagh (SP63/175/no.5xix)

¹⁶⁵ Randall Brereton to Marshal Bagenal, 24th November 1594 (SP 63/177/no.30 vii), *Carew Manuscript* Vol.3 p.93

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Hugh Rua O'Donnell also had to ensure the loyalty of subordinate *uirríthe* and freeholders in Tyrconnell. The O'Gallaghers were mostly based in south Tyrconnell with Ballyshannon described as their 'chief house' but there also appears to be a branch of O'Gallaghers in Cinél Móen, which was the territory surrounding Lifford. The O'Gallaghers were traditionally one of the most important and influential clans under the O'Donnells and given the position of marshal of O'Donnell's forces.¹⁶⁶ Owen MacToole O'Gallagher was the chieftain of the clan during Hugh MacManus's reign and he was one of Hugh MacManus' chief counsellors. He was not only closely tied to Hugh MacManus but also to his wife and children. For instance, in 1588, Fitzwilliam described O'Gallagher as a 'great favourer of the Scottish women, O'Donnell's wife...and her children.' He was also closely linked to the Earl of Tyrone as his wife was Tyrone's widowed mother. O'Gallagher was imprisoned by Fitzwilliam following a 1588 expedition to Tyrconnell in the aftermath of the Spanish Armada. Fitzwilliam justified the imprisoning of O'Gallagher by claiming that he was given as a pledge by O'Donnell and was collateral for the payment of rent that O'Donnell owed the government. However other sources, such as Fynes Moryson, claimed that Fitzwilliam imprisoned O'Gallagher because he failed to hand over Spanish treasure from the Armada thought to be in his possession. O'Gallagher was not released until after Fitzwilliam was replaced as Lord Deputy in 1594 and he would die the following year.¹⁶⁷ It is not mentioned who succeeded him but McGettigan suggests that Eoghan MacShane O'Gallagher replaced him and he, like his predecessor, was closely tied to Hugh MacManus' branch of the O'Donnells. This is evident from his appearance in Iníon Dubh's 1586 pardon and in 1594 Hugh Rua stated that he was one of his best horsemen. Owen MacShane would support Hugh Rua throughout the Nine Years' War.¹⁶⁸ Although, like all clans, the O'Gallaghers were not completely united and according to Ó Cléirigh a number of them boycotted Hugh Rua's inauguration 'through spite and malice.' These O'Gallaghers were aligned to Hugh MacCalvach O'Donnell and resented his killing at the hands of Hugh Rua's mother.¹⁶⁹

Tadhg Óg O'Boyle, whose chief stronghold was Ballyboyle located two miles west of Donegal town, sided with Donal O'Donnell when he attempted to depose Hugh Rua's

¹⁶⁶ McGettigan, Darren. *Red Hugh O'Donnell* pp.23-4, Simms, Katharine. *From Kings to Warlords*, p.95, Morgan, Hiram. *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.118

¹⁶⁷ Lord Deputy to the Privy Council. 31st December 1588, Dublin (SP 63/139/no.25), Moryson, Fynes. *An Itinerary*, pp.180-2

¹⁶⁸ McGettigan, Darren. *Red Hugh O'Donnell* pp.23-4, *The Irish Fiants*, Vol.2, p.748

¹⁶⁹ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.41, *AFM*, pp.1928-9 footnote.

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father. After Donal's death, O'Boyle must have reconciled with Hugh MacManus and his line because he supported Hugh Rua's inauguration as chieftain and was part of his besieging force at Enniskillen in the summer of 1594, which marked O'Donnell's first open act of rebellion.¹⁷⁰ In Hugh Rua's time the chieftain of the MacSweeneys of Fanad was Donal MacSweeney, whose main stronghold was Rathmullan. The MacSweeneys of Doe were an offshoot of the Fanad MacSweeneys and they occupied the territory west of Fanad. Their chieftain was Eoghan Óg MacSweeney who had been a foster father of Hugh Rua. There was a third branch of MacSweeneys, the MacSweeneys of Banagh. They were located in the south of Tyrconnell, around Killybegs. Donough MacSweeney became chieftain of his branch in 1588, after he killed the incumbent and he, like O'Boyle, sided with Donal O'Donnell in his bid to take over Tyrconnell. Following Donal's demise Donough would support Hugh Rua's succession along with the other two MacSweeney chieftains and their support for the young O'Donnell chieftain continued as all three were part of his besieging force at Enniskillen.¹⁷¹

The O'Dohertys of Inishowen were one of the O'Donnells' most important *uirríthe* and Hugh MacManus even claimed that 'the revenue of Odokortie was more to me than all the rest of Tirconnell.'¹⁷² While Hugh MacManus was likely overstating the case, the importance he placed on Inishowen and the O'Dohertys was not misguided. O'Doherty's military strength and contributions to O'Donnell's forces convey this importance. A 1599 estimation of O'Doherty's forces stated that he could field 300 foot and 40 horse and this constituted nearly a fifth of O'Donnell's foot and 14 percent of his horse.¹⁷³ Furthermore his country was said to be able to support an additional two hundred *bonnachts*.¹⁷⁴ The O'Dohertys had the misfortune of being located beside two more powerful and ambitious rival clans, the O'Neills and O'Donnells, both of whom aspired to overlordship of the valuable Inishowen. This put O'Doherty in an undesirable position of being forced to contribute rents and services to one or both of them. Henry Bagenal noted this perilous position and stated that historically 'Odoghertie who beinge not of power able to defend him selfe, is forced to contribute both to Oneyle and Odonnell, and (*alterius vicibus*) to

¹⁷⁰ Ibid p.37-9, Advertisements of Maguire's forces and others. 19th July 1594 (SP 63/175/no.35 vi) *AFM*, pp.1889-91, McGettigan, Darren. *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, p.29

¹⁷¹ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.37-9, *AFM*, pp.1865-7, 1889-91, McGettigan, Darren. *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, p.27-8 Advertisements of Maguire's forces and others. 19th July 1594 (SP 63/175/no.35 vi)

¹⁷² O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy, 1579 (SP 63/66/ no.50 ii)

¹⁷³ An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)

¹⁷⁴ Description of Lough Foyle and the adjoining country, 19th December 1600, (SP 63/207 pt 6/no.85)

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serve them bothe.¹⁷⁵ However, over the sixteenth century the O'Donnells' influence in Inishowen grew at the expense of the O'Neills. O'Donnell claims to Inishowen were recognised by the crown in 1543 when it was agreed that 'O'Donnell shall enjoy that dominion.' O'Neill was granted an annual rent of 60 cows out of Inishowen in recompense.¹⁷⁶ Forty years later the overlordship of Inishowen was once again in dispute and Lord Deputy Perrot was forced to intervene. Perrot and his commissioners concluded that the agreement forty years earlier was valid and the terms should continue to be observed.¹⁷⁷

While the O'Donnells' overlordship of Inishowen was confirmed in 1584, the chieftain of the O'Dohertys, Sean O'Doherty, was not pleased with his status as an *uirrí* of the O'Donnells. A sign of this discontent can be seen in 1586 when Hugh MacManus raided Inishowen, likely a response to O'Doherty's recalcitrance and unduly close reliance on the crown.¹⁷⁸ Perrot hinted at this the following year when he asked the Queen to show favour to O'Doherty, who had served her well and had been beaten down because of it.¹⁷⁹ In 1588, O'Doherty further displayed his desire to free himself from O'Donnell and rely on the government instead when he availed of a surrender and regrant arrangement, which abolished his Gaelic title and Gaelic succession.¹⁸⁰ O'Doherty's relationship with Perrot's successor, Fitzwilliam, got off to a poor start. O'Doherty was imprisoned alongside O'Gallagher as a supposed pledge for O'Donnell. Unlike O'Gallagher, O'Doherty was released not long after and it was alleged that he secured his release by bribing Fitzwilliam.¹⁸¹ There appears to have been a reconciliation with Hugh MacManus because O'Doherty helped Iníon Dubh defeat Donal O'Donnell in 1590. When Hugh Rua came to power in 1592, O'Doherty reverted to hostility and did not attend Hugh Rua's inauguration ceremony.¹⁸² This opposition to the O'Donnells may have stemmed from the usual wish of an *uirrí* to be free from burdensome exactions and both Henry Bagenal and Miler Magrath claimed that O'Doherty would adhere to the government in order to free himself

¹⁷⁵ Hore, Herbet, "Marshal Bagenal's Description of Ulster, Anno 1586." p.148

¹⁷⁶ *AFM*, pp.1317, 1339, *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 1 pp.205-7

¹⁷⁷ Prendergast, John, and David B. Quinn (eds), "Calendar of the Irish Council Book, 1581-1586," pp.154-56

¹⁷⁸ The Chancellor Archbishop to Burghley, 12th May 1586 Dublin (SP 63/124/no.14)

¹⁷⁹ *Salisbury Manuscript* Vol. 3 pp.285-6

¹⁸⁰ *The Irish Fiants*, Vol. 3, pp. 56, 58

¹⁸¹ Lord Deputy to the Privy Council. 31st December 1588, Dublin (SP 63/139/no.25), Moryson, Fynes. *An Itinerary*, London, 1617, Vol. 2, pp.180-2

¹⁸² *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.41, *AFM*, pp.1889-91

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from the ‘intolerable burthen’ imposed on him.¹⁸³ O’Donnell chieftains would not entertain the thought of allowing O’Doherty to live independently and in a parley with government officials in 1596, Hugh Rua O’Donnell displayed this uncompromising attitude. In the parley, government officials demanded that O’Doherty be allowed to enjoy his lands according to his letters patent but O’Donnell rebuffed them and avowed that O’Doherty ‘hath no lands but what O’Donnell doth give him in Tireconnell, neither had his predecessors any land there but such as held of O’Donnell’s ancestors.’¹⁸⁴ O’Donnell, shortly after his inauguration, looked to reassert control over his wayward *uirrí* and did so ‘by the point and edge of the sword.’ According to Ó Cléirigh during a parley O’Donnell seized O’Doherty and imprisoned him. O’Donnell refused to release him until he submitted and gave pledges, which O’Doherty eventually did.¹⁸⁵

Government pressure may also have played a part in Hugh Rua’s release of O’Doherty because when he submitted to the Lord Deputy at Dundalk in August 1592, he was ordered to release O’Doherty.¹⁸⁶ O’Donnell imprisoned O’Doherty for a second time in February 1594 and released him over a year later in March 1595. One intelligence report stated that O’Doherty was imprisoned by O’Donnell, who was acting on Tyrone’s advice, because he was too loyal to the crown and it was believed that he supplied the crown garrison at Enniskillen with provisions. Upon his release O’Doherty himself informed a Captain Thornton that O’Donnell imprisoned him because he intercepted letters that O’Doherty had written to the Lord Deputy.¹⁸⁷ It was clear that O’Doherty’s fidelity to the Gaelic confederacy was fleeting and he made this known during his meeting with Captain Thornton. O’Doherty rejected Thornton’s offer to meet with the Lord Deputy because he was sworn to O’Donnell, who now had his son as a pledge, and thus could not attend the meeting without O’Donnell’s consent. However, if the government sent a force to his country, O’Doherty said that he ‘would with all his followers yeeld to Her Majesty.’¹⁸⁸ Clearly O’Doherty’s dislike of O’Donnell overlordship remained but without the military

¹⁸³ The state of Ireland, May 30th 1592 (SP 63/164/ no.47), Sir Henry Bagenall to Burghley, 20th February 1592, Newry (SP 63/163/no.29)

¹⁸⁴ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol. 3 pp. 161-2

¹⁸⁵ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.55-7

¹⁸⁶ Articles ministered to Hugh Roe O’Donnell upon his oath, 2nd August 1592, Dundalk (SP 63/166/no.44 ii)

¹⁸⁷ Declaration by Darby Newman of speeches used by the Earl of Tirone. 19th February 1594, Newry (SP 63/173/no.64 iv), Note of intelligences received out of the North, 20th May 1594 (SP 63/174/no.55), Capt. Thornton to the Lord Deputy, 17th July 1595, Carrickfergus (SP 63/181/no.37), [Unknown] to the Lord Deputy. 31st March 1595 (SP 63/178/no.133)

¹⁸⁸ Capt. Thornton to the Lord Deputy. 17th July 1595, Carrickfergus (SP 63/181/no.37)

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support from the government he desired, O'Doherty had to begrudgingly be under Hugh Rua and part of the Gaelic confederacy.

In August 1594 Henry Bagenal, when discussing the situation in Ulster, lamented that the many 'factions among themselves' were 'suppressed' by Tyrone.¹⁸⁹ Tyrone's strength allowed him to temporarily suppress the fighting among rivals, but the factions remained. The crown government could later revive the conflict between factions when in a stronger position and there were plenty factions to exploit. The Maguires were split between Hugh and Conor Rua. Conor as the most senior Maguire thought he was entitled to the chieftainship and felt aggrieved when Hugh, with assistance from outside forces, seized the title of the Maguire. Thus, he joined with the first crown forces sent to Fermanagh to deal with Hugh Maguire after he rebelled and Conor Rua fought with the government for over a year. Ultimately the pressure put upon him by the confederates proved to be too great and he was forced to make an accord with his rival and join the Gaelic confederacy in September 1594. The main divide among the MacMahons was between Brian MacHugh Óg and Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon. Brian MacHugh Óg had joined the Gaelic confederacy early on and cemented his friendship with Tyrone through a marriage alliance. Patrick on the other hand sided with the government and served against the confederates, hoping for a reward of land for his troubles. The attacks of the confederates and offers of Tyrone proved too much for Patrick to resist and he defected and betrayed the government garrison at Monaghan. Shane MacBrian and Niall MacHugh O'Neill fought over North Clondeboye and the dispute was wrapped up in the Tyrone-Bagenal rivalry with Tyrone backing Niall and Henry Bagenal supporting Shane. Tyrone strength eventually forced Shane to observe his authority. South Clondeboye was equally divided between Niall MacBrian Faghartach O'Neill and his cousin Eoghan MacHugh O'Neill. Tyrone backed Eoghan and this backing enabled Eoghan to depose his rival. This prompted Niall to reconsider his position and he joined the Gaelic confederacy. He was given back North Clondeboye and Eoghan was allocated the Dufferin. After the death of Hugh Connallach O'Reilly in 1583 the O'Reillys fragmented into three parties. Edmund was the eldest and the *tánaiste*, Shane was the heir under primogeniture and Philip thought he was worthy of being chieftain. The O'Reillys were late to join the confederacy and it was not until January 1596 that they finally decided to adhere to Tyrone. Philip likely joined because support from Tyrone could allow him to secure control over the O'Reilly

¹⁸⁹ Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley. 21st August 1594, Dublin (SP 63/175/no.71)

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lordship. The rest of the clan followed suit partially because of the threat that Tyrone and the Gaelic confederates posed as the O'Reillys and their lordship had suffered attacks for their loyalty to the crown.

However, the expansion of the local Tudor government into Cavan and actions of officials also played a part in the O'Reillys decisions to ally with Tyrone. The extortion and executions committed by sheriffs alienated the local populace and pushed the O'Reillys towards Tyrone. This was replicated elsewhere as the actions of the government and their officials contributed to some clans forgoing their previous hostility of O'Neill overlordship. Richard Bingham and Humphrey Willis disaffected Hugh Maguire and the execution of Hugh Rua MacMahon and division of Monaghan played a role in Brian MacHugh Óg and the other MacMahons joining the Gaelic confederacy. However, others like O'Hanlon and Magennis, were still quite pro-crown and had no interest in being under the O'Neills or joining the Gaelic confederacy until forcefully compelled. They would revert to their previous loyal stance if reinforced by the government. Lastly the O'Cahans and Turlough MacHenry O'Neill of the Fewes were also part of the Gaelic confederacy. The O'Cahans traditional opposed O'Neill interference but they were closely tied to both confederate leaders through fosterage and marriage. Furthermore, their isolated position meant there was little prospect of any government assistance so resisting Tyrone was not feasible. Turlough MacHenry was a half-brother of Tyrone and seen as a loyal to him although there were signs of discontent. Meanwhile O'Donnell had his own troubles especially with O'Doherty, who greatly resented O'Donnell involvement in Inishowen. Several stints as O'Donnell's captive and no likelihood of government assistance forced O'Doherty to acknowledge O'Donnell as his overlord for now. Such disunity among the confederates was primed for exploitation.

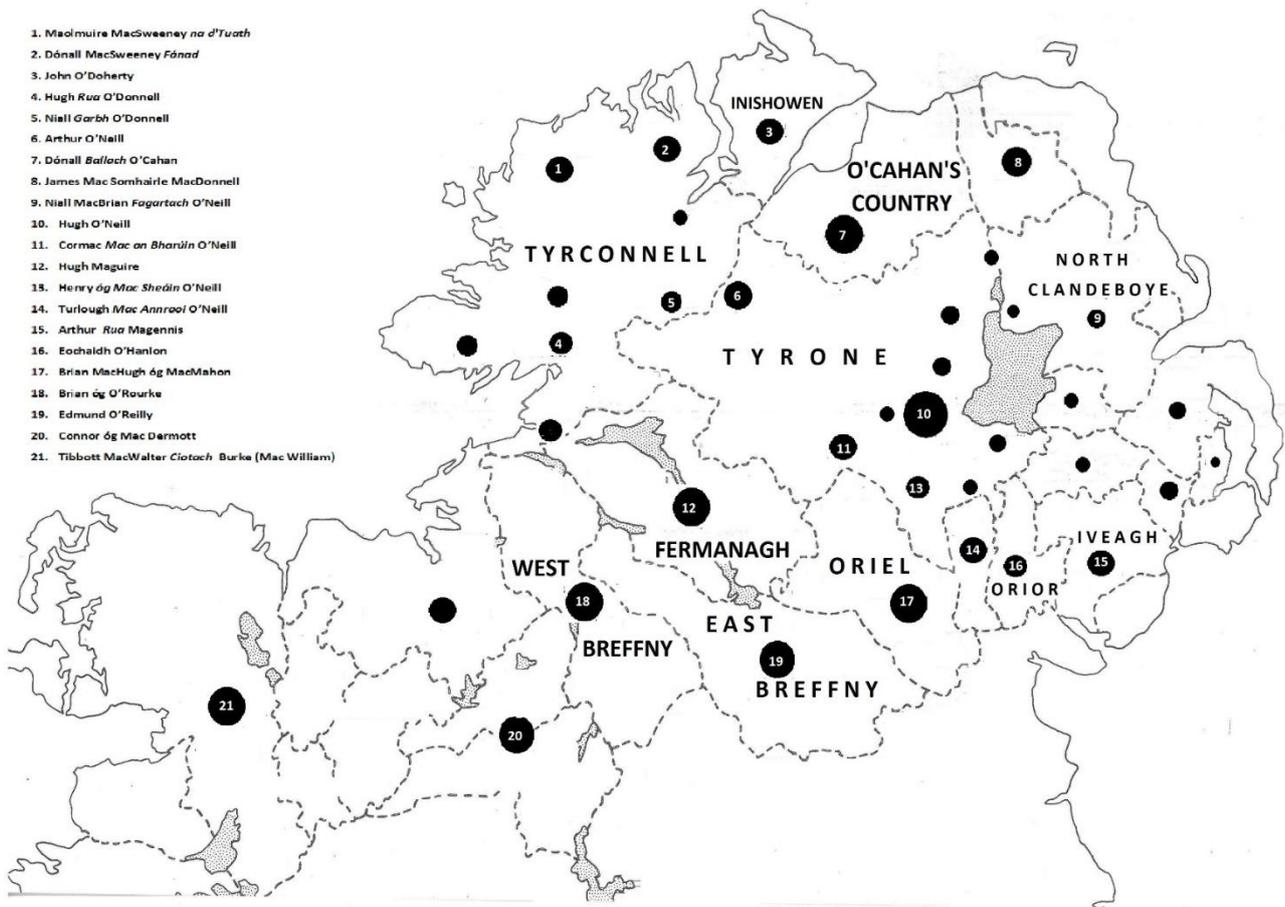


Figure 4: Proportional Strength of the Gaelic Confederate Leaders

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'It will be hard for me to agree you': Keeping the confederacy together before the arrival of Docwra

When three squabbling contenders for the O'Reilly lordship joined the Gaelic confederacy, Tyrone managed to patch up a fragile alliance between them. The death of Shane O'Reilly in 1596 reopened the succession dispute over East Breifne. According to a spy, the three contenders went to Dungannon, where Tyrone attempted to broker a new accord between them. Tyrone was not hopeful and complained to the three claimants that 'it will be hard for me to agree you.'¹ This need for Tyrone to intervene in a succession dispute and maintain unity was not unusual given the many fragile alliances within the Gaelic confederacy. It was an enormous and difficult challenge for Tyrone and in the case of the O'Reillys it actually proved to be too challenging, so East Breifne was plagued by internal clan violence, leading to collaboration by some with the crown. Yet Tyrone and O'Donnell did have some success in limiting defections in the years before Henry Docwra arrived at Lough Foyle in May 1600. This success enabled the Gaelic confederacy to prosper and, for the most part, get the upper hand over government forces, most notably at the Battle of the Yellow ford in August 1598 where they defeated a near 4,000 strong government army sent to relieve a garrison on the river Blackwater and killed their commander and Tyrone's bitter rival, Henry Bagenal.

In the early months of 1600, Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy's power reached its zenith. The government was so weak and Tyrone so strong that he was able to march the length of the country to Munster and return largely unimpeded. The government was greatly troubled by this as it not only made them look powerless but significantly increased Tyrone's reputation. Fenton for example complained that Tyrone's journey to, and return from, Munster gave him 'a greater reputation with the Irishry than ever' and Her Majesty's service was greatly 'blemished.'² Not long after Tyrone returned to Ulster, Docwra landed at Lough Foyle. His Derry fort would play a major role in encouraging defections but that is not to say that without a fort at Derry there was no threat of defections. The example of the O'Reillys clearly shows that even before Docwra, disunity and defections were a real hazard to the stability of the Gaelic confederacy. This chapter will examine several major

¹ Unknown to Lord Deputy, 3rd August 1596 (SP 63/192/no. 7 viii)

² Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 15th March 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.38)

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rifts in the confederacy during the period before Docwra's landing and these rifts are Hugh Maguire's disillusionment with Tyrone, the continuing succession dispute in North Clandeboyne and a new one in Iveagh following the death of the Magennis chieftain, problems among the MacMahons, James MacSorley MacDonnell's attempts to side with the government and his fight with MacQuillan over the Route, the disruption caused by Shane O'Reilly's death and the disintegration of relations between Tyrone and Turlough MacHenry. The chapter will also look at the internal clan problems that Tyrone had to worry about, the MacShanes and Art O'Neill and O'Donnell's own problems with Niall Garbh and Sean O'Doherty. The chapter will focus on these individual cases and how the government attempted to take advantage these divisions to secure defections. Why and where they failed and succeeded will be explored. The chapter will also evaluate the effectiveness of the tactics used by Tyrone and O'Donnell to keep their confederacy together and such tactics include taking pledges, detaining cattle, closely watching suspected confederates, imprisoning potential defectors, a faith and fatherland ideology, an alliance with Spain and mediating between clan rivals. The chapter will also look at the difficulty of having to cress soldiers and impose exactions on *uirríthe* in order to sustain a large war effort while not alienating those who had to bear the burden and who already resented overlordship from Tyrone and O'Donnell. Lastly this chapter will comment on the defections that did occur in Ulster before Docwra's arrival, examine their effects on the Gaelic confederacy and how beneficial these Gaelic allies of the crown were.

By the end of October 1594, William Russell had been Lord Deputy for nearly three months and the Queen and her Privy Council were unimpressed as he had failed to quell Tyrone during the first months of his deputyship. To remedy this, the Queen and her council advised Russell: 'that by setting division in the country, wherein many there would be glad to be maintained against him,....he [Tyrone] may be disabled and reduced to obedient conformity.'³ Russell took their advice on board and shortly after he looked to secure defections and decided to target Tyrone's most important allies in Ulster, Maguire and O'Donnell.⁴ It soon became apparent that there was little hope of breaking up the Tyrone-O'Donnell alliance but Maguire was a different story.⁵ Maguire's susceptibility to government overtures seems unexpected given his centrality to the formation of the Gaelic confederacy and his apparent devotion to Tyrone at the outbreak of rebellion in 1593.

³ *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.3, p.101

⁴ Lord Deputy to Burghley, 27th December 1594, Dublin (SP 63/177/no.48)

⁵ Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, 14th July 1595, Moyry (SP 63/181/no.29)

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However, by the end of 1594, Maguire was reported to be bemoaning his 'estate' and complaining that he was badly treated by Tyrone and his followers. He was in fact so disillusioned with Tyrone that he now wanted to submit.⁶

What brought about this change of heart in Maguire? Firstly, since Hugh Maguire expelled Willis from Fermanagh there had been a major change in the politics of the Maguire lordship, namely the alliance between Maguire and Conor Rua. When Bagenal reported that the two Maguires had gone to Dungannon and came to an accord, he did not elaborate on the details of the agreement. Given that Tyrone was involved, acted as a surety and probably as an arbitrator as well, the terms of the agreement were probably along the lines of Tyrone's other mediations which usually involved a division of land. Conor Rua's branch of Maguires were based at Lisnaskea and the barony of Magherastephena so at the very least his control of these lands would have been recognised. Perhaps Conor Rua was given more because in 1600 Captain Willis stated that Conor Rua's country consisted of south, or 'upper', Fermanagh.⁷ Moreover the agreement at Dungannon may have the blueprint for the post-war division in which Conor Rua received roughly the baronies of Magherastephena, Clankelly and Tirkennedy, while Cúchonnacht Maguire, Hugh's brother, got the other four baronies.⁸ Whatever portion of Fermanagh Conor Rua was awarded, it may have been too large for Hugh Maguire's liking so he may have possibly viewed the government as a better option for him if he wanted possession of all or most of Fermanagh. Maguire's request for letters patent for Fermanagh certainly would indicate that he was concerned about securing control over all of the Maguire Lordship. Maguire also requested that a sheriff or other government officials not be sent to Fermanagh 'for a time' because he was too poor. Maguire had not forgotten about his treatment at the hands of the Bingham and Willis.⁹ Therefore, his anxiety about local government officials may have derived more from his previous bad experiences than his poverty and he might still have wished to halt the government's expansion into Fermanagh more than just a year. If Maguire thought he could balance allying with the government and preventing the introduction of institutions of local Tudor government then he was mistaken.

⁶ Lord Deputy Russell to Burghley, 15th January 1595, Dublin (SP 63/178/no.10), Certain advertisements out of the North of Ireland, January 1595 (SP 63/178/no.30)

⁷ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.130)

⁸ *CSPI 1608-10*, p.575, Moody, T.W. (ed), "Ulster Plantation Papers." *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 8, (1938), pp.282-3

⁹ Maguire to one that hath been employed to him, 20th July 1595, Enniskillen (SP 63/182/no.26 ii)

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Another explanation for why Maguire now wanted to defect was that he began to resent the strain on his resources and country which resulted from his support of Tyrone and the war, more precisely the demands of maintaining soldiers. This resentment was not restricted to Maguire or the Gaelic confederates. The Dublin government too struggled with providing for their soldiers without souring the relationship with those whom had to bear the burden of supporting them. The Pale especially despised the crown forces cessed upon them. They accused them of extortion and generally being oppressive, so much so that a number of Palesmen complained that the soldiers ‘no less consumed, empoverished and annoyed most part of the Pale then the traitor.’¹⁰ The level of anger can be seen by an incident in County Kildare in 1599. The locals were ‘determined not to suffer any soldiers to be among them, or to pass through them’ so they attacked a column of soldiers at Johnstown Bridge (near Naas), killing over fifty of them.¹¹ Tyrone also experienced difficulty in making sure that his followers and *bonnachts* did not oppress those upon whom they were cessed. In truth it was probably an impossible task because supporting an overlord’s soldiers and mercenaries was always unpopular and the scale that Tyrone was waging war on meant they were employed and cessed in great numbers. For instance, in October 1594 2,200 *bonnachts* were hired by Tyrone and of the 2200, the MacMahons had 400 cessed upon them, Magennis 500 and O’Hanlon a further hundred, with the rest being kept within Tyrone.¹² When hostilities first broke out in Fermanagh, Maguire supplemented his local forces, then estimated at 400, with 420 men provisioned by his country and these included 120 sent by Tyrone and under the command of his foster brothers, the O’Hagans, and 100 Gallowglass¹³ sent from Tyrconnell.¹⁴

A reference to the financial cost that the inhabitants of County Sligo incurred for the maintenance of O’Donnell’s troops highlights how costly it was to provide for soldiers. Over a ten-month period the cost for Sligo to maintain O’Donnell’s soldiers ran to about 1800 marks or £1,200.¹⁵ Given that the cost to maintain the entire English army in Ireland through most of the 1560s and 70s was £30,000 per annum, £1,200 for one county over a

¹⁰ A declaration of the present state of the English Pale of Ireland, 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.4/no.60)

¹¹ Captain John Lye to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 20th October 1599, Clonagh (SP 63/205/no.217)

¹² Certain advertisements lately sent concerning the Earl of Tirone, 28th September 1594 (SP 63/176/no.60 iv)

¹³ Professional soldiers, usually heavy infantry and from families originally Scotland

¹⁴ The Examination of Moris O’Skanlon, 19th June 1593, Dundalk (SP 63/170/no.23 xiii)

¹⁵ A 'mark' was worth two-thirds of a pound. Davis, James. *Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200-1500*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.xvii, Sir Richard Bingham to Burghley, 22nd April 1596, Athlone (SP 63/188/no.50),

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ten month period was not an unsubstantial burden.¹⁶ In fact maintaining soldiers was so expensive that in 1597 the Lord Deputy reported that Tyrone had ‘cessed the country almost to the utmost penny, to keep his bonnachts this summer.’¹⁷ The expense was greatest when Tyrone had to gather his forces together in order to oppose a large government force. When Tyrone defeated Henry Bagenal at the Battle of the Yellow Ford in August 1598 two captains who fought in the battle claimed it cost him £500 a day to keep his army together.¹⁸ Tyrone had made attempts to lessen the negative impact of his soldiers by imposing restrictions on them and punishing any who broke the rules. A 1601 proclamation by Tyrone detailing the pay, conditions and duties of bonnachts stated that any who transgressed could be executed.¹⁹ Furthermore, when Tyrone sent a Donough O’Hagan to East Breifne to gather victuals for an expedition into Leinster, Tyrone imprisoned him for remaining too long and extorting the inhabitants. However, it was quite difficult for Tyrone to control all his followers and bonnachts. Once he even bemoaned that he ‘could not well rule so many strangers of Connaght, Clandeboy, the Scotts and all others that followed himself and his people.’²⁰

Even if Tyrone did manage to control his men, the resources he needed to sustain his war were still great so the burden was always going to be heavy. This alienated Tyrone’s confederates and encouraged them to defect in order to escape the exactions and bonnachts. In 1598 a number of Ulster chieftains were reported to have complained to the constable of Ballyhoe, which is on the Meath border with Monaghan, that there were so many bonnachts that there was ‘not a cow we keep.... but bears a bonagh.’ They found supporting all these bonnachts and Tyrone so miserable and extortionate that they told the constable that if they knew that the Dublin government would accept their submission then they would rather suffer their pledges with Tyrone to be hanged than depend on him.²¹ Maguire and his country too seem to have had suffered as a result of sustaining Tyrone’s forces. Richard Bingham claimed that, after the summer campaign in 1593, most of

¹⁶ Fissel, Mark Charles. *English Warfare 1511-1642*. London, Routledge, 2001, p.207

¹⁷ The Lord Deputy Burgh to Burghley, September 10th 1597, Dublin (SP 63/200/no.118)

¹⁸ The declaration of the Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill, 23rd August 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.34 i)

¹⁹ O’Donovan, John (ed and trans), “Military Proclamation, in the Irish Language, Issued by Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, in 1601.” *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 6, First series (1858), pp. 57-65, Ó Báille, M, “The Buannadha: Irish Professional Soldiery of the Sixteenth Century.” *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 22, No. 1/2 (1946), pp. 71-2.

²⁰ Advertisements delivered to Sir Henry Wallop, 24th March 1597 (SP 63/198/no.113)

²¹ Advertisements by Patrick Caddell, 10th November 1596, (SP 63/195/25 viii), Walter Hussey to [Unknown], 1598, Antrim (SP 63/202 pt.4/no.56)

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Maguire's forces consisted of Tyrone's men and Fermanagh was completely exhausted by the cost of maintaining them. Many were said to have become 'weary of his [Maguire's] rebellion by reason of his new entertained beggars [who] did much oppress and impoverish them and he hath eaten out his country [so] that most of his followers were readie to forsake him'.²² Things did not improve as a couple of months later Captain Dowdall reported trouble between the Fermanagh men and the *bonnachts*. Dowdall stated that there was a controversy between the two over victuals, leading to two men being killed.²³ Possibly the *bonnachts* were attempting to take more than their allotted victuals or had been too heavy handed when taking them. The country, as Bingham conveyed, may have simply exhausted their resources and were tired of maintaining these *bonnachts*. By the end of 1594 Maguire may have begun to feel the same way as the rest of his country and viewed Tyrone's demands as excessive. This, along with Conor Rua's joining the Gaelic confederacy, could have been why Maguire thought he was now being treated badly by Tyrone and his followers.

Yet Tyrone managed to prevent Maguire's defection. Fear of the consequences of opposing Tyrone caused Maguire to reconsider. He lamented that the 'chiefs of the North....are all linked and wynded in one' so it would be 'hard to do service uppon' them. Therefore Maguire, 'for fear of my overthrow', proposed that his defection be postponed until Tyrone and the Ulster confederates were in a weaker position.²⁴ Maguire was right to be fearful, given the fate of those who initially refused to acknowledge Tyrone's authority during the formation of the Gaelic confederacy. Fear of the repercussions of betraying the powerful Tyrone was not confined to Maguire and it was a major factor that kept the loose confederacy in Ulster together.²⁵ Captain Lee's conversation with 'many men of the best sort' in Ulster exemplifies this. Lee claimed that they told him that they were 'soe firme and constant unto' Tyrone because 'none of us dare forsake him though wee be weary of this kinde of life.' Lee sympathized with their predicament and acknowledged that the Ulster chieftains were 'too weake to contend with that mightie Traytor' so 'what can these Rebells doe otherwise then as nowe they doe, be adherents to Tyrone.'²⁶ Lee was not the

²² Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, 19th September 1593, Athlone (SP 63/171/no.36)

²³ Capt. John Dowdall to Capt. Henshaw, 6th November 1593 (SP 63/172/no.18 vi)

²⁴ Maguire to one that hath been employed to him, 20th July 1595, Enniskillen (SP 63/182/no.26 ii)

²⁵ O'Cahan expressed similar reservations about losing the favour of Tyrone in a 1602 letter. O'Cahan to Chichester, 21st June 1602 (SP 63/211 pt.2/no. 60 a)

²⁶ Lee, Thomas, *The Discovery and Recovery of Ireland with the Author's Apology*, (British Library, Add. MSS. 33743), folio 29-30. Accessed at <https://celt.ucc.ie//published/E590001-005/index.html>

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only to note how fear kept the Gaelic confederacy intact. Bagenal was another as he too stated that many remained allied to Tyrone because of fear.²⁷

Instead of openly opposing Tyrone, Maguire thought it would be better if he were secretly favoured by the government for a time though he fretted that his communications with the government would be discovered by Tyrone.²⁸ These concerns were warranted because Tyrone had excellent intelligence. Sean O'Doherty once warned Captain Thornton that if the Lord Deputy planned any action against Tyrone then the Earl would know about it within 24 hours.²⁹ Tyrone's brother, Art MacBaron, also remarked upon Tyrone's network of spies. Art claimed that 'there is not anie thing done or said at the Councell Table, if there be but iii Councillors at the same, but Therle hath intelligence thereof.'³⁰ Tyrone's intelligence network was not restricted to Ireland as he also had contacts in England. His contacts were so good that he actually had notice of reinforcements being sent from Brittany to Ireland at the beginning of 1595 even before the Lord Deputy, something that deeply concerned Russell.³¹ This intelligence network was a great tool for preventing defections because Tyrone could be forewarned about any wavering allies attempting to abandon him and this could give him time to take the necessary measures to block them. Tyrone's intelligence played a vital role in his prevention of Maguire's defection. Tyrone was able to foil a plot by Russell to further divide him and Maguire. When Russell first heard that Maguire was becoming unhappy with Tyrone, he tried to send a message to the Fermanagh chieftain, telling him that Tyrone was planning to submit and hand him over to the government. However, Russell complained that his stratagem was thwarted because of Tyrone's 'good intelligence boeth here and I fear out of England.'³²

In September 1595, Russell lay on the borders of the Pale and hoped that the now apprehensive Maguire and others who were predisposed to defect would contact him and submit. Tyrone was aware of Maguire's possible defection so he would not let him leave his sight, using the pretence that Maguire 'must stay with him for the good of the service

²⁷ Project by Sir Henry Bagenall for the prosecution of the Earl of Tirone, 20th February 1596 (SP 63/186/no.76)

²⁸ Maguire to one that hath been employed to him, 20th July 1595, Enniskillen (SP 63/182/no.26 ii), Certain advertisements out of the North of Ireland, January 1595 (SP 63/178/no.30)

²⁹ Capt. Thornton to the Lord Deputy, 17th July 1595, Carrickfergus (SP 63/181/no.37),

³⁰ John Morgan to [the Lord Deputy], 10th July 1596, Newry (SP 63/191/no.18)

³¹ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 26th February 1595, Dublin (SP 63/178/no.54)

³² Lord Deputy to Burghley, 31st August 1595, Dublin (SP 63/182/no.77)

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that were in hand.³³ Throughout the war Tyrone would keep a close watch on those he suspected and if he could not do it himself, as was the case with Maguire, then he would delegate the task to one of his dependable subordinates.³⁴ O'Donnell would do the same. He often had one of his close associates watch the unreliable O'Doherty who continued to resent O'Donnell overlordship and secretly made this fact known to the government.³⁵ In October 1598 O'Donnell sent Redmond O'Gallagher, the bishop of Derry, from his Connacht camp to Inishowen when a small force under Captain Thornton landed and perpetrated a raid. Before he returned to Carrickfergus, Thornton had a conference with O'Doherty but O'Gallagher would not allow O'Doherty to have a private conversation with the captain. On another occasion Hugh Buí MacDavitt, one of O'Donnell's most influential and important advisors, would be used. When Docwra first met O'Doherty, the Inishowen chieftain could not express what he really thought 'for fear of one Hugh Boy, a creature of O'Donnell's that was in his company.'³⁶

Tyrone's keeping Maguire close worked as the Fermanagh chieftain was not able to contact Russell and submit but Maguire's allegiance would continue to be doubtful. In February 1598 there was again real danger of him defecting. His brother-in-law, Brian Óg O'Rourke, had done so and he was thought to hold great sway over Maguire. The government hoped this influence could be used to persuade Maguire to abandon Tyrone and indeed O'Rourke soon began making appeals to the government to accept Maguire's submission. Tyrone again had to intervene but this time he did more than just keep an eye on Maguire, he imprisoned him, which was another of Tyrone's favoured tactics to deal with those he suspected. Maguire was imprisoned while negotiations between Tyrone and Ormond, then acting as Lord Lieutenant of the forces in Ireland, were taking place in April 1598. Most of the important Gaelic confederates had gathered together for the negotiations so Tyrone used the opportunity to detain not just Maguire but others he distrusted, some 20 or 30 men.³⁷ Tyrone used imprisonment often as he erred on the side of caution. He expressed this preference when giving O'Donnell advice on how to deal with a suspect

³³ Lord Deputy to Burghley, 4th October 1595, Dublin (SP 63/183/no.71)

³⁴ Report by Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex on the information gained in Ulster by Captain J. G, June 1599 (SP 63/205/no.100)

³⁵ Phillip Williams to Sir Robert Cecil, 20th October 1597, Dublin (SP 63/201/no.25)

³⁶ Captain George Thornton's letter to the Earl of Ormond, 3rd November 1598, Carrickfergus (SP 63/202 pt.4/no.34 viii), Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 24th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.57)

³⁷ Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, 18th April 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.9), Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, 24th April 1598, Athlone (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.21), Memorial delivered by Sir Calisthenes Brooke, to the Privy, 20th May 1598, (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.41)

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ally. According to Ó Cléirigh, he told O'Donnell to detain the ally as 'it was meet and just to put another man in fetters rather than allow his own death to come of it or his imprisonment or bondage.'³⁸ Evidently Maguire would not be detained for long, as he fought alongside Tyrone at the Battle of the Yellow Ford in August 1598. O'Rourke's return to the Gaelic confederacy in June must have helped reassure Tyrone that it was safe to release Maguire.³⁹ O'Rourke returned to the Gaelic confederacy because he grew concerned that his agreement with the president of Connacht, Conyers Clifford, would be undone by Ormond and Brian's brother Tadhg and his claim to Leitrim supported instead. Tadhg was weaker than his brother and a less useful ally, but he was 'near allied to his Lordship [Ormond] and hath been brought up with him' so he had Ormond's backing regardless. O'Donnell also captured Tadhg and the confederates kept him detained to 'flatter O'Rourke.'⁴⁰

The government's other attempts to induce Gaelic confederates to defect through the summer of 1595 would not fare much better than their efforts with Maguire. Both the Lord Deputy and John Norris, who was part of the Brittany reinforcements and appointed lord general of forces in Ireland, made incursions into Ulster and had hoped their expeditions would cause some of Tyrone's allies to desert him. Tyrone pre-empted the defections by taking pledges, imprisoning those he suspected and seizing cattle.⁴¹ Cattle and pastoralism was a vital component of Gaelic society. English contemporaries thought there was such a focus on pastoralism that tillage farming was neglected and not a significant aspect of the Irish economy. This was misguided as cereal crops played an important role in sustaining the Gaelic confederate's war effort. After the war Tyrone even told the King of Spain that the cultivation of their land 'was the most important element in maintaining the last war.'⁴² Yet the importance of pastoralism cannot be overlooked, so the threat of losing one's cattle was serious and a real deterrent to those thinking of defecting.⁴³ Conyers Clifford actually thought that cattle were paramount if one wanted to keep the Irish on your side because 'neither for pledges nor oaths, nor any cause, this

³⁸ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.293

³⁹ The declaration of the Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill, 23rd August 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.34 i)

⁴⁰ Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council June 26th 1598, Athlone (SP 63/202/ no.84), Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, October 31st 1598, Athlone (SP 63/202/ no. 137)

⁴¹ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 6th August 1595, Dublin (SP 63/182/no.13)

⁴² O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.108-9, Kerney Walsh, Micheline, *Destruction by Peace: Hugh O'Neill after Kinsale*, Armagh: Cumann Seanchais Ard Mhacha, 2015, pp.194-5

⁴³ Nicholls, Kenneth, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, pp.131-8

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people will be held in obedience to lose their cattle'.⁴⁴ Therefore the government thought that if they could either threaten the Gaelic confederates' cattle or reassure them that they could guard their cattle from Tyrone, then defections would follow. Ralph Lane, the muster master of Ireland, for one stated that a garrison at Coleraine would immediately result in the MacDonnells leaving Tyrone because of 'fear of the loss of their cows, which they love as their lives, and far better than him [Tyrone]'.⁴⁵ In 1597 the Lord Deputy promoted the need to place garrisons in Ulster because they could help protect the cattle of those who wanted to defect. Otherwise there was no hope of them abandoning Tyrone because they would not risk the loss of their cattle.⁴⁶ The fact that Tyrone detained cattle in the first place, does reinforce the government's contention that security of cattle did influence loyalty. Tyrone would continue to seize cattle throughout the war in order to better assure himself of the loyalty of his confederates.⁴⁷

Tyrone was often mentioned as taking pledges who 'he keep in close in prisonne clogged with yrone'.⁴⁸ O'Donnell was very thorough in his taking of pledges and went so far as to take pledges from gentlemen of quite modest means; some of them could only make about three or four horsemen.⁴⁹ Unlike the detaining of cattle, the usefulness of taking pledges was often questioned. Many thought it was ineffective, leading to calls for the crown to stop the practice because it did not guarantee loyalty. Captain Thomas Lee referred to the demanding of pledges as 'dunsical.' He went on to say that in his long service in Ireland he had seen many pledges taken, a father taken for his son, a son taken for the father, a brother taken for a brother and so on, none of which stopped the pledge-giver from rebelling if he was so inclined.⁵⁰ John Norris shared Lee's misgivings about taking pledges. Norris pointed to Philip O'Reilly's joining of the Gaelic confederacy as a reason why. The crown had Philip's son as a pledge and yet it 'restrained him not.'⁵¹ How ineffective pledges could be was on display at the siege of Castle Glin in July 1600. The castle was being besieged by the governor of Munster, George Carew, and he held the son of the castle owner, Edmund Fitzthomas Fitzgerald Knight of Glin, as a hostage. The

⁴⁴ Minute by Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lords Justices, 13th September 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.137 i)

⁴⁵ The project for service, by Sir Ralph Lane, 23rd December 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt. 4/no.46 i)

⁴⁶ The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, 3rd August 1597 (SP 63/200/no.72)

⁴⁷ Heffernan, David, *'Reform' Treatises on Tudor Ireland*, p.341

⁴⁸ Ibid pp.341-2, Presumptions against the Earl of Tirone's loyalty, August 1594 (SP 63/175/no.83), The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, 22nd June 1597 (SP 63/199/no.115)

⁴⁹ Declaration by Darby Newman of speeches used by the Earl of Tirone, 19th February 1594 (SP 63/173/no.64 iv)

⁵⁰ Lee, Thomas, *A brief Declaration of the Government of Ireland*, pp.111-2

⁵¹ Sir J. Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, 20th March 1596, Dublin (SP 63/187/no.44)

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hostage proved useless as Edmund ‘had no regard’ for the six-year-old boy and neither did the defenders of the castle. When Carew placed the boy on a cannon in full view of the defenders and threatened to fire, the constable of the castle retorted that they were little concerned about the boy’s life and the Knight was virile [*bod bríomhar*] and his wife fertile so they could have more children. Carew took pity on the boy and untied him from the cannon.⁵²

If pledges could not ensure loyalty to the crown then equally, they could not prevent defections from the Gaelic confederacy and O’Donnell experienced this to his detriment in Connacht. O’Donnell imprisoned two Connacht chieftains, Conor Óg MacDermott and Hugh O’Connor Don, but at the beginning of 1598 he released them. To better ensure their loyalty O’Donnell took pledges from the men. O’Connor Don gave two legitimate sons and the sons of three of his followers, O’Hanly, O’Flynn and O’Beirne. Conor Óg MacDermott gave his only son and a principal follower.⁵³ These pledges were not enough to stop the two Connacht chieftains from defecting to the government and O’Donnell responded by executing the men’s pledges.⁵⁴ While pledges could not guarantee loyalty, it would be wrong to completely dismiss the taking of pledges as having no impact. Tyrone’s imprisoning of those whom he suspected clearly was the most effective and simple method to prevent defections. There was little mention of who Tyrone apprehended in the summer of 1595 except for his far from loyal son-in-law, Henry Óg MacShane O’Neill.⁵⁵ Tyrone’s efforts to block defections during the summer campaign of 1595 were largely successful, much to the dismay of the frustrated government. A letter from the Lord Deputy and Irish council to the English Privy Council summed up Tyrone’s success and their failure. Russell and the council reported that they attempted to stir ‘up any others to annoy therle....we have thought often of that course and laboured therein but with little fruit as yet for that some of those whome we might make instruments to serve Her Majesty turne that way, Therle taking them in hand at the first and still detaine them and their creats (a creaght denoted a herd of cattle and the attendant herders)⁵⁶ under straight [close] guard.’⁵⁷

⁵² McGurk, John. “Terrain and Conquest 1600-3,” in Pádraig Lenihan (ed), *Conquest and Resistance: War in Seventeenth-Century Ireland*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, pp. 101–105. Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, 18th July 1600, Limerick (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.26)

⁵³ *AFM*, p.2047, A part of Sir Conyers Clifford’s letters, 27th February 1598, (SP 63/202 pt.1/no.58)

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, 24th April, Athlone (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.21)

⁵⁵ Examination of Pat. O’Donello, 12th July 1595, Newry (SP 63/181/no.50 i)

⁵⁶ Herd of cattle

⁵⁷ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 6th August 1595, Dublin (SP 63/182/no.13)

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There were some minor successes for the government in 1595 though. The loose association that O'Hanlon had with Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy ended and he joined the Lord Deputy's expedition to Ulster in June 1595, during which a garrison was established at Armagh. O'Hanlon acted a guide and was even wounded in a skirmish with O'Neill's forces.⁵⁸ Although O'Hanlon was described by Henry Bird, commissary for musters at Newry and Carlingford, as being of little power so defection had a minimal impact.⁵⁹ Magennis must have abandoned Tyrone for a time as he was subjected to a punitive raid.⁶⁰ However the first major defection of a more committed Gaelic confederate occurred at the end of the 1595 summer campaign, a defection that highlighted the difficulty of keeping two rivals contented. Following Shane MacBrian's joining the Gaelic confederacy, the tensions between him and Niall MacHugh O'Neill over North Clondeboye persisted. Tyrone was forced to mediate between them in June 1594 and he divided North Clondeboye. In the division Niall MacHugh was given Killelagh and Kilmakvit along with any followers of Shane who wished to go to him.⁶¹ Killelagh and Kilmakvit were located north-east of Lough Neagh, extending from the River Crumlin in the south to Six Mile Water in the north.⁶² According to a 1605 inquisition, North Clondeboye comprised about twenty *tuatha*.⁶³ By allotting Niall only two out of twenty *tuatha*, Tyrone showed that he had switched his support to Shane MacBrian. Shane was probably the stronger of the two as Niall was described as weak unless propped up by Tyrone. Shane's strength meant he was a more valuable ally and if there was an opportunity to switch support to someone more useful, then Tyrone would do so.⁶⁴

Tyrone's withdrawal of support meant that the Gaelic confederacy no longer presented Niall with an opportunity to attain North Clondeboye. Now if the disappointed Niall wanted to realise his ambition for North Clondeboye, the only option left to him was changing his allegiance to government. This was exactly what Niall did in August 1595 when he looked to take advantage of the proclamation of Tyrone as a traitor in June, which offered a pardon for those willing to abandon him.⁶⁵ He offered to submit and petitioned

⁵⁸ *Carew Manuscript*, Vol. 3, p.117

⁵⁹ Henry Bird, Commissary, to Sir Robert Cecil, 10th May 1600, Carlingford (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.28)

⁶⁰ *Carew Manuscript*, Vol. 3, p.116

⁶¹ Charles Eggarton, Constable of Carrickfergus, to the Lord Deputy, 20th June 1594, Carrickfergus (SP 63/175/no.19 i)

⁶² *A repertory*, pp.285-6

⁶³ Reeves, William. *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down, Connor, and Dromore*. Dublin, 1846, pp.344-6,

⁶⁴ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, pp.191-2

⁶⁵ *Carew Manuscript*, Vol. 3 p.111

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the government to establish a garrison in North Clondeboyne consisting of 500 men and 50 horse, 20 of whom would be reserved in pay for Niall. Niall also claimed that he could raise another 50 horse that would be sustained at the charge of the region. If the garrison was established, Niall MacHugh claimed that he could bring in the rest of the inhabitants of North and South Clondeboyne, consequently denying Tyrone victuals and men from the region. This loss, according to Niall, would weaken Tyrone by a thousand men and greatly diminish his access to victuals. For this service Niall hoped to be rewarded with the pension and the lands of Shane MacBrian. He claimed that he was entitled to Shane's lands because of primogeniture. His father Hugh was the elder brother of Shane's father so by lineal descent he was the heir.⁶⁶ Niall also went to Dublin to meet with the Lord Deputy, who accepted his submission and gave him a protection for three months with the promise of a pardon once the three months ended, if Niall had done some service by then. Furthermore, in response to his petition for Shane's lands, Niall was offered the custodianship of North Clondeboyne, an offer that Niall was said to be happy with.⁶⁷ Shane MacBrian responded a month later by meeting with the constable of Carrickfergus, Charles Eggerton. He offered to submit and requested a pardon. Shane made great offers of service if the garrison at Carrickfergus was increased to 500 foot and 50 horse. If the Carrickfergus garrison was not strengthened, then Shane warned that Tyrone would continue to have influence in North Clondeboyne.⁶⁸

Shane's submission was likely a direct response to Niall's. Shane may have feared his rival getting government support and by submitting he blocked Niall from getting the full backing of the government. Yet given Shane's previous inclination to side with the government and his desire to be independent of Tyrone, he would have needed little prompting to abandon the Gaelic confederacy. It must always be noted that problem of the onerous demands of supporting Tyrone's war, more specifically maintaining his soldiers and *bonnachts*, would have done little to lessen Shane's dislike of O'Neill overlordship. In 1594, 500 *bonnachts* under Brian MacArt were cessed in Clondeboyne and in 1596, 200 of Tyrone's men were in North Clondeboyne at charge of the locals and this was reportedly a regular occurrence. These soldiers, like in Fermanagh, had caused problems with the locals and with Shane himself. Captain Mansell at Carrickfergus reported disputes between

⁶⁶ Humble suit of Neile M'Hugh M'Phelim O'Neill of the North Claneboy, 16th August 1595 (SP 63/183/no.47)

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, Lord Deputy to Burghley, 4th October 1595, Dublin (SP 63/183/no.71)

⁶⁸ Shane O'Neale [M'Brian] to the Lord Deputy, 17th September 1595, Carrickfergus (SP 63/183/no. 71 i),

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Shane and soldiers under the O'Hagans because Tyrone's men were oppressive and had committed 'wrongs not to be tolerated.' Furthermore, when Tyrone's men were cessed in North Clondeboye Shane's authority in the region was compromised. For instance, when Tyrone sent his nephew, Brian MacArt, to Clondeboye, his authority appears to have superseded Shane's. Shane resented this and asked Tyrone to remove his nephew from North Clondeboye so he could exercise sole responsibility for the war east of the Bann.⁶⁹

In November 1595, Shane would travel to Dublin and Niall MacHugh would do the same. The government would not resolve their dispute over North Clondeboye without the Lord Deputy, who was absent in Connacht. The council decided to give the two men a protection for ten weeks and told them to come back when Russell returned. In the mean time they were not to cause any disturbances.⁷⁰ Shane's allegiance to the crown did not last long, and he was in Tyrone's company when he negotiated with government officials in January 1596.⁷¹ Shane's relapse was probably because the government did not reinforce Carrickfergus as he requested or provide any extra military assistance. This assistance was needed if Shane were to oppose Tyrone and he said as much in his petition, when he pointed out that without a strong Carrickfergus garrison, Tyrone would have North Clondeboye.⁷² This lack of ability and commitment to defend their potential or actual allies was a recurrent weakness prior to Docwra's arrival. A document giving advice on how to prosecute the war highlighted this deficiency, complaining that 'when the enemye doth come in and submytt themselves and hope to be defended by Her majesty's forces, little regarde is had of them' and they 'are lefte to the spoyle of the enemye.'⁷³ This lack of support, as in the case of Shane MacBrian, would force the defectors to re-join Tyrone. Moreover, many of those who were predisposed to defect would not do so unless they had some confidence that there were forces to defend them. Fenton made this point in 1598, saying that 'many of the Irish are fallen from him [Tyrone] in harte and wold no doute turn against him, yf they might once see Her Majesty stronge in the field, and determined to proceed thoroughly against him. Otherwise, howsoever they may have good wills, yet they

⁶⁹ Capt. Charles Eggerton to [Unknown], 3rd April 1596, Carrickfergus (SP 63/188/no.9), Captain Rice Mansell to [the Lord Deputy], 31st July 1596, Carrickfergus (SP 63/192/no.7 iv), Schedule of the 2,000 soldiers lately cessed on the Urraghs of Ulster, September 1594 (SP 63/176/no.60 vi)

⁷⁰ Sir H. Wallop et al to Burghley, 30th November 1595, Dublin (SP 63/184/no.37)

⁷¹ *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.3, p.134

⁷² Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, pp.190-1

⁷³ Notes touching the furtherance of Her Majesty's service in Ireland, 1597 (SP 63/201/no.139)

dare not show themselves apparently till they see how they may be defended by Her Majesty.’⁷⁴

Shane demonstrated that he had fully returned to rebellion in April 1596. He raided the area around Carrickfergus, took 300 cows, threatened the town of Carrickfergus itself and ordered that none of his followers were to sell victuals to Carrickfergus.⁷⁵ This would largely be the *status quo* up until 1600, Shane remaining in the Gaelic confederacy and Niall assisting the Carrickfergus garrison. There was a brief reversal in the summer of 1597. The new commander of Carrickfergus, John Chichester, managed to capture Shane’s garrison at Edenduffcarrick with the assistance of Niall MacHugh. Chichester’s success led to Shane submitting but this submission was greeted with suspicion.⁷⁶ Fenton thought Shane’s submission was done with Tyrone’s consent and was a ploy to gain time to reap the harvest. This type of strategic submission was a tactic that Tyrone was frequently accused of using.⁷⁷ In 1599 it was reported that Tyrone gave Ever MacCooley permission to submit in order to save his corn and Tyrone himself ‘commonly seeketh peace....when their corn is ready to be cut.’⁷⁸ The suspicion towards Shane meant there was little hope that he would ‘stand fast longer than may serve his turn’ and when he returned north he was detained in Carrickfergus due to a debt owed to Chichester but Dublin advised that he be kept imprisoned until ‘there be less cause to doubt him.’⁷⁹ He was eventually released and his helping to relieve the garrison of Edenduffcarrick with cheese may have helped convince Carrickfergus of his loyalty. Niall MacHugh had been detained alongside Shane for an unspecified reason but he escaped and launched a failed attack on Edenduffcarrick after the ward raided the locality.⁸⁰ Niall would soon revert to his previous loyalty and in 1600 he was said to have ‘these three years past served the Queen painfully.’⁸¹ Shane would return to his previous allegiance to Tyrone so his submission, at this juncture, may indeed have been a ploy to save his harvest. The events in North Clondeboy show the difficulty of managing two rivals for a lordship. Both men thought themselves entitled to North

⁷⁴ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th May 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.28)

⁷⁵ Capt. Charles Eggerton to [Unknown], 3rd April 1596, Carrickfergus (SP 63/188/no.9)

⁷⁶ Sir Henry Wallop to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th July 1597, Dublin (SP 63/200/no.55), Sir John Chichester to Burghley, 16th September 1597, Dublin (SP 63/200/no.125)

⁷⁷ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 23rd September 1597, Dublin (SP 63/200/no.137)

⁷⁸ Memorandum by Captain Stafford on the state of Ireland, May 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.54), Advertisement from the north of Ireland, 20th July 1599, Louth (SP 63/205/no. 118 i)

⁷⁹ *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.3 p.272, The Council to the Privy Council, 21st January 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.1/no.22)

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, Captain Charles Egerton to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, 6th January 1598, Carrickfergus (SP 63/202 pt.1/no.22 ii)

⁸¹ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.78)

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Clandeboyne and two does not go into one. Meditation and concession prizes, like two *tuatha*, were not enough so there was going to be a disappointed party who could appeal to the government for assistance to gain their right. Moreover, there was still the problem of the unpopularity of O'Neill overlordship and the maintaining of soldiers which could even alienate the candidate that Tyrone supported.

Tyrone's problems with managing Niall and Shane in North Clandeboyne were mirrored in Iveagh. At the start of 1596 Hugh Magennis died, and two candidates vied to replace him. His son, Art Rua, was the rightful heir according to primogeniture and his father's 1584 letters patent. Glasney MacAgholy Magennis was the other claimant. He was from a branch of Magennises based in Clanconnell, which was located between the Rivers Bann and Lagan in the parishes of Tullylish and Donacloney.⁸² Glasney claimed to be the legitimate heir under Gaelic succession and was inaugurated as chieftain following the death of Hugh. One would have expected Tyrone to support his son-in-law, Art Rua, but when Tyrone met with government officials in January 1596, it was Glasney that the Gaelic confederates put forward as Hugh's successor.⁸³ The reason they gave for backing Glasney was that he was, according to the 'ancient custom of the country', entitled to succeed. Glasney was the elder candidate so it was likely that they were using the interpretation of Gaelic succession that proscribes that the rightful heir was the eldest of the clan. Yet a *bona fide* commitment to upholding the senior candidate's right to succeed was not the real motivation behind Tyrone's decision to support Glasney. Tyrone and the Gaelic confederates did not consistently back the elder candidate, a fact noticed by Henry Wallop and Robert Gardner, the commissioners sent to treat with Tyrone and his Gaelic confederates in January 1596. When O'Donnell challenged Art Rua's right to Iveagh and promoted Glasney's claim under 'the ancient custom of the country', the commissioners replied that O'Donnell himself was not the rightful heir to Tyrconnell under their ancient custom. Presumably the commissioners were referring to Hugh Dubh O'Donnell's claim to Tyrconnell as eldest of the clan. The commissioners also pointed out that Philip O'Reilly was not the eldest candidate or *tánaiste* either, yet the Gaelic confederates backed his claim. Therefore, they charged O'Donnell and the rest of the Gaelic confederates with 'not stand[ing] upon your own customs.' O'Donnell could not explain the contradictions and

⁸² O'Sullivan, Harold. "The Magennis Lordship of Iveagh in the Early Modern Period, 1534 to 1691" in Lindsey Proudfoot (ed), *Down: History & Society*, Geography Publications, 1997, p. 165

⁸³ Lord Deputy Russell to Burghley, 26th January 1596, Dublin (SP 63/186/no.23), *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol. 3, pp.136-8

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just smiled, a response that aptly conveys his insincerity about upholding their ‘ancient custom.’⁸⁴ Given Tyrone’s penchant for siding with the competitor who he saw as strongest and most beneficial to him, Glasney was probably chosen because Tyrone perceived him to be the stronger and more useful ally.

Tyrone’s backing of Glasney gave the government another possibly ally because Art was greatly disappointed with being denied Iveagh and sought their assistance. He met with Wallop and Gardner prior to their meeting with the Gaelic confederates and pleaded for their ‘lawful aid and favour for maintenance of his title and right.’⁸⁵ Civil war almost broke out in May 1596 when Glasney planned to hire about 300 or 400 Scottish mercenaries and then use against Art Rua but Tyrone prevented the mercenaries from going to Glasney and instead employed them himself.⁸⁶ By October Tyrone had ‘drawne to himself [Art Rua] Magennis’ following a raid of Lecale.⁸⁷ This raid must have intimidated Magennis into joining Tyrone especially as he does not seem to have been given much military support by the government. At the same time O’Hanlon also re-joined with Tyrone, likely for the same reasons as Magennis. While Art joined the Gaelic confederacy, the dispute between him and Glasney was not settled. In December, Tyrone intervened in the dispute. He requested Art meet with him so ‘I maie agree between you and [Glasney] McAgholie.’⁸⁸ The outcome of the meeting was that Tyrone, in an attempt to appease Art, gave his son-in-law control over the areas neighbouring Iveagh and these areas were Lecale, MacCartan’s country and Kilwarlin. Presumably Glasney’s control over Iveagh and position as Magennis chieftain was again confirmed. In the short term this agreement appears to have been successful as Henry Bagenal said that Tyrone had ‘assurdely possessed’ Art Rua and Tyrone himself claimed to now speak for all the Magennises.⁸⁹

Tyrone had switched his support from Glasney to Art by 1597. The dismissal of Glasney’s claim by Tyrone again demonstrates that he cared little about the principles of Gaelic succession. Rather Tyrone probably changed his support from Glasney because he

⁸⁴ *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol. 3, pp.142-3

⁸⁵ *Ibid* p.136

⁸⁶ Capt. Rice Mansell to [the Lord Deputy], 20th May 1596, Carrickfergus (SP 63/189/no.46 ii), Charles Eggarton to the Lord Deputy, 27th May 1596, Carrickfergus (SP 63/190/no. 11 xi)

⁸⁷ The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 15th October 1596, Dublin (SP 63/194/no.19)

⁸⁸ Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to Magennis, December 1596, (SP 63/196/no.31 viii)

⁸⁹ Marshal Sir Henry Bagenall to [the Lord Deputy], 23rd December 1596, Newry (SP 63/196/no.31vii), Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to [the Lord Deputy], 13th December 1596, (SP 63/196/no.31i)

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no longer viewed him as useful an ally as Art Rua. Tyrone certainly seemed to value Art as an ally because he used a triple marriage alliance to strengthen their relationship. Art was already Tyrone's son-in-law and became his brother-in-law in 1597, when Tyrone married Catherine Magennis. Tyrone's nephew, Brian MacArt, married Art's recently widowed mother as well.⁹⁰ Tyrone also seems to have placed a lot of trust in Art Rua. He actually trusted him to such an extent that he used him to watch those he did not. For instance, Tyrone ordered Magennis to

watch MacCartan, who 'inwardly hate[d] Tyrone.' Magennis brought MacCartan and his cattle with him everywhere 'so that he may not be spoken withal' by any government officials.⁹¹ Tyrone's support enabled Art to establish himself as the dominant party in Iveagh and there was little doubt that Art's power derived from Tyrone as a Captain Stafford pointed out that 'the greatness of Arthur Magennis is because he married a daughter of the Earl of Tyrone, and the Earl married a sister of his, and a nephew of the Earl married the said Art's mother.' The problem of the 'great discontentment' between Glasney and Art persisted though, except now it was Glasney who was left disappointed and a potential defector.⁹² Tyrone could never fully reconcile the two men but his strength allowed him to hold together the two men's fragile coexistence up until the early months of 1600 when Samuel Bagenal at Newry had some military success. This gave the disgruntled Glasney confidence to defect in order to regain Iveagh and he was given the Magennis Lordship in a custodian capacity, presumably with the promise of letters patent to confirm his ownership.⁹³

In 1596 Tyrone also had to step in and attempt to mollify internal tensions among the MacMahons. Brian MacHugh Óg MacMahon and Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon continued their struggle over Monaghan. In October, Tyrone summoned both men and

⁹⁰ The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th August 1597, Cavan (SP 63/200/no.98), Genealogies of several Irish families, and some papers on the state of Ireland (Cotton Titus, C. X, no.17)

⁹¹ Report by Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex on the information gained in Ulster by Captain J. G, June 1599 (SP 63/205/no.100)

⁹² Memorandum by Captain Stafford on the state of Ireland, May 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.54)

⁹³ A just and true account of the service done by the garrison of the Newry, February 1600 (SP 63/ 207 pt.7/no.24 i). The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, 12th March 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.32)

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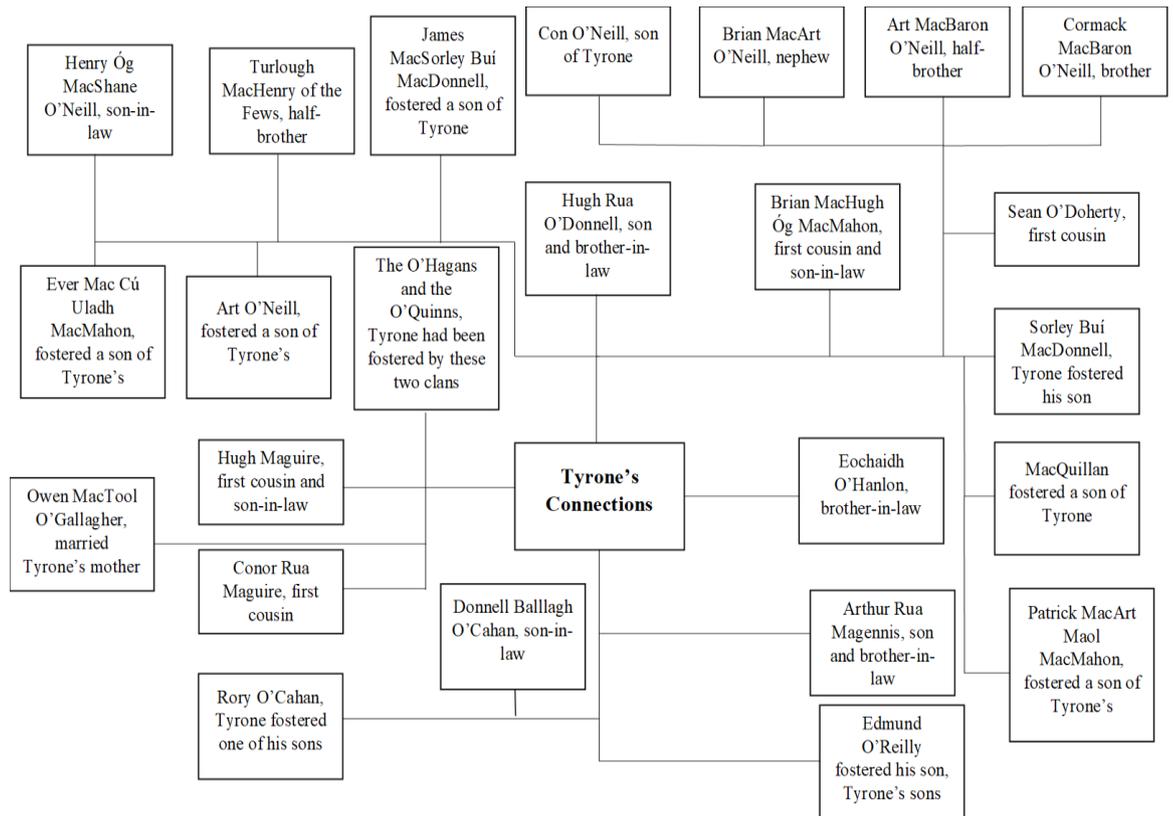


Figure 5. Tyrone's Connections

‘united and made friends Patrick mac Art Moile and mac Mahonne and bound them both in great bonds not to infringe or break his slaintie which he hath passed between them.’⁹⁴ Tyrone’s ‘slaintie’ was his acting as surety for the agreement. Tyrone also looked to further bind Patrick to him by fosterage. Tyrone gave Patrick his eldest son to foster.⁹⁵ Tyrone did not however establish a lasting peace and by 1598 Patrick was still ‘mightily maliced’ by Brian.⁹⁶ Two rivals and one lordship was simply an equation with no adequate answer. Brian soon began to make overtures to the government. The general dislike of supporting Tyrone’s war effort probably played a part, but, as with Maguire, the inclusion of a rival into the confederacy could have had an alienating effect as well. Before Patrick joined Tyrone had promised Brian ‘that he should have the whole countie to himself.’ But to persuade Patrick to join the Gaelic confederacy, Tyrone rewarded him with a ‘gift of lande and living.’ These lands that included the ‘chief seat’ of Monaghan town.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Captain Francis Stafford to [the Lord Deputy], 1st November 1596, Newry (SP 63/195/no.7 iv)

⁹⁵ Ibid, Nicholls, K. W. *Gaelic and Gaelicised*, p.49

⁹⁶ Memorandum by Captain Stafford on the state of Ireland, May 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.54)

⁹⁷ Ibid, The causes why the E. of Tyrone will not come to Dundalk, circa 1597, (Cotton Titus B/XII/ no.120/folio 527), Advertisements from Sir Henry Duke, 7th June 1594, (SP 63/175/no.5 xxi)

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Brian was doubtless forced into conceding territory to a bitter rival which went against what Tyrone had initially promised him. These concessions may have been too much for Brian. Alternatively, Brian may have simply not been able to coexist with his bitter enemy. Whatever the reason, MacMahon was willing to defect and in October 1597, the then Lord Deputy, Thomas Burgh, managed to secretly secure MacMahon's support. To avoid suspicion MacMahon would not meet with Burgh's secretary in person and instead sent his wife who received a protection for her husband. Burgh hoped that MacMahon's secret support would help his October 1597 expedition into Ulster in order to supply the Blackwater fort which he established a few months prior. However, Burgh died during the expedition so the plans for MacMahon were abandoned. MacMahon's half-hearted commitment would continue and so he one of those imprisoned by Tyrone in April 1598.⁹⁸ MacMahon was released sometime before the end of the year but the dissension among the MacMahons and Brian's attempting to defect further highlights the intricacies and near impossibility of keeping such a factious confederacy together.

There was also a conflict in the 'Route' in north County Antrim and this division was between the MacQuillans and the MacDonnells. The MacQuillans were the original occupants of the Route but in the mid-sixteenth century they lost much control of the area to Sorley Bui MacDonnell, leading to a bitter rivalry between the MacDonnells and the MacQuillans over the region.⁹⁹ In June 1594 Tyrone tried to divide the Route between James MacSorley Bui MacDonnell and the chieftain of the McQuillans, Rory Óg. There was no mention of who got what in the division but in 1595 the Lord Deputy said that MacQuillan possessed three eighths of the Route and MacDonnell the rest. In reality MacQuillan did not hold three eighths because he was 'of so small means to resist him, that James has usurped the whole.'¹⁰⁰ It was MacDonnell though who looked to defect early in 1595. He wrote to the Lord Deputy and declared himself to be a true subject. He claimed to have proven his loyalty by his recently putting 'his hand in that fire with therle of Tyrone.' He had intercepted, and detained powder and lead intended for Tyrone.¹⁰¹ In October he parleyed with Charles Eggerton, at Carrickfergus, and wrote to the Lord Deputy

⁹⁸ Phillip Williams to Sir Robert Cecil, 20th October 1597, Dublin (SP 63/201/no.25), Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, 18th April 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.9)

⁹⁹ For more on the expansion of the MacDonnells into the Route see Hill, James Michael. *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*. Athlone Press, London, 1993, pp.35-57

¹⁰⁰ Charles Eggerton, Constable of Carrickfergus, to the Lord Deputy, 20th June 1594, Carrickfergus (SP 63/175/no.19 i), Lord Deputy to Burghley, 7th November 1595, Dublin (SP 63/184/no.5)

¹⁰¹ James M'Donnell to the Lord Deputy, 27th February 1595, Dunluce (SP 63/178/no.56)

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again. James claimed that reports of his involvement with Tyrone were false and came from his enemies. He did admit that due to Tyrone and O'Donnell's strength and his defenceless position, he was forced to send some men to Tyrone. He asked for a pardon for that indiscretion as well as military assistance to help him resist Tyrone.¹⁰²

Being free from the overlordship of Tyrone appears to have been one of James' motivations as the Lord Deputy noted that he wanted to be 'exempted from anie rule of Tyrone over him or his contrie, which he greatly seems to hate.'¹⁰³ The government's holding of his brother Randal in Dublin Castle may have also influenced James' offers of submission and service. While, as previously stated, pledges did not guarantee loyalty they could on occasions be effective. James constantly requested that his brother be released or at the very least transferred to Carrickfergus for a while before his eventual release. He claimed that this would reassure his followers of Her Majesty's good disposition towards him and his country as many of them now thought Randal would never be released. Tyrone was also said to have spread a rumour that Randal had died, a rumour that James claimed many believed.¹⁰⁴ MacDonnell maintained that without Randal he 'cannott keep the country in so good an order' as he wanted and Randal's absence also prevented James from travelling to Dublin as was requested because he had no one else he could leave to defend his country. If Randal was sent to Carrickfergus James offered to go to Dublin.¹⁰⁵ These claims may have been just a ploy to secure his brother's release but John Norris did state that most of James' country depended on Randal. Moreover, when Randal was released James gave him command over *bonnachts* so Randal's leadership and military command does seem to have been genuinely valued by James.¹⁰⁶ More importantly, James' appeals for his brother's release suggests that Randal's imprisonment did concern him and was a factor stopping him from returning to Tyrone. An intelligence report does suggest this as it stated that as soon as Randal was let go, James would join with Tyrone. Norris was of a

¹⁰² Ibid, The conditions of a parley made by Charles Eggerton, 3rd October 1595, Carrickfergus (SP 63/183/no.78 ii), James McDonnell to the Lord Deputy, 4th October (SP 63/183/no.80 ii)

¹⁰³ Lord Deputy to Burghley, 15th February 1596, Dublin (SP 63/188/no.66)

¹⁰⁴ James M'Donnell to the Lord Deputy, 27th February 1595, Dunluce (SP 63/178/no.56), The conditions of a parley made by Charles Eggerton, 3rd October 1595, Carrickfergus (SP 63/183/no.78 ii), James McDonnell to the Lord Deputy, 4th October (SP 63/183/no.80 ii)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Captain Charles Eggerton to [the Lord Deputy], 31st July 1596, Carrickfergus (SP 63/192/no.7 iii), The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th July 1596, Athlone (SP 63/191/no. 10)

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similar opinion and thus believed the 'Quyte of the north is lyke to be somewhat interrupted' by Randal's release.¹⁰⁷

Perhaps James's professions of loyalty were just a ploy to secure Randal's release and he was still secretly allied with Tyrone. His admission that he sent soldiers to Tyrone would certainly hint that he may have discreetly continued to assist Tyrone. There were also accusations that he did in the end send the intercepted military supplies to Tyrone.¹⁰⁸ Yet the rift between Tyrone and James seems to have been real. When Spanish envoys met with the Ulster confederates in May 1596, they noted that MacDonnell was not part of the confederacy.¹⁰⁹ Tyrone's need to resort to force to deal with MacDonnell also shows that there was a gulf between them. To deal with MacDonnell, Tyrone used one of his favoured tactics and that was replacing an opponent with someone more amenable. Tyrone had the perfect candidate in Rory Óg MacQuillan. Tyrone's support must have been a welcome relief for the weak and 'usurped' MacQuillan and it certainly seemed to embolden him as he captured a fort of MacDonnell's and killed the warders. Tyrone would help MacQuillan hold his newly won fort.¹¹⁰ Of more concern to MacDonnell were the 700 foot and 300 horse that Tyrone gathered to invade the Route in June 1596.¹¹¹

By June though, Randal had been released, facilitated by a £200 payment from James. James also sent a young illegitimate brother, described as being of little value, as a replacement pledge.¹¹² No longer having to worry about his brother, whose £200 price tag is more evidence of his importance to James, and having the threat of Tyrone and a rejuvenated MacQuillan looming over him, MacDonnell decided that the sensible course was to make amends with Tyrone. Stopping Tyrone from supporting his Scottish relatives, the MacDonnells of Dunyveg, reassert their authority in Antrim might have also been a factor in James decision to meet with Tyrone and reconcile. Tyrone tried to further solidify the reconciliation by giving James his son Henry to foster. MacQuillan's fate was similar to Niall MacHugh's. Tyrone abandoned the weak and less useful MacQuillan and backed the stronger MacDonnell in the dispute over the Route. Tyrone expelled MacQuillan from

¹⁰⁷ Report by Gillaboy O'Flanigane of the intentions of the rebels, 12th May 1596, (SP 63/189/no.46 i), General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th July 1596, Athlone (SP 63/191/no. 10)

¹⁰⁸ James McDonnell to the Lord Deputy, 4th October (SP 63/183/no.80 ii)

¹⁰⁹ *CSP Simancas*, Vol. 4, p.639

¹¹⁰ Captain Francis Stafford to [the Lord Deputy], 10th July 1596, Newry (SP 63/191/no.19) Francis Stafford to [the Lord Deputy], 10th June 1596, Newry (SP 63/190/no.30 viii)

¹¹¹ Captain Rice Mansell to the Lord Deputy, 8th June 1596, Carrickfergus (SP 63/190/no.30 vii)

¹¹² Report by Gillaboy O'Flanigane of the intentions of the rebels, 12th May 1596, (SP 63/189/no.46 i), General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th July 1596, Athlone (SP 63/191/no. 10)

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the fort he had captured and gave it back to MacDonnell.¹¹³ However MacDonnell's relationship with Tyrone was strained by July 1597 because Tyrone still 'willeth that McQuilin shall have some parte of the Route.' MacDonnell had no interest in allowing MacQuillan a strong foothold in the Route so he was greatly perturbed with Tyrone's insistence on MacQuillan being given a portion. MacDonnell's disaffection led to him being singled out as someone who could be easily drawn from Tyrone and by September he was described by the governor of Carrickfergus, John Chichester, as being obedient albeit he had little hope that he would remain so.¹¹⁴ MacDonnell's refusal to yield any ground to MacQuillan once again exemplified that Tyrone's attempts to mediate between rivals, here and elsewhere, were futile. There was simply no middle ground to be found.

MacDonnell met with Tyrone on 1st November and the two managed to resolve their differences for the moment. To further secure MacDonnell's allegiance Tyrone took pledges from him and his brothers, as well as arranging marriage alliances. Tyrone's young daughter was promised to James and Randal agreed to marry a daughter of O'Doherty (although the marriages never actually took place). Upon his return from Tyrone, MacDonnell, with reinforcements from the Earl, raided the area surrounding Carrickfergus and Chichester responded by asking MacDonnell for a parley. When the two sides met Chichester's officers were not happy with the haughty demeanour of MacDonnell and thought it was dishonourable to 'suffer a sort of beggar to brave us.' Instead of a parley, Chichester decided to charge MacDonnell, who retreated and lured Chichester into an ambush in which he and 280 men were killed, over half of the Carrickfergus garrison. Why had MacDonnell reconciled with Tyrone? MacDonnell himself claimed that he was forced to join Tyrone because he thought Chichester was planning to betray him.¹¹⁵ In reality MacDonnell may have thought that Tyrone was now in the ascendancy. This was at least the explanation Hugh Collier, a government spy, gave as he claimed that after the death of Lord Deputy Burgh in October 1597, MacDonnell re-joined Tyrone because he saw that the 'traitor Tyroane was somewhat in better case to saue himself then before.'¹¹⁶ What is more the Carrickfergus garrison did not inspire confidence and MacDonnell was well

¹¹³ Captain Francis Stafford to [the Lord Deputy]. 10th July 1596, Newry (SP 63/191/no.19), Hill, James Michael, "The Rift within Clan Ian Mor", p.870

¹¹⁴ Memorandum, drawn up by James Nott, July 1597 (SP 63/200/no.67), Sir John Chichester to Burghley, 16th September 1597, Dublin (SP 63/200/no.125)

¹¹⁵ O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, p.69, The circumstances of the Scots' entry into parley with Sir John Chichester, 1597 (SP 63/201/no.96 i)

¹¹⁶ Collier, Hugh, *The Dialogue of Silvynne and Peregrynne*, (S.P. 63/203/no.119), p.114, Accessed at <https://celt.ucc.ie//published/E590001-001/index.html>

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aware of how under-resourced it was. Prior to Chichester's defeat 'divers of soldiers, both footemen and horssmen of this garrison runne from hence unto him [McDonnell] that knoweth too well the state of this place.'¹¹⁷

This deserting and disclosing of the weaknesses of the army to the Gaelic confederates was a common problem. Therefore, the Gaelic confederates were conscious of how the government's forces were badly supplied with provisions, clothing, munitions, horse and men and this greatly encouraged them. For example, in 1598 Ormond complained of the army's 'extreme wants' in regards to money, gun powder, men and victuals and how 'the traitors do well know, and [it] emboldeneth them to persist in their insolency and pride.'¹¹⁸ To further add to the woes of the government army, they also had to contend with the ineptness of the soldiers sent over from England. They were badly trained, if at all, so many could not even fire their weapons. An example of this occurred in October 1595. A small force was sent to relieve a besieged garrison at Belleek in County Mayo but they were too late and on the march home they were attacked. The 'new soldiers for the most part could not tell how to handle their pieces, so that the Captains were driven to take away their bullets and powder and give the same to the Irish shot'.¹¹⁹

The reputation of the inadequately trained and supplied army was extremely poor, so poor in fact that Hugh Collier went so far as to say that the army in the midlands were 'but a laughinge stock to the enemy.'¹²⁰ Tyrone was described by William Warren have so little regard for the government forces that he kept his wife and daughters with him in camp as did many other confederates.¹²¹ After the war Tyrone would tell the Spanish King not to worry about soldiers in England because they are 'all raw recruits without any experience in matters of war' and this viewpoint must have been informed by Tyrone's own dealings with soldiers sent from England during the Nine Years War.¹²² O'Donnell displayed his contempt for government forces when contemplating whether or not to invade Thomond in December 1599. Some tried to dissuade him from doing so by pointing out that the Earls of Thomond and Clanricard both had a force of 800 men but O'Donnell 'esteemed not those forces.'¹²³ The lack of regard for the ability of the government's army

¹¹⁷ Captain Charles Eggerton to [Thomas Norreys], 5th November 1597, Carrickfergus (SP 63/201/no.64 i)

¹¹⁸ The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, 19th April 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.12)

¹¹⁹ Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, 7th October 1595, Tulsk (SP 63/183/no.84 i)

¹²⁰ Collier, Hugh, *The Dialogue of Silvynne and Peregrynne*, p.24

¹²¹ William Warren to the Lord Justices Loftus and Carey, 23rd November 1599, Navan (SP 63/206/no.68 i)

¹²² Kerney Walsh, Micheline, *Destruction by Peace*, p.299

¹²³ Intelligences out of Connaught, 12th December 1599 (SP 63/206/no.81 iii)

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did impact potential defectors and influenced their decision to remain in the Gaelic confederacy or return to it as in the case of MacDonnell. Ralph Lane pointed this out after the poor performance of the army, especially the new recruits, in 1595. Lane claimed that recent defeats of crown forces in Connacht and Ulster were ‘imputed wholly to the insufficiency of the laste new supplies out of England.’ This weak, untrained and poor performing army had so ‘shaked those of the Irishie, that in hatred of thearle, had disposition to have served her majesty if....the reabell had not been greatlie in reputation strengthened and her majesty partie in the same greatly weakned.’¹²⁴ When offering to submit in 1599, Art O’Neill expressed his dim view of government soldiers, especially new recruits, and conveyed the concerns of prospective government allies. Art asked for aid but ‘let not labanaghs [new men or possibly more literally *leath-buanna*, half-soldiers] nor bad men be sent hither, but good men.’¹²⁵ Consequently it was not just the strength of Tyrone and the fear it instilled that helped keep together the Gaelic confederacy but also the weak and uninspiring government army which put off current and potential allies.

Such circumstances meant there was little incentive for MacDonnell or other disaffected confederate to join and stay with the government before 1600. By doing so they would be on the weaker side, opposing the stronger and suffering the consequences. This was best exemplified by an interaction between Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Henry Óg MacShane and Tyrone’s brother Art MacBarron. Art and Henry Óg protested that if they did not side with Tyrone then they could not ‘preserve our goods and countreys nor the lifes of our people.’ Mountjoy acknowledged their difficult situation and that previously there was little reason for them to support the crown because why would they if it meant ‘there people to be straved and spoiled only to followe our fortune in misery.’¹²⁶ Ultimately when deciding who to follow MacDonnell, Art, Henry Óg and others appear to have had the same approach as Marcus Caelius Rufus did when deciding who to side with during the Roman civil between Caesar and Pompey. He advised that in peacetime it was important to ‘follow the party most in the right: when it comes to war and the camp, the stronger party; and to make up one's mind that the safer course is the better.’¹²⁷ Prior to Docwra’s landing, Tyrone was for the most part the stronger party and thus the safer course.

¹²⁴ Sir R. Lane to Burghley, 23rd December 1595, Dublin (SP 63/185/no.24)

¹²⁵ O’Neill’s son to Sir Samuel Bagenall, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.149)

¹²⁶ The Lord Deputy to the Privy Council of England, 9th August 1602, Newry (SP 63/212/no.7)

¹²⁷ Shuckburgh, Evelyn, (trans), *The Letters 2, Cierco*. Altenmunster, Jazzybee, 2017, p.137

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Following his return to the Gaelic confederacy in November 1597, MacDonnell would remain part of it during the period before Docwra's arrival, albeit he was not especially committed and was still designated as a likely defector by the government.¹²⁸ MacQuillan would side with the government and received pay but his small means meant his defection was of little importance.¹²⁹ The government reaped few benefits from exploiting the divisions among the O'Neills of North Clondeboye, Maguires, Magennis and MacMahons. Nor did they profit much from the division between the MacDonnells and MacQuillans or the discontent resulting from the burden of supporting Tyrone's war effort. This was largely because Tyrone had prevented defections through taking pledges, detaining cattle, utilizing his intelligence network, intimidation, fear, raids and lastly imprisoning those he suspected. Moreover, Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy were largely in the ascendancy prior to 1600 and this, along with the ineffective and uninspiring government army, played a part in convincing wavering confederates to stay put. The defections that did occur had little impact. Niall MacHugh was weak and while serving with the crown he was described as a 'beggar' who 'was not able to eat without the Queen's entertainment' so his ability to hinder Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy was minimal.¹³⁰ MacDonnell's admission that he had to send men to Tyrone shows how ineffective his brief opposition to Tyrone was. However, there was one deeply divided clan that demonstrated the advantages of exploiting rifts among the Gaelic confederates and how such divisions could disrupt the confederacy. The divided clan was the O'Reillys of East Breifne.

In 1596 the unity among the O'Reillys was delicately balanced. Shane was nominally chieftain, but his weakness had forced him to accept Philip as *de facto* leader. Edmund's dislike of the government caused him to temporarily put his aspirations on hold and accept Philip's leadership. Shane's death in June destabilised the brittle unity in East Breifne.¹³¹ Now the weak Shane was replaced by his more capable and determined son Maolmordha, who was the rightful heir according to primogeniture and his father's letters patent. When his father died Maolmordha could not immediately stake his claim as he was outside East Breifne with his ally, Ormond. In his absence Philip quickly replaced his

¹²⁸ Sir Ralph Lane to Sir Robert Cecil, 1st February 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.82)

¹²⁹ A book of concordatums granted, beginning primo Martii, 1598[-9], 10th November 1599, (SP 63/206/no.16)

¹³⁰ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.78)

¹³¹ The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th July 1596, Athlone (SP 63/191/no. 10)

brother and was inaugurated as chieftain. Maolmordha was not willing to be so easily usurped so he went to John Norris, who was then in Roscommon, to seek government assistance. Backing Maolmordha in the dispute over East Breifne was the logical choice for the government. He was not only the legitimate heir but his close relationship with the loyal Ormond gave some reassurance that he could be depended on. Norris certainly thought the 'usurped' Maolmordha should be backed by the government and sent 'to oppose himself against the said Philip' so he urged the Lord Deputy to 'give him your countenance and assistance for th[e] acquiring of his right.'¹³² However no support for Maolmordha was forthcoming at this point.

Matters in East Breifne were more complicated because there was still the issue of Edmund. According to the Baron of Slane, Philip had to go to his uncle before his inauguration and looked to get his blessing. The Bishop of Meath's statement a month later that Philip and Edmund were secretly agreed with each other suggests that Philip did manage to win his uncle to his side.¹³³ If Philip did, it was only momentarily as Edmund again began to demand that as eldest he should be chieftain. In August 1596 Philip, Edmund and Maolmordha went to Dungannon where Tyrone attempted to mediate. Without any government help Maolmordha likely knew he could not gain control of East Breifne and thus decided to go to Dungannon and see what he could get. At Dungannon Edmund again reiterated that as eldest he was entitled to be chieftain. Edmund further alleged that Philip had promised him that he would be O'Reilly first. Philip did not deny this yet still maintained that he should be the O'Reilly. Maolmordha used his father's letters patent which in Gaelic Ireland was not a persuasive argument given the resistance to the introduction of primogeniture (see chapter one). Rather, Philip offered Maolmordha his father's lands and the position of *tánaiste*. The offer again shows how little being an elected successor mattered since a chieftain could simply choose his own *tánaiste*. Maolmordha rejected the offer. Tyrone was struggling with the coordination problem as he simply could not get all the interested parties to agree and eventually an exasperated Tyrone lamented that it was 'hard for me to agree you.' Tyrone decided to postpone his decision and took pledges from the three men to be held until they came to an agreement.¹³⁴

¹³² Lord General Norreys to the Lord Deputy, 15th June 1596, Roscommon (SP 63/190/no. 30 xiii)

¹³³ Lord of Slane to Thomas Jones, Lord Bishop of Meath, 3rd June 1596, Stephenstone (SP 62/190/no.11 vi), The Bishop of Meath to [the Lord Deputy], 4th July 1596, Ardraccan (SP 63/191/no.15 xii)

¹³⁴ Unknown to Lord Deputy, 3rd August 1596 (SP 63/192/no. 7 viii)

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This noncommittal judgement from Tyrone was an attempt to avoid alienating two of the parties. Tyrone though, needed to support someone and so he backed Philip, the obvious choice.¹³⁵ Maolmordha's close relationship with Ormond meant he could not be trusted. Edmund was weak and old. Philip was a younger 'man of great courage' with many followers.¹³⁶ This was especially pertinent given Tyrone's preference for supporting the stronger and more useful candidate. There seemed to be little chance of Philip defecting like Maolmordha. The government viewed him as an unredeemable rebel who was greatly trusted and valued by Tyrone. He was described as Tyrone's 'special counsellor' and his 'right hand.'¹³⁷ Tyrone valued Philip to such an extent that on one occasion, when he planned to go to Connacht, he left Philip to guard the borders of the Pale. Moreover, if the Lord Deputy attempted any incursions into Ulster, Tyrone ordered that the Ulster forces should be at O'Reilly's command.¹³⁸ Yet the relationship between the two was not as harmonious as the government thought. O'Reilly in fact had made contact with Norris in July 1596, offering 'that in all things he will follow such order, as the state shall set down.' Norris dismissed the sincerity of an offer from such a 'perverse rebel' but there was a real divide between Tyrone and Philip.¹³⁹ Philip might not have been able to give up the traditional dislike of O'Neill overlordship or resented the burdensomeness of Tyrone's war. Furthermore, it was in Philip's interests to keep the option of siding with the government open, especially as his location beside the Pale meant he was more open to attack by government forces and his rival kinsmen more easily supported. Philip was certainly concerned about his rivals overthrowing him with government assistance. He told the Bishop of Meath that he would never give the government a pledge 'unless the L.deputie and council would undertake not to give aide or countenance to Edmund O'Relie' or to Maolmordha.¹⁴⁰ By siding with the government or at the very least keeping that option open, Philip had more flexibility to preserve his interests. Philip however was still uneasy about allowing a sheriff in Cavan as he told the Bishop of Meath that they would not accept a sheriff or garrison at Cavan town until Tyrone did the like in his country. He also asked to retain his Gaelic title. Perhaps Philip mistakenly thought he could side with the

¹³⁵ Brady, Ciaran. "The End of the O'Reilly Lordship, 1584-1610," pp.185-6

¹³⁶ Hogan, Edmund. *A Description of Ireland*, p.119

¹³⁷ The Lord Deputy to the Privy Council, 14th October 1596, Dublin (SP 63/194/no.15)

¹³⁸ Sir Edward Moore to [the Lord Deputy]. 31st August 1596, Mellifont (SP 63/193/no.9 i)

¹³⁹ Certain notes [by Sir John Norreys], 27th July 1596, Athlone (SP 63/191/no.46 i)

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, and Lords Delvin and Killeen to the Lord Deputy, June 1596, Kells (SP 63/190/no.44 ix)

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government while also retaining Gaelic titles and preventing the introduction of local Tudor government.¹⁴¹

Philip was killed by Tyrone's men in September 1596. Tyrone claimed that it was an accident. He had sent men to compel Philip to return cattle that he had stolen from the Pale but Philip refused and in the ensuing struggle he was shot and killed. Most contemporary sources accepted Tyrone's explanation. The government was so delighted with the killing that it did not question Tyrone's version of events. The *Annals of the Four Masters* also claimed that Philip's death was accidental.¹⁴² However Ciaran Brady's argument that it was not an accident but a political assassination is more plausible. Brady argued that Tyrone no longer trusted Philip and his strength and the danger he posed meant O'Neill could not risk allowing him to live.¹⁴³ Tyrone's previous use of assassination certainly shows he had no qualms with taking this kind of decisive action to deal with a troublesome chieftain. What is more, Tyrone's intelligence meant he could have easily gotten word of the double game that Philip was playing with him and Dublin. There is also contemporary evidence that suggests that Philip's death was not an accident. An elegy composed for Philip does not portray his death as a lamentable accident, as the *Annals of the Four Masters* do, but a murder resulting from Ulster treachery.¹⁴⁴

Philip's death stopped a potentially dangerous defection for Tyrone but his problems in East Breifne were far from resolved. There was still the dispute between Edmund and Maolmordha. Tyrone decided to support Edmund and went to East Breifne with 1,000 men to establish his new O'Reilly. A prudent choice given Maolmordha's ties with Ormond and inclination towards the government, although Tyrone did try to placate Maolmordha by making him *tánaiste*. However, yet again the position of *tánaiste* was not enough for Maolmordha and a violent O'Reilly civil war would follow. Edmund and his faction initially got the upper hand and expelled Maolmordha's ward at Cavan town with three killed on each side. Edmund was in a strong enough position to go on the offensive and so the O'Reillys invaded the Pale with a force of 800 foot and 80 horse, burning the

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 6th October 1596, Dublin (SP 63/194/no.7), The Lord Deputy to the Privy Council, 14th October 1596, Dublin (SP 63/194/no.15), *AFM*, p.1997

¹⁴³ Brady, Ciaran. "The End of the O'Reilly Lordship, 1584-1610," pp.185-6

¹⁴⁴ Carney, James. *Poems on the O'Reillys*, pp.201-4

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town of Kells in January 1597.¹⁴⁵ Maolmordha continued to look for government support. He sent a letter requesting that seven companies be sent to East Breifne but the letter was intercepted. The next month the Lord Deputy did receive a letter from Maolmordha who offered his services.¹⁴⁶ In April 1597 there was actually a reconciliation between Edmund and Maolmordha thanks to the intervention of Maolmordha's wife, Caitlin Butler. Tyrone sent messages to the O'Reillys, telling those that had submitted or were thinking of submitting not to give the government any assurances until June, and if war recommenced then he would grant them what they wanted. Such an offer shows that Tyrone continued his carrot and stick approach to secure loyalty and prevent defections. When Caitlin heard of Tyrone's offer she went to him and promised that her husband and Edmund would both be at his direction. She also procured the release of her husband's and Edmund's pledges. Following her conference with Tyrone, she set up a meeting between her husband and Edmund. The two men took oaths to depend on Tyrone and Maolmordha promised to be 'true to' and 'honour' Edmund. Edmund for his part swore to 'love and esteem' Maolmordha 'as his sonne.' Additionally, Edmund agreed to give Maolmordha 200 polls of land 'free to himself' and also allowed him to retain his father's lands.¹⁴⁷ East Breifne consisted of 1459 polls of land so the 200 extra polls that Maolmordha received and held independently of Edmund was 14 percent of East Breifne.¹⁴⁸

Maolmordha's weak position had forced him temporarily to make amends with Edmund and so reconciliation with his great-uncle was disingenuous. By June 1597, Maolmordha received a pardon and was firmly on the side of the government.¹⁴⁹ Maolmordha was now finally given support by the government as the newly arrived Lord Deputy, Thomas Burgh, took a keen interest in reducing East Breifne to obedience. In August he went to East Breifne, recaptured Cavan town and installed Maolmordha as military governor in the shire.¹⁵⁰ Maolmordha was also given 30 men in pay and overall, government forces were, on paper at least, 430.¹⁵¹ The now better supported greatly weakened Edmund's hold on East Breifne which in turn reduced Tyrone's influence there,

¹⁴⁵ Advertisements by Patrick Caddell, 10th November 1596 (SP 63/195/no.25 viii), Captain Henry Streete to [the Lord Deputy], 22nd January 1597, Kells (SP 63/197/50 vi), Memorial thought convenient to be delivered to Sir Robert Gardener, 7th December 1596, Dublin (SP 63/196/.13 i)

¹⁴⁶ *Carew Manuscripts* Vol.3, p.257, Intelligences from the Brenny, sent to the Lord Deputy, 21st February 1597 (SP 63/197/no.106)

¹⁴⁷ Intelligences delivered to the Bishop of Meath, 14th April 1597, (SP 63/198/no. 110 xiv)

¹⁴⁸ Brady, Ciaran. "The End of the O'Reilly Lordship, 1584-1610," p.180

¹⁴⁹ *Irish Fiants*, Vol.3, p.299

¹⁵⁰ Brady, Ciaran. "The End of the O'Reilly Lordship, 1584-1610, p.186

¹⁵¹ A list of the forces upon the northern borders, 12th June 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.2/no. 72 i)

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much to his annoyance. In February 1598, Tyrone complained that Maolmordha and government forces had recently attacked and preyed Edmund's lands on six occasions. Maolmordha also killed Edmund's son and half a dozen gentlemen of the country along with their followers. Of more concern was Maolmordha's destroying much of the Gaelic confederates' provisions in East Breifne and Tyrone warned that because of Maolmordha's actions there would be food shortages and 'the death of thousands of the country people.'¹⁵² Things did not improve for Tyrone and Edmund. By June 1598 Maolmordha was so much in the ascendancy that he banished Edmund from the O'Reilly lordship, imprisoned his uncles and seized most of the region's goods. Tyrone tried to re-establish control and sent forces to East Breifne. They captured 'some islands' where provisions were kept but when they attempted to take the castle at Cavan they were repulsed.¹⁵³

Maolmordha's campaign to gain East Breifne was cut short in August 1598. He was part of Henry Bagenal's army that was defeated at the Battle of the Yellow Ford and Maolmordha was killed in the rout but was praised for his conduct during the battle and was said to have been 'a most valiant soldier [in] every way.'¹⁵⁴ Even Philip O'Sullivan Beare gave credit to Maolmordha for his courage while serving with the government.¹⁵⁵ Maolmordha's death allowed Tyrone's faction in East Breifne to regain control. Tyrone had lost faith in the aging Edmund and in October 1599 he installed a nephew of Edmund, Turlough McShane O'Reilly, as *tánaiste* and *de facto* chieftain. This is evident by Tyrone's giving Turlough rather than Edmund the pledges for the rest of the O'Reillys' loyalty.¹⁵⁶ This was yet another example of Tyrone's preference for supporting a stronger more useful candidate. Tyrone may have managed to regain East Breifne but the fact that Maolmordha, with some limited support from the government, was able to nearly expunge Tyrone's influence in the O'Reilly lordship gives an indication of how defections and the service of Gaelic allies could derail the Gaelic confederacy. There was another defection that highlighted the benefits for the government of using Gaelic allies.

¹⁵² Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Earl of Ormonde, 25th February 1598, Dungannon (SP 63/202 pt.1/no. 61 i)

¹⁵³ Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Earl of Ormonde, 16th June 1598, The Fews (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.71), The Irish Council to the Privy Council, 17th June 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.72)

¹⁵⁴ Lieutenant William Taaffe to H. Shee, 16th August 1598, (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.28 iii), Portions of some manuscript history of the time, October 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.140)

¹⁵⁵ O'Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.106

¹⁵⁶ Brady, Ciaran. "The End of the O'Reilly Lordship, 1584-1610," p.187, Notes drawn out of a letter written from the borders of the Brenny to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 28th October 1599 (SP 63/205/no.226)

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Turlough MacHenry submitted in May 1597. His submission was warmly welcomed by the government because it was thought that it would greatly weaken Tyrone and losing MacHenry's 300 foot and 60 horse certainly was a blow for Tyrone. Moreover, the position of the Fews near the frontier between Ulster and the Pale meant control of the region was strategically very important and thus for the government its 'recovery were more profitable than that of any other of his dependants of the kindred of the Earl.' There was a further setback for Tyrone as his illegitimate son, Con O'Neill, also submitted.¹⁵⁷ Why did Tyrone's half-brother and son submit? As mentioned in chapter three, Turlough and Tyrone's relationship had occasionally been strained and now, according to John Norris, the 'hard dealings of the rebellious Earl' had further alienated Turlough and caused him to submit. These hard dealings were probably the same burdens that annoyed other confederates.¹⁵⁸ Turlough MacHenry certainly had to deal with maintaining Tyrone's men like the rest. In September 1594, 100 men were reportedly cessed in the Fews and in March of the following year 100 men were again placed there.¹⁵⁹ Turlough's submission was not unexpected as there were signs of discontent in the preceding months. In April captain Francis Shane for one stated that Turlough MacHenry was one of the northern chieftains that did 'inwardly detest' being under Tyrone. Shane added that Tyrone had previously imprisoned Turlough because of 'a jealousy conceived of his return to obedience' so MacHenry's loyalty had been suspect for a while. Turlough's imprisonment may also have been part of the 'hard dealings' that Norris was referring to.¹⁶⁰

Con's submission was not unexpected either. Shortly before his submission Con was suggested as a pledge for Tyrone but Norris dismissed the suggestion because Con was 'no pledge upon hym but redy every day to run from him if he might be accepted.'¹⁶¹ According to O'Sullivan Beare the immediate catalyst for Con's submission was that he was 'vexed by his father a few days previously.' O'Sullivan Beare does not elaborate on what caused this vexation but there were some prior episodes that give an insight into the

¹⁵⁷ Lord Deputy Burgh to Burghley, 5th June 1597, Dublin (SP 63/199/no.82), Captain E. P. Symes to Sir Robert Cecil, 6th June 1597, Dundalk (SP 63/199/no.86), The Privy Council to the Earl of Ormonde, 28th December 1597, Whitehall (SP 63/201/no.120), An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)

¹⁵⁸ The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, 24th May 1597, Dublin (SP 63/199/no.58)

¹⁵⁹ Schedule of the 2,000 soldiers lately cessed on the Urraghs of Ulster, September 1594 (SP 63/176/no.60 vi), Letter from a man employed to discover the traitors to the Lord Deputy, 12th March 1595, Dungannon (SP 63/178/no.86)

¹⁶⁰ Heffernan, David, *'Reform' Treatises on Tudor Ireland*, p.341

¹⁶¹ The Lord Deputy and Council to the Lord President Sir John Norreys, 10th April 1597, Dublin (SP 63/198/no.110 iv), The Lord President Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, 21st April 1597, Drogheda (SP 63/198/no.115)

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troubled relationship between father and son.¹⁶² The most telling occurred in April 1594 when Henry Óg MacShane was raiding Monaghan and encountered a small force under Captain Thomas Henshaw. A skirmish broke out and when word reached Con, he went to Henry's aid and led a charge against Henshaw's force and put them to flight. Tyrone was not pleased with the performance of his son and son-in-law. He was angry that they allowed any of the 'English churls' to escape because they had the advantage of numbers. Tyrone lashed out at his son and said he was 'not worthie to be an Earls sonne and would not accept of him for his sonne.'¹⁶³ This type of chastisement may have opened a rift between the two. Tyrone's strict discipline and reprimands for failure to live up to his expectations were not confined to his son. At the Battle of Clontibert Tyrone fined some of his horsemen 40 cows for their slackness and if they could not pay then they would lose their horse and 'never more to be allowed for a horseman'.¹⁶⁴ On another occasion when mustering soldiers he hit 'those with his truncheon which were not redie.'¹⁶⁵ Tyrone's castigations and occasional brutality may have pushed some confederates, and even his wife, Catherine Magennis, away from him and towards the government. In 1605 his wife used 'many bitter and malicious speeches of her husband...recounting many violences which he had used and done to her in his drunkenness.' She eventually agreed to spy on him for the crown.¹⁶⁶

The defection and service of Turlough MacHenry, like that of Maolmordha, demonstrated how useful Gaelic allies were to the government. Shortly after his defection Turlough MacHenry was given 100 foot in pay and acted as a guide for Lord Deputy Burgh during his expedition to Ulster in July 1597. Their ability to serve as guides was one of the most important advantages of employing Gaelic allies. Guides were essential for government armies if they wanted to campaign in unknown and unmapped territory. Gaelic allies could also help provide spies which gave vital intelligence on the movements of the confederates. Without the help of guides and spies government forces were, in effect blind and this could limit campaigning. For example, in December 1596, John Chichester complained that he planned to do some service upon the Gaelic confederates but a 'want of both guides and espials hath prevented me.'¹⁶⁷ Turlough MacHenry's service as a guide

¹⁶² O'Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, pp.101-2

¹⁶³ Captain Thomas Henshaw to [the Lord Deputy?], 30th April 1594, Monaghan (SP 63/174/no. 37 vii) Declaration of Sir Edward Herbert and Captain Humfrey Wyllis to the Lord Deputy, 24th June 1594 (SP 63/175/no. 13v)

¹⁶⁴ Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, 9th June 1595, Dublin (SP 63/180/no.23)

¹⁶⁵ Presumptions against the Earl of Tirone's loyalty, August 1594 (SP 63/175/no.83),

¹⁶⁶ Lyons, Mary Ann. "The Wives of Hugh O'Neill, Second Earl of Tyrone," pp. 54-55

¹⁶⁷ Captain John Chichester to [the Lord Deputy], 22nd December 1596, Tullagh (SP 63/196/no.31vi)

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during Burgh's Ulster expedition further proved the value of Irish guides. Burgh marched to the River Blackwater and took a fort that Tyrone had placed on a crossing and did so without much resistance. James Perrot noted that Turlough 'undertooke to guyde the Lord Deputy over the Blackwater' and the *Annals of the Four Masters* say that it was 'the guidance and instruction' of Turlough that enabled Burgh to take the fort. Turlough also sent a small force to Dungannon which managed burn the great hall, some houses and Tyrone's mills.¹⁶⁸ Burgh was very impressed with Turlough during his expedition, telling Robert Cecil that he 'proves very honest and he is a great man in his country and may do much service.'¹⁶⁹

Turlough MacHenry's service with the government would not last long, and seven months after his submission he returned to the Gaelic confederacy. This *volte face* was not out of any sense of loyalty to his half-brother. Rather 'he was not defended and so for his succour returned.'¹⁷⁰ Yet again their inability to defend their Gaelic allies had cost the government. Turlough MacHenry may have re-joined the Gaelic confederacy but Tyrone was still suspicious of him and so Turlough was one of those imprisoned during negotiations with Ormond in April 1598. Tyrone also seized all MacHenry's goods and gave possession of the Fewes to his son Con, who like Turlough, had returned to the Gaelic confederacy.¹⁷¹ His being given the Fewes however suggests that unlike Turlough, Con managed to regain his father's trust. Tyrone's greater mistrust of Turlough was reflected by how much longer he was imprisoned compared to others like Maguire. It was not until January 1599 that Turlough was released.¹⁷² Even then Tyrone only did so to appease Art O'Neill who also had been imprisoned by Tyrone in April 1598 but managed to escape. Following his escape, lengthy negotiations took place. One of Art's demands was the release of Turlough MacHenry because Turlough was married to Art's sister, who was imprisoned alongside her husband.¹⁷³ In November 1598 it was reported that Art and Tyrone had made a temporary agreement. Tyrone agreed to set free Turlough and his wife, although there was a near two month delay until Turlough was reportedly released.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Perrott, Sir James. *The Chronicle of Ireland 1584-1608*, Herbert Wood (ed), Dublin, Stationary Office, 1933, pp.134-8, *AFM*, p.2023, O'Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, pp.101-2

¹⁶⁹ The Lord Deputy Burgh to [Sir Robert Cecil], 19th September 1597, Drogheda (SP 63/200/no.129)

¹⁷⁰ The Privy Council to the Earl of Ormonde, 28th December 1597, Whitehall (SP 63/201/no.120)

¹⁷¹ Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, 18th April 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.9)

¹⁷² The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, 19th January 1599, Dublin (SP 63/203/no.18)

¹⁷³ Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, 6th November 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.151)

¹⁷⁴ Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, 20th November 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.167)

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Tyrone probably was not willing to let Turlough go without some sort of reassurance of his loyalty and waited until the two managed to reconcile. Yet Tyrone did not secure a genuine reconciliation because Thomas Lee and Donough O'Connor Sligo both claimed that Turlough was ready to leave Tyrone.¹⁷⁵ For now Tyrone's strength meant Turlough stayed with the Gaelic confederates.

Turlough MacHenry and the other defectors had shown the advantages and disadvantages of using Gaelic allies. Turlough, Con, Shane MacBrian and James MacSorley all returned to the Gaelic confederacy and so demonstrated that Gaelic allies were not reliable. However, if they had been better protected and supported then they most likely would have continued to serve the government and this service could have been invaluable. Such differing outcomes led to vastly disparate opinions on the policy of using Gaelic allies. Some, like Fenton, thought it was imperative to take advantage of the divisions within the Gaelic confederacy and win defectors who would 'draw the bludd of the rest whereby the greater traitors maie be weakened and Her Majesty's service furthered.'¹⁷⁶ Norris believed it necessary to 'break theyr combination' and so make them 'instruments to helpe pull down one another.'¹⁷⁷

Others shared Barnaby Rich's view of Gaelic allies, or Irish serving in English companies, as harmful. Henry Knowlis advised that none of the Irish could be trusted and to do so was like trusting a dog with a bone. Instead it would be better just to take their sons as pledges or have 'themselves in safe keeping.' Muster master Maurice Kyffin was anxious about the heavy reliance on the Irish and how many of the companies were now Irish. He thought this was a 'dangerous matter...for Her Majesty to wage warre and use such forces against their countrymen, kinsmen and allyes...They runne away and revolt to the rebels daily and hourly. They betray forts, castles, howses and villages ordinarily.'¹⁷⁸ While exaggerated, these concerns were not completely unfounded. George Bingham was killed at Sligo in July 1595 by his ensign, Ulick Burke, who would then hand the castle over to O'Donnell and join the Gaelic confederacy. According to O'Sullivan Beare, Burke killed Bingham because he felt he was not adequately rewarded with booty from a raid in

¹⁷⁵ Sir William Warren to Sir Robert Cecil, 5th December 1599, Dublin (SP 63/206/no.74), Lee, Thomas, *The Discovery and Recovery of Ireland with the Author's Apology*, folio 35

¹⁷⁶ Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 20th March 1595, Dublin (SP 63/178/no.102)

¹⁷⁷ Sir J. Norreys to Burghley, 7th November 1595, Dublin (SP 63/184/no.7)

¹⁷⁸ Henry Knowlis to Robert Cecil, 10th January 1597, Kilmacthomas castle (SP 63/197/no.6), Maurice Kyffin to Burghley, 27th October 1597, Dublin (SP 63/201/no.33)

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Tyrconnell. The annals say that Burke slew Bingham because he ‘was offered insult and indignity by George and the English in general.’¹⁷⁹ However greater ambitions may have played a part in his actions because shortly after Bingham’s death, it was reported that Burke sought O’Donnell and Tyrone’s help overthrowing his cousin, the Earl of Clanricard, and obtaining his earldom.¹⁸⁰

The advice to stop using Gaelic allies was unrealistic because the badly supplied and trained army needed all the help it could get and was not in a position to reject assistance from the Gaelic Irish. Essex’s *volte face* on Gaelic allies best exemplifies this. When Essex first arrived in April 1599, with the largest army ever to leave England under Elizabeth I, over 17,000 men, he was not keen about using Gaelic allies as he put little stock in their service and in general he did not trust the Irish. He thought the only time they did anything useful against a rebel was if it was part of a private quarrel. Essex also stated that a Gaelic ally might muster 100 horse and 200 foot in order to get revenge but when for just Her Majesty’s service he will claim he can only bring six. To this problem Essex knew ‘it may be answer that matters thus standing, Her Majesty must wholly trust to her owne strengthe.’ Therefore, Essex requested as much aid from England as possible because despite the large army already sent ‘our numbers are inferior to those which come against us.’ While Essex was concerned about his army’s inferior numbers, he was not worried about a deficiency in ability because he had a dim view of the Gaelic confederacy’s capabilities, confidently declaring that ‘our cause is better, our order and discipline stronger; our courage likewise, I doubt not shall be greater.’ This underestimation of the Gaelic confederates was common and often for those who held such views, a rude awakening was in store. Robert Osborne came over with Essex and he wrote that in ‘England they say they be but naked rogues, but we find them as good men as those which are sent us, and better.’¹⁸¹ By July, Essex was well aware of the weakness of his own English troops who did not ‘make so good soldiers as these rogues here are.’ His inferior forces, both in numbers and in training, meant Essex, despite his reservations, knew he needed to engage with Gaelic allies and soldiers because ‘these rebels will hardly be subdued, if some of themselves be not used against themselves.’¹⁸² Completely rejecting

¹⁷⁹ *AFM*, p.1973, O’Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.87-9

¹⁸⁰ Lieutenant W. Martin to [Sir R. Bingham], 22nd July 1595, Boyle (SP 63/182/no. 10 v)

¹⁸¹ Robert Osborne to Edward Reynolds. 13th August 1599, Dublin, *Cecil papers*, Vol.179/no.74, The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, 29th April 1599, Dublin (SP 63/205/no.42)

¹⁸² The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, 15th July 1599, Dublin (SP 63/205/no.109)

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Gaelic allies was therefore out of the question, even if one wanted to, and there remained potential allies within the O'Neills, most notable the MacShanes and Art O'Neill.

Freeing the MacShanes was seen by some as potentially very beneficial. Captain Francis Shane argued that the popularity of the MacShanes meant if they were freed; many in the lordship would rally to their side against Tyrone. He suggested that maybe some money may convince some of the locals to liberate the popular MacShanes.¹⁸³ London too thought the MacShane could be a useful tool against Tyrone. Burghley made this stance clear to Ormond when he was about to negotiate with Tyrone at the end of 1597. They ordered Ormond to seek the MacShanes released because they would be 'a good curb to bridle the Earl of Tyrone at all times.'¹⁸⁴ Tyrone knew the danger the MacShanes posed so he did all he could to prevent them escaping. In 1595 it was reported that he gave the task of guarding them to some of his most trusted followers, the chieftain of the O'Quinns, with whom Tyrone had been fostered in his youth, and an Art MacHugh. Both men were described as 'two chief men in credit with thearle' and they had 10 men solely dedicated to guarding the MacShanes.¹⁸⁵ Tyrone also made sure to keep the MacShanes in as secure a location as possible: by 1599 the MacShanes were confined on islands within lakes. Con MacShane was kept on a heavily fortified crannog on Lough Roughan just north of Dungannon. Other 'sons of Shane' were said to be held on another cranno within a fastness in Kinelarty in County Down. That was part of MacCartan's territory, but it was unlikely that MacCartan had the duty of guarding the MacShanes given his dubious loyalty. Magennis' proximity to Kinelarty, his good relationship with Tyrone and the fact he was previously given command over MacCartan's country meant he likely had the responsibility of guarding them.¹⁸⁶ It may seem strange that Tyrone did not just execute the MacShanes as he had Hugh Geimhleach. It certainly would have been the most effective way to deal with the threat they posed. Possibly he kept the MacShanes alive to use them as pledges for their supporters such as the O'Donnellys.

Another threat to Tyrone was Art O'Neill, and as Fitzwilliam predicted, there could 'be no sound friendship between' them. During the early years of the war there was little

¹⁸³ Heffernan, David, *'Reform' Treatises on Tudor Ireland*, p.341

¹⁸⁴ Heads of matters for the Earl of Ormonde to urge upon Tyrone at the parley, 5th December 1597, (SP 63/201/no.95 i)

¹⁸⁵ Letter from a man employed to discover the traitors to the Lord Deputy, 12th March 1595, Dungannon (SP 63/178/no.86)

¹⁸⁶ Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex, June 1599 (SP 63/205/no.100), *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.4, p.264.

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prospect of Art defecting because he simply was not in a position to do so at Strabane. He was far from the Pale and the few crown garrisons in south and east Ulster. It was no coincidence that most defectors, before the Lough Foyle garrison was established, were in east or south Ulster and so at least had the possibility of receiving help from nearby crown garrisons. With no possibility of being reinforced by government soldiers, abandoning Tyrone would have been risky. If there had been some government troops to help Art then he would have joined the government and he made this clear in a 1599 letter to Samuel Bagenal at Newry. He declared that he 'would have done service myself upon O'Neill, if I were sure of aid' and when soldiers were sent he vowed to 'help to do good with them.'¹⁸⁷ Tyrone also kept a close eye on his uncertain ally. Such close a eye in fact that it led to Ralph Lane, in 1595, dismissing the idea of Art serving against Tyrone. He warned not to expect any service from Art because 'Therle hath such a keeping' of him that he dare not do anything no matter what his will is.¹⁸⁸ Despite the isolation and being closely watched, in 1597 Art did make a tentative attempt to change sides, when he contacted Lord Deputy Burgh and 'made an offer of himself and all about Strabane.'¹⁸⁹ Burgh's death, as it had with MacMahon, halted Art's defection. As aforementioned Art was imprisoned during negotiations with Ormond in April 1598 'by Tyrone in regard of the suspicion that he was well-affected to Her Majesty.' This suspicion was clearly correct and detaining Art was a sensible precaution. Art's escape in November 1598 destabilised the O'Neill lordship and a clan civil war appeared to be imminent because upon his return to his country Art assembled all his forces.¹⁹⁰ Art's forces were estimated to be about 300 foot and 60 horse, not enough to challenge Tyrone but enough to be a nuisance.¹⁹¹ Tyrone was concerned enough about Art's military capabilities that he sought to negotiate. Art agreed to send soldiers to Tyrone and to maintain Tyrone's *bonnachts* but Art was not required to serve with Tyrone in person.¹⁹² This brittle alliance broke down by May 1599 and over the next two months there were more negotiations but 'to little purpose.' Another meeting was said

¹⁸⁷ O'Neill's son to Sir Samuel Bagenall, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.149)

¹⁸⁸ Sir R. Lane to Burghley, 12th July 1595, Dublin (SP 63/181/no.54)

¹⁸⁹ Phillip Williams to Sir Robert Cecil, 20th October 1597, Dublin (SP 63/201/no.25)

¹⁹⁰ Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, 6th November 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.151),
Captain Thomas Reade to [Sir Robert Cecil], 20th November 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.151)

¹⁹¹ An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)

¹⁹² Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, 20th November 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.167)

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to have been scheduled and some sort of agreement must have been reached because in August Tyrone reportedly cessed his men in Art's country.¹⁹³

If there was an accord between the two it was as ineffectual as the first and Tyrone faced the same problem he had when mediating in the O'Reilly and North Clondeboye lordships. Tyrone was trying to reach an acceptable compromise when in reality there was none to be found because 'they will never be true one to another.'¹⁹⁴ Art's ambition for the O'Neill lordship was too strong and he never really intended to settle his quarrel with Tyrone. His main aim was to temporise until a Lough Foyle garrison was established which would provide the reinforcements Art needed to challenge Tyrone militarily.¹⁹⁵ The establishing of a government garrison at Lough Foyle had been discussed for some time by the government and they knew that it would entice the disgruntled Art to defect. The government was ready to plant the garrison in August 1598. Samuel Bagenal was given command of the operation with instructions to appeal to Art and others disillusioned with Tyrone and O'Donnell. The Lough Foyle expedition had to be delayed because of the defeat at Yellow Ford. The defeat caused a panicked government to divert the forces designated for Lough Foyle to Dublin in order to defend the vulnerable Pale.¹⁹⁶ Art's temporising and wait for the Lough Foyle garrison lasted much longer than he intended. He had thought that when the Earl of Essex arrived as Lord Lieutenant in April 1599 'that Englishe men wold com in Logh Foyle and that we shold have good play with Onele.' It would be another year until forces landed in Lough Foyle and all Art could do in the interim was to continue to equivocate when dealing with Tyrone and keep open the lines of communication with the government. He did so via Samuel Bagenal at Newry, making him offers of service and requesting the O'Neill lordship as compensation.¹⁹⁷ Tyrone's patience with Art's temporising had its limits and in the early months of 1600 he reverted to his tactic of confinement to deal with Art. Tyrone was actually able to capture Art and kept him by his side when travelling to the borders of the Pale but Art again escaped. Art

¹⁹³ Advertisements from Dundalk of Tyrone's intended courses, 19th June 1599, Dundalk (SP 63/205/no.84) [Unknown] to [Sir George Carey.], 23rd May 1599 (SP 63/205/no.68), Richard Weston to the Earl of Essex, 28th August 1599, The Bawn (SP 63/205/no.156)

¹⁹⁴ [Unknown] to [Sir George Carey.], 23rd May 1599 (SP 63/205/no.68),

¹⁹⁵ Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, 20th November 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.167)

¹⁹⁶ Instructions given to Sir Samuel Bagenall, 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.23), Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th August 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.3/no.22)

¹⁹⁷ O'Neill's son to Sir Samuel Bagenall, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.149), Sir Arthur O'Neill to John Fleming, March 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.2/no. 28 i)

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would from then on remain aloof, hiding and waiting in a fastness: 'expecting the coming of Her Majesty's forces at Lough foyle.'¹⁹⁸

O'Donnell faced many of the same problems as Tyrone did in regards to maintaining the fragile unity of his clan and the loyalty of his followers. O'Donnell, as previously mentioned, used many of the same tactics as Tyrone, such as taking pledges and imprisonment. According to James O'Neill, there was one unique method that O'Donnell used to deal with his most bitter rival, Niall Garbh, and it was a tactic reminiscent of King David and Uriah the Hittite. In October 1593, Maguire's forces clashed with Henry Bagenal and Tyrone at a ford near Beleek, and Maguire's men were decisively beaten but O'Neill contends that Maguire never really intended to put up much resistance. Rather, Maguire and Tyrone's aim was to deceive and divert the crown's military resources in an ineffective campaign and prolong Tyrone's facade of loyalty. The worst and most disposable troops were sent and were to be sacrificed to uphold Tyrone's duplicity and allow him to fight alongside Bagenal, safe in the knowledge that he was doing little harm to his allies and that Bagenal was wasting his time and resources. Maguire himself did not even enter the fight and remained nearby. O'Donnell could have known that soldiers were to be sacrificed and this gave him an opportunity to rid himself of Niall Garbh. He sent Niall Garbh, along with 60 horse, 60 swordsmen and 100 Gallowglass, to aid Maguire and perhaps hoped that Niall Garbh would perish in the battle. If this was O'Donnell's intention then he would be disappointed, as Niall Garbh survived the fray. O'Donnell imprisoned Niall Garbh in February 1594 but he was quickly released after he surrendered his brother as a pledge.¹⁹⁹

After this O'Donnell appears to have begun to trust Niall Garbh and assigned him important tasks and command over better soldiers. When returning from Connacht in January 1597, after he had burned Athenry and the suburbs of Galway town, O'Donnell left Niall Garbh behind and in command of his *bonnachts* with orders to continue the war in Connacht. Niall was imprisoned in April 1598 after the negotiations with Ormond but by the end of the year he once more commanded O'Donnell's soldiers during another raid of Connacht and Thomond. At a siege at Collooney in the summer of 1599, Niall Garbh was given charge of the besieging force after O'Donnell left for the Curlew Mountains to

¹⁹⁸ Intelligences out of the North, 21st /28th March 1600, Dungannon (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.63 i), Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, 26th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.141)

¹⁹⁹ O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.33-4

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meet Conyers Clifford's army, which had been sent to relieve the besieged garrison.²⁰⁰ Under O'Donnell, Niall Garbh was not just given command but given command of sizable forces. The Baron of Delvin once encountered Niall Garbh and estimated that his force was 500 men.²⁰¹ It is odd that O'Donnell put so much trust in and gave a great deal of authority to such a dangerous rival. It was not as if Niall Garbh's ambition for Tyrconnell and hatred of O'Donnell had abated during the war.²⁰² He was more than willing to defect, and Art O'Neill left no doubt to Niall's intention in a letter to Samuel Bagenal. Art made sure to remind Bagenal that Niall would defect and do great service for the Queen and Art would have been well aware of Niall's real intent because they had a close relationship. Mountjoy would even describe them as having 'an extraordinary fastness of love' for each other.²⁰³

Unsurprisingly this willingness to defect made Niall Garbh a key target for the government. Why then did O'Donnell give Niall Garbh command of soldiers instead of treating with the utmost suspicion? Niall Garbh was brave and a skilled commander. Perhaps this clouded O'Donnell's judgement and explains why he turned to his rival when a commander was needed.²⁰⁴ Hugh Rua had been fostered with Niall Garbh's father and his sister was married to Niall.²⁰⁵ Such connections may have caused Hugh Rua to hesitate taking stronger action against Niall Garbh such as a lengthy confinement or having him executed. Perhaps O'Donnell was credulous or underestimated the threat Niall Garbh posed. O'Donnell's treatment of Niall Garbh was consistent with how he treated his other rivals, less ruthlessly than Tyrone. He never used assassinations, nor did he imprison his rivals indefinitely as was the fate of the MacShanes and probably Art if he had not escaped. This was not because O'Donnell lacked ruthlessness. He had no qualms about hanging pledges.²⁰⁶ Whatever the reason, O'Donnell's mild treatment of Niall Garbh and the misplaced faith he put in him was a major mistake that would have dire consequences once Docwra arrived.

²⁰⁰ *AFM*, p. 2011, 2099, 2125, The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the Council, to the Privy Council, 4th May 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.26)

²⁰¹ A note of services done by the Lord of Delvin, 1600 (SP 63/207 pt. 1/no.88 i)

²⁰² Heffernan, David, *'Reform' Treatises on Tudor Ireland*, pp.339-40

²⁰³ O'Neill's son to Sir Samuel Bagenal, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.149), The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 15th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no104)

²⁰⁴ For an account of Niall Garbh's bravery see Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd November 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.7/no.10)

²⁰⁵ Casway, Jerrold. "Women in Flight." *History Ireland*, Vol. 15, No. 4, (July-Aug, 2007), p. 74.

²⁰⁶ A part of Sir Conyers Clifford his letters, 27th February 1598 (SP 63/202 pt.1/no.58)

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Niall Garbh was not the only one within Tyrconnell whose loyalty to O'Donnell continued to be in doubt. O'Doherty's commitment to Hugh Rua remained uncertain and he was seen by the government as one who would be 'drawne easely from O'Donnell.'²⁰⁷ O'Doherty's position in Inishowen, isolated and far from any government garrison, meant defection was risky. He had thought some forces would have landed Lough Foyle during the early stages of the war. O'Doherty and others in Inishowen expressed their disappointed and bemusement over this when they meet with Captain Thornton in November 1598. They told Thornton that they wondered 'that in all these three years warres, there hath not anie of her Majesty's forces landed in Lough foile, which they hold to be the onelie waie to end the warres.'²⁰⁸ Without such forces O'Doherty's decision to delay was sensible given the fate of an uprising against Hugh Rua in 1598. This uprising was the brainchild of Shane MacManus Óg O'Donnell, a first cousin of Hugh Rua O'Donnell. Shane accused his cousin of being 'extreme and tiranical' and of 'havinge wrongfullie and unjustly usurped the name and seignorie of odonnell.' Shane was too weak to resist O'Donnell, so he had no option but to follow him until he heard that his brother-in-law, Brian Óg O'Rourke, decided to defect. This gave Shane the impetus he needed to abandon O'Donnell and so he went to O'Rourke. Both men would meet with and submitted to Conyers Clifford in February 1598. Shane claimed to be a representative of all those displeased with O'Donnell, including Hugh Dubh O'Donnell, O'Boyle and many of the MacSweenys. Shane promised that he and the rest would 'advance and further her highness service' if supported and defended from O'Donnell. He also requested that Tyrconnell be annexed to Connacht and delivered 'from the Tirany of the archtraitor odonnell.'²⁰⁹ After his submission, Shane was sent back to Tyrconnell by Clifford and told to assemble those who were against O'Donnell and take up arms. Clifford had promised Shane that he would 'succor them with all the force I cold' but he could not fulfil his promise because Ormond prevented him. There was a cessation between the government and the Gaelic confederates and Ormond did not want Clifford breaking the cessation by attacking O'Donnell.²¹⁰

Shane did not manage to garner much local support and MacSweeny Doe was the only chieftain of note to join him. There were rumours that MacSweeny defected because

²⁰⁷ *APC*, Vol.29, pp.59-60, *Carew Manuscripts* Vol.3, p.295

²⁰⁸ Captain George Thornton's letter to the Earl of Ormond, 3rd November 1598, Carrickfergus (SP 63/202 pt.4/no.34 viii),

²⁰⁹ Submission of Shane mac Manus oge O'Donell, of Tyrconnell, for himself and others, 14th February 1598, Boyle, *Cecil papers*, Vol.141/no.194

²¹⁰ Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, 24th April 1598, Athlone (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.21),

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of ‘jealousy, that he conceived unto O'Donnell for his wife.’²¹¹ MacSweeny later complained that O'Donnell had ‘deceived me with words, even when the church had undertaken in his behalf.’ MacSweeny did not specify what O'Donnell’s ‘deception’ was but it does indicate that a broken promise contributed to MacSweeny defection.²¹² Without any government support Shane and MacSweeny could not put up much of a fight against O'Donnell. Shane was captured and MacSweeny had sixteen of his men killed and was forced to flee to Connacht and live there in exile.²¹³ The speed with which O'Donnell put down this uprising may explain why Shane was not able to gather many local allies or Shane may have exaggerated the level of disaffection within Tyrconnell. The utter failure of Shane and MacSweeny’s resistance against O'Donnell highlights the dangers and the futility of defecting if not properly reinforced. The caution of those who wanted to defect but were afraid to unless supported by government forces, was more than justified. Shane McManus Óg and MacSweeny were not the only ones who conspired with Clifford. O'Donnell’s brother and *tánaiste*, Rory O'Donnell, made a secret agreement with Clifford and promised to serve against his brother but Hugh Rua discovered the plot and imprisoned his brother.²¹⁴ Yet O'Donnell did not take more action against his brother or Shane other than imprisoning them for a short time. While Rory did not make any other serious attempts to defect, Shane would.

Another strategy used by Tyrone and O'Donnell to recruit allies and keep the Gaelic confederacy was the employment of a ‘faith and fatherland’ ideology. This ideology appealed to and promoted a love of one’s faith and native land and by doing so it transcended divisive local Gaelic politics and ethnic differences between the Gaelic Irish and Old English. Therefore, the use of such an ideology was potentially very useful when attempting to form a nationwide confederacy in a divided Gaelic Ireland. Tyrone was not the first to utilise a faith and fatherland ideology. Silken Thomas in the 1530s and Shane O'Neill in the 1560s both used religion as they tried to frame their rebellions as holy crusades for the Catholic faith in order gain support among Catholics at home and abroad.²¹⁵ James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald during the Desmond rebellions was first to

²¹¹ Sir George Carew, President of Munster, to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th February 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.101)

²¹² The causes of suspicion against McSwine Nee Doe, 28th August 1600, (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.96)

²¹³ Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, 24th April 1598, Athlone (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.21),

²¹⁴ The Lord Deputy and Councillors to the English Privy Council, 9th January 1603, Athlone (SP 63/212/no.114)

²¹⁵ Morgan, Hiram. “Hugh O'Neill and the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No.1 (1993), p.26-7

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properly combine faith with fatherland as he looked to gain allies by urging them to ‘stand for God’s honour, the health of our country and for restoring of the Catholic faith again.’²¹⁶ James O’Neill has dismissed the role of faith and fatherland in relation to Connacht and Ulster during the Nine Years’ War. O’Neill does not think it was used to win over allies within those regions and points to a letter from O’Donnell to O’Connor Sligo and its lack of religious overtones as evidence of this. In order to convince O’Connor to join the Gaelic confederacy, O’Donnell offered him the support of 400 troops and promised to cancel his debts. O’Donnell also threatened to support another claimant for the O’Connor Sligo lordship if O’Connor refused his offer. At no point was religion cited. Furthermore, O’Neill argues that Tyrone only began to mention religion as one of his motives in January 1596 and only started using it to attract potential allies in the summer of 1596. Those potential allies were not in Connacht or Ulster but in Munster. Tyrone, O’Donnell and other confederates sent a letter to Munster, urging the recipients to ‘assist Christ’s Catholic religion and....make war with us.’ Tyrone began to use the love of one’s fatherland in 1598 and only did so to appeal to the Old English Catholics of the Pale. He hoped to overcome the ethnic differences by substituting narrow concerns about local lordships for patriotism and the need to defend their shared Catholicism.²¹⁷

O’Neill is certainly correct that when Tyrone and the Ulster chieftains first rebelled faith was not a primary motive for them. Even Peter Lombard did not claim that Tyrone began the war for religious reasons. Lombard of Waterford was a doctor of theology at Louvain and was sent to Rome on university business in 1598. While in Rome he was convinced to help Tyrone’s efforts to gain papal support and prepared a memorandum for the Pope. According to Lombard’s memorandum Tyrone admitted at a parley at Dungannon that religion ‘was not the cause which first moved me to think of war’ because he had other just reasons for war such as ‘intolerable oppression and servitude.’ Much of the memorandum derived from information supplied by Tyrone himself so he may very well have uttered those words.²¹⁸ However it would be wrong to dismiss faith and fatherland as it pertains to Ulster and Connacht, especially the religious aspect. For one

²¹⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, pp. 23–24

²¹⁷ O’Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.105-8, *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.3, p.179

²¹⁸ Morgan, Hiram. “Policy and Propaganda in Hugh O’Neill’s Connection with Europe” in Thomas O’Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *The Ulster Earls and Baroque Europe: Refashioning Irish Identities, 1600-1800*, Four Courts Press, 2010, p. 35, Lombard, Peter, *The Irish War of Defence, 1598-1600. Extracts from the De Hibernia Insula Commentarius of Peter Lombard*, Matthew Byrne (ed), Cork, 1930, pp.39-41

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there was the presence of bishops and priests among the Gaelic confederates in Ulster and Connacht. They were present from the beginning of the war and central to the establishment of an alliance between Spain and the Gaelic confederacy. Some of these clergymen had spent time on the continent, where they developed a strong commitment to the Catholic reformation. James Archer, a Jesuit originally from Kilkenny, returned to Ireland in 1596, after over a decade on the continent, and he heavily influenced Tyrone and his use of a faith and fatherland ideology.²¹⁹

Archer and other clergy, while with the Ulster and Connacht confederates, were very active. Archer gave a description of his activities while in Tyrone's camp before the Battle of the Yellow Ford. He heard confessions, 'administered the sacrament in the camp....converted ten priests who were living in schism and concubinage' and said mass.²²⁰ Florence Conry, a Franciscan and O'Donnell's confessor, provided a similar service for the Ulster confederates following his return to Ireland in April 1598. He helped in 'the Catholic military camp of the earls Ó Neill and Ó Domhaill...hearing confessions, preaching and supporting those demoralised by the suffering of war.'²²¹ It is unlikely that the zealous Conry and Archer would not have incorporated some of their faith and fatherland beliefs when preaching and encouraging the confederates. O'Donnell's harangue before the Battle of the Curlews in August 1599 gives a possible insight into the kind of inspirational talk Conry would have used to spur on those who were 'demoralised.' According to O'Donnell's biographer, Ó Cléirigh a cleric, Hugh Rua told his forces that they have 'the power of God, and that he is victorious who trusts in the Trinity and believes that the One God turns the army that fights for falsehood into rout before the few who stand for truth. Thus, we few stand for the right, and the English with their great host stand for the wrong.'²²² Assuming the speech was not an invention by Ó Cléirigh, it was replete with the kind of Maccabean ideology used regularly by Conry so he may have helped O'Donnell compose his speech and used similar religious rhetoric himself when raising the spirits of the Gaelic confederates.²²³ A letter from Edmund Óg MacDonnell, the dean

²¹⁹ Morgan, Hiram. "Policy and Propaganda in Hugh O'Neill's Connection with Europe", pp.28-9, Canning, Ruth A. *The Old English in Early Modern Ireland: the Palesmen and the Nine Years' War, 1594-1603*. Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2019, pp.17-9

²²⁰ Hogan, Edmund. *Distinguished Irishmen of the Sixteenth Century*, London, Burns and Oates, 1894, pp.324-5

²²¹ Quoted in Hazard, Benjamin. *Faith and Patronage: The Political Career of Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, c. 1560-1629*. Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2010, pp.32-3

²²² *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.221-3

²²³ Hazard, Benjamin. *Faith and Patronage*, p.33

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of Armagh, to his father also exhibits that religion was being pushed by the clergy as an agenda for the Ulster confederates and used to encourage Tyrone. Tyrone sent Edmund to Spain to solicit support and in May 1595 Edmund wrote to his father and asked him to inform Tyrone that he had given the Spanish a report strongly commending him. MacDonnell also added that it was imperative for his father to impress on Tyrone ‘that, with Divine assistance, aids will come his way provided only he fights in defence of the Church.’²²⁴

There is also evidence that clergy used the promise of absolution in order to gain support. The Bishop of Derry, Redmond O’Gallagher, accompanied O’Donnell on an expedition to Connacht in July 1596 and according to O’Sullivan Beare, O’Gallagher offered to absolve from heresy ban of those who were willing to desert the government. A late 1593 letter from the Rome based Cardinal, William Allen, gave O’Gallagher and other bishops in the north permission to do this as Allen told them to ‘absolve penitents from all their sins no matter how enormous....even from heresy.’²²⁵ The fact that O’Gallagher was with O’Donnell when he made this offer of absolution suggests that O’Donnell must have played a part, either ordering O’Gallagher to make the proposal or at least sanctioning it. The clergy helped to maintain the unity of the confederates by acting as peacemakers when tensions arose. Archer claimed to have played the part of a marriage counsellor and reconciled a couple which ‘put a stop to dangerous dissensions which existed among members of both families.’²²⁶ Conry worked ‘hard to maintain accord between the nobles of the Catholic Confederacy against the foe’.²²⁷ Edmund Magauran, the Archbishop of Armagh, had to intervene when Hugh Maguire and Brian Óg O’Rourke fell out over the division of a prey taken during a raid. O’Rourke complained about his meagre share but Maguire justified it by claiming that it was his men who took the prey. Without Magauran’s intervention the two men would not have ‘parted friends.’ He also helped settle a succession dispute between O’Rourke and one of his rivals Hugh Galt O’Rourke.²²⁸

²²⁴ Walsh, Paul. *Irish Chiefs and Leaders*, Colm O. Lochlainn (ed), Dublin, Sign of the Three Candles, 1960, pp.82-3

²²⁵ O’Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.95, Quoted in Devlin, Ciarán, “Some Episcopal Lives” in Henry Jefferies and Ciarán Devlin (eds), *History of the Diocese of Derry*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2000, pp. 127–8.

²²⁶ Hogan, Edmund. *Distinguished Irishmen of the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 324-5

²²⁷ Quoted in Hazard, Benjamin. *Faith and Patronage*, p.33

²²⁸ Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, 30th May 1593, Roscommon (SP 63/170/no. 5iii), Magauran to Hugh Galt O’Rourke, June 1593, (SP 63/170/no.26)

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Again it is likely that Archer, Corny and Magauran would have drawn on their shared religious cause when attempting to assuage frictions between confederates. There were more signs than just the presence and comments of the clergy that religion was used to recruit allies, motivate confederates and maintain cohesion in Ulster and Connacht. Firstly, O'Donnell did actually make references to God when writing to an unspecified O'Connor, probably either one of the O'Connor Roes or Dons in Roscommon. O'Donnell told the unnamed O'Connor that if he refused to join the Gaelic confederacy, then they will 'take God to our side against you.'²²⁹ In addition there was a reference to the Pope during a siege at Tusk Abbey which implies that the defence and restoration of the Catholic faith was to some extent a motivation. The siege took place during a cessation in the early months of 1596 and the government hoped to use the cessation to supply the government garrison at Tusk Abbey. The besieging Connacht confederates however prevented the provisions from reaching their destination and they claimed that 'the land and Abbey of Tulske was the Popes.'²³⁰ Even in Galway town a Protestant cleric, William Daniel, complained of priests stirring up religious zeal and rebellious intentions which resulted in some Galway townsmen trying to intimidate and stop him preaching by throwing stones through his window.²³¹ A poem for Dermott O'Connor Don hints at the presence of religious motivations for the Gaelic confederates in Connacht. The poem urges O'Connor to expel 'the heretics who seized Ireland.'²³²

From Ulster there were the statements of the chieftain of the MacDonnells of Tyrone, a Galloglass family from Ballygawley, in June 1596.²³³ MacDonnell made these statements in an informal conversation with a government official and during a cessation when the government was hopeful a stable peace could be established. MacDonnell was not optimistic about the chances of a lasting peace because of religion as 'they, the Ulster men, were told how meritorious yt was to establish the same throughout the Realme.'²³⁴ MacDonnell was not simply mouthing the party line by trying to portray the war as some kind of religious crusade, but providing real intelligence. He actually went explicitly against Tyrone by divulging information about the confederates and their

²²⁹ Hugh O'Donnell to O'Connor and his sons, 8th July 1596 (SP 63/191/no.14)

²³⁰ William O'Comyn to Sir Richard Bingham, 21st February 1596, Roscommon (SP 63/186/no.86 xi)

²³¹ William Daniel, preacher of the Word, to Burghley, 26th September 1596, Galway (SP 63/193/no.38)

²³² Hoyne, Mícheál. "A Bardic Poem to Diarmaid Ó Conchubhair Donn.", p.74,88

²³³ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.89

²³⁴ Mr. Baron John Elliott of the Exchequer's report of speeches uttered before him by M'Donnell, 16th June 1596, Newry (SP 63/190/no.44 i)

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meeting with Spanish envoys, information which Tyrone had done his best to conceal. MacDonnell appeared to be disgruntled with his overlord and the Spanish and that was probably why he was willing to divulge such sensitive information.²³⁵

The attempts of Tyrone and O'Donnell to implement Tridentine reforms in Ulster, more specifically a crackdown on concubinage among the clergy, may also have reflected a push towards framing their war in the north as a religious crusade. Both men criticised the bishop of Raphoe for causing a scandal, probably for keeping a concubine, and asked Rome in 1596 to appoint suitable men to the leading dioceses rather than men of ill repute.²³⁶ This may not have been an isolated incident as according to Lombard there was a wider campaign to stamp out concubinage throughout their territories.²³⁷ The sincerity of such reforms was questionable especially in the case of Tyrone whose commitment to Catholicism in his earlier years was in doubt as he had no trouble accompanying Lord Deputies to Protestant services when in Dublin. The Baron of Delvin would later challenge Tyrone on his earlier commitment to Catholicism. Delvin stated that he had always been a devout Catholic even when Tyrone 'was thought not be one.'²³⁸ Yet his and O'Donnell efforts in Ulster seemed enough to convince Tridentine reformers at the cathedral of Raphoe of their commitment to the Catholic cause and Tridentine ideals. In July 1600 they wrote to the Pope for a replacement relic recently destroyed after English soldiers burnt the cathedral's roof and they were confident that an alliance with Tyrone and O'Donnell would lead to the restoration of the cathedral because their 'triumphs in the cause of religion' had left the heretical English 'bruised and battered.' Moreover, O'Donnell was a man of 'conspicuous fervour' and 'deeply devoted' to the Catholic church and charity.²³⁹ Perhaps they were just saying what they thought would best help them receive help from the Pope. Yet, even if one discounts their confidence in Tyrone and O'Donnell's faith and the war as a Catholic crusade, the comments of the MacDonnell chieftain and the presence among the Ulster confederates of Conry and Archer, along with their rhetoric, suggests that religion was employed in the north to unify.

²³⁵ Ibid, Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone's rebellion*, p.211

²³⁶ MacCuarta, Brian. *Catholic Revival in the North of Ireland, 1603-41*. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2007, pp.21-2

²³⁷ Lombard, Peter, *The Irish War of Defence*, pp.37-9

²³⁸ For a discussion on Tyrone's faith see O'Connor, Thomas, *Hugh O'Neill: religious chameleon, free spirit or ardent Catholic?* in Hiram Morgan (ed), *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Wordwell, 2004, pp.59-72

²³⁹ MacCuarta, Brian. *Catholic Revival in the North of Ireland, 1603-41*, p.21-2, Maguire, Edward, *A History of the Diocese of Raphoe*, Vol.1, Dublin, Browne and Nolan, pp.14-7

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It is difficult to quantify how effective using religion was as a motivating factor in Ulster but defectors, such as Art O'Neill and Niall Garbh O'Donnell, all requested liberty of conscience when negotiating their submission with the government. This was rejected and government officials instead just assured the defectors that they would not be harmed or interfered with because of their religion as long as they remained law-abiding subjects.²⁴⁰ Thus the notion of fighting for the defence of Catholicism was not enough to deter some disaffected confederates from making contact with the government and promises that they would not be persecuted were sufficient to assuage fears. The relative ease with which they were reassured may have in part been due to Elizabeth's non-aggressive stance on religion in Ireland and the secular nature of the crown's expansion into Gaelic areas. For instance while crown officials and English laws were established in East Breifne, the spiritual authority for the region still rested with the Catholic bishop of Kilmore.²⁴¹ Such precedents may have caused the Ulster confederates to feel less threatened on religious grounds and more easily assuaged. Moreover, it should be noted that submitting was not a sign of a lack of commitment to the Catholic faith. O'Sullivan Beare stressed this fact when discussing Conor Rua Maguire's defection as 'he shrank as much as the others from the false religion of the English.'²⁴² The presence of chaplains among defectors also reinforces that by joining the government one was not turning their back on their faith. Henry Óg MacShane retained Cúchonnacht O'Kenan as his chaplain following his defection and when Donal Ballach O'Cahan submitted and received his pardon his chaplain, Donough MacRedie dean of Derry, was listed among his followers.²⁴³ The case of O'Cahan's brother, Shane Carragh, best illustrates that those who defected were still committed Catholics. Shane submitted alongside his brother in the summer of 1602. His devotion to Catholicism was incontrovertible and he displayed this when he was executed in 1608 for his part in the rebellion of Cahir O'Doherty. Before his execution a monk was sent to give Shane religious guidance but this monk had avoided execution himself by renouncing his obedience to the Pope. When Shane heard the monk had abjured his Catholic faith 'he thruste him away from him and said that he deserued hanginge for

²⁴⁰ List of men in the north whom Sir Arthur O'Neill offers to bring in, 18th April 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.123), The demands of Neale Garve to me the Governor of Her Majesty's forces at Lough Foyle, 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.2 i), Articles of agreement between Sir Henry Dockwra and Hugh Boy McDavid, 14th February 1601, (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.48)

²⁴¹ Maginn, Christopher, *William Cecil, Ireland, and the Tudor State*. Oxford University Press, 2012, pp.176-7,181

²⁴² O'Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.174

²⁴³ *Carew Manuscript*, Vol.4, p.442, MacCuarta, Brian. *Catholic Revival in the North of Ireland*, p.33

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reuolting from the popes religion: and so caste him selfe from the gallows and was hanged: with thre or foure others.’ One of the others executed was Donough MacRedie who also refused to reject the authority of the Pope.²⁴⁴ Commitment to Catholicism was not therefore a barrier for potential defectors: religion as a unifying force had its limitation in Ulster.

Tyrone also tried to prevent collaboration with the government by instilling a mistrust of their intentions. Tyrone tried to recruit Captain James Fitzgarrett of Lecale by warning him of the Queen and her government’s desire to ‘suppresse the nobilletie and gentlemen of Ireland.’²⁴⁵ When Tyrone sent a messenger to Shane MacBrian in early 1594, the messenger told Shane ‘to be upon his keping and not to give anie confidence or trust to English men’ and reminded him of the betrayal and the execution of his father.²⁴⁶ Tyrone and the confederates would continue to foster suspicions of the English by emphasising that they could not be trusted. The government’s offers of peace and mercy were just a ploy to weaken the Irish by getting them to kill each other and once those who fought for the government were no longer useful, they would be disregarded and treated no better than a rebel. The Queen complained that Archer and others went so far as to claim that the English could not be trusted because ultimately they planned to ‘not only to conquer, but also utterly to extirp and root out all that nation.’²⁴⁷ In 1595 Norris stated that the confederates ‘seditiously spread abrode through all thys realm rumours that the rebels did offer to submytt themselves to any conditions’ but this offer was rejected because the Queen’s ‘purpos was to make an entyer conquest of thys realm and prosecute the ruyne of all the Irish’.²⁴⁸ In Munster, at the beginning of 1600, Tyrone and Archer sent a message to the Viscount of Buttevant in which they alleged that Lord Deputy Burgh had been given a ‘speciall commission at his best opportunitie to put unto the sword all persons of irish without restraint or exception.’²⁴⁹ It should be noted that Tyrone’s warning Buttevant, who was Old English, that the ‘sword of extirpation hangeth over your head as well as ours’ was another attempt to overcome any divide between the Gaelic Irish and those of English

²⁴⁴Ibid, p.35, Falkiner, C. L. (ed), “William Farmer's Chronicles of Ireland.” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 22, No. 87, (July 1907), p. 540, *The Irish Fiants*, Vol. 3 p.578

²⁴⁵ Advertisements delivered by Captain James FitzGarrett of Lecale, 12th August 1596, Newry (SP 63/192/no.7 xi)

²⁴⁶ Examination of Shane M'Brian, 14th March 1594 (SP 63/173/no.92 v), For the fate of Brian MacPhelim see chapter three

²⁴⁷ Queen Elizabeth to [Unknown], 1599 (SP 63/206/no.136), A brief declaration of the state wherein Ireland now standeth, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.142)

²⁴⁸ Sir J. Norreys to Burghley, 25th August 1595, Newry (SP 63/182/no.57)

²⁴⁹ A copy of papers which O'Neill and Father Archer sent, 25th February 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.130 i)

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descent. The two needed to band together because the 'cruel yoke' of English 'heresy and tyranny' would not distinguish between the Gaelic Irish and Old English.²⁵⁰

Tyrone also used the fear of a total conquest to motivate his men during preparations for the Battle of Moyry Pass in September 1600. He did this by framing the battle as the last stand for the preservation of Ulster. He told those digging trenches that the trenches were not simply just for their own protection but also to 'safeguard their wives and children' because if the government forces were able to pass through Moyry then they could say 'farewell Ulster and all the north'.²⁵¹ Propagating the idea that the English planned a conquest and eradication of the Irish appears to have been successful as it was prevalent enough that it required the government to issue a proclamation dismissing the rumour that 'we intended an utter extirpation and rooting out of that nation, and conquest of the country.'²⁵² In turn Tyrone and Archer would dismiss this proclamation and its offer of clemency as a ploy to 'hoode wink your eyes and blindfold your sense.'²⁵³ The idea that those who sided with the government would be betrayed or at the very least disregarded once they served their purpose was reportedly believed by many, and so it proved for some like Niall Garbh, O'Cahan and Cahir O'Doherty. For instance a 1599 report on the state of Ireland complained that priests, especially Archer, were successfully spreading the rumour that 'such as do join with us are but made instruments to cut off the rest, and to serve the present necessity; and, when the turn is served, no more regard will be had of those that do service than the rebel'.²⁵⁴ Talk of the deceitfulness of the English was frequent enough that it was highlighted by Thomas Lee. He complained that the confederates were saying 'that there is noe trust in us' and it was in fact safer to be in rebellion. In rebellion at least the only danger they faced was being caught and killed by the 'English churle' and he first 'must hit us before he can kill us, and he must take us before he can hange us.'²⁵⁵

It was not surprising that this tactic would find some success because there were legitimate reasons to be sceptical of the government and to fear duplicity. Ironically Thomas Lee's actions show why. Art O'Toole was an ally of the crown but also an enemy

²⁵⁰ Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to David, Viscount Buttevant, Lord Barry, 25th February 1600, Tyrone's camp (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.130)

²⁵¹ Advertisements received by Sir Geoffrey Fenton out of McMahan's country, 7th October 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.84)

²⁵² Proclamation for Ireland, 25th January 1599 (SP 63/203/no.25)

²⁵³ A copy of papers which O'Neil and Father Archer sent, 25th February 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.1/no.130 i)

²⁵⁴ A brief declaration of the state wherein Ireland now standeth, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.142)

²⁵⁵ Lee, Thomas, *The Discovery and Recovery of Ireland with the Author's Apology*, Folio. 54

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of Lee, who captured him after he returned from a campaign against Tyrone in late 1597 and blinded him.²⁵⁶ There were older incidents of treachery like the capture and execution of Brian MacPheilm O'Neill. These treacherous acts were ingrained in the consciousness of the Irish and caused anger, fear and mistrust. This anger can be seen in the reactions to the massacre at Mullaghmast which happened in 1578. The massacre occurred when Francis Cosby, seneschal of Laois, invited some O'Mores to parley with him at Mullaghmast and promised them safe conduct. However, when they arrived, they were killed and estimates of the casualties ranged from about 40 to 180. The level of anger towards this massacre can be discerned from the condemnation of the event seeping into the most apolitical and odd places such as a medical text written shortly after. The text dealt with an unusual case of menstrual bleeding but the author, Corc Óg Ó Cadhla, was so infuriated by the massacre that he felt the need, in the margins of the text, to write about the 'disgraceful deeds' committed at Mullaghmast.²⁵⁷ How embedded massacres like Mullaghmast were in the consciousness of Gaelic society is conveyed by the fact that they were still being talked about long after. When negotiating with Ormond in December 1597, Tyrone produced a long list of 'sondry abuses don againste us' which included the massacre at Mullaghmast and the murder of Brian MacPhelim O'Neill. Tyrone actually went as far back as the 1550s, referencing wrongs done during the plantation of Laois and Offaly.

Tyrone claimed that these acts of treachery and maltreatment caused him and the other Gaelic confederates 'to feare the like measure, to be don against us.' Fenton thought this was disingenuous and Tyrone was 'ripping up these old sores of the kingdom' in order to make himself popular but fear of the English betrayal was not contrived.²⁵⁸ A letter from Brian Riabhach O'More to Tyrone letter and intelligence reports show that the Gaelic confederates were legitimately concerned about being double-crossed. O'More warned against making peace with Ormond in 1598 because 'when we think ourselves sure of peace, then they seek their vantage upon us.'²⁵⁹ Tyrone's foster brother, Henry Hovenden, expressed similar reservations and vehemently advised Tyrone against negotiating with Ormond because he thought it was just a ploy to 'underhand clip his wings, and... draw

²⁵⁶ Maginn, Christopher, *William Cecil*, pp.206-7

²⁵⁷ Carey, Vincent, "John Derricke's 'Image of Irelande', Sir Henry Sidney, and the Massacre at Mullaghmast, 1578." *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 123, (1999), pp.320-5

²⁵⁸ Morgan, Hiram (ed), "The 1597 Ceasefire Documents." pp.7-8, 20-21.

²⁵⁹ Brian Reogh O'More to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, 6th April 1598, Kildare (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.3)

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away his followers from him.’ Then Tyrone would suffer a similar fate as the Earl of Desmond, who was killed, his son imprisoned and lands confiscated.²⁶⁰ A captain Charles Montague noted that Lee’s blinding of O’Toole caused some of the Irish to be fearful as they were ‘doubtfull of theeier safetyes, obrayinge the State and English with infidelitye, tearing protections for traps to betray them.’²⁶¹ Moreover the presence of English treachery in poetry suggests that fear of betrayal was genuinely part of Gaelic mentalities. Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn cautioned Brian na murtha O’Rourke about meeting the English and making peace because ‘none of the bright *Banbha*'s warriors come from the foreigners safe from treachery or betrayal.’²⁶²

How much Tyrone believed in this rhetoric about the English being untrustworthy and planning extirpate the Irish is difficult to ascertain but the fate of Hugh Rua MacMahon and others must have given him genuine concern. He would at least continue to use such rhetoric throughout his exile on the continent. He warned the Spanish of the deceitfulness of the English on several occasions and he and other Irish exiles told the Pope that they could not reconcile with the English ‘seeing how deceitful and untrustworthy is the promise made by heretics, as exemplified, for instance, in the fate of Mary, Queen of Scots, and in the treatment meted out to the Irish who relied on the good faith of the protestants.’²⁶³ While Tyrone seems to have been somewhat successful in disseminating rumours about a conquest and there were sincere and legitimate concerns about English promises, the effectiveness of the tactic had its limitations. Shane MacBrian was a case in point because Tyrone’s stark warnings about trusting the English did not stop him from submitting in September 1595. Maguire was another example. When he was on the verge of submitting in 1595, he had concerns about siding with the governments because he thought it was ‘an easy matter to find meanes to undo him that hath bene once a traytor’ but these concerns were not enough to prevent him from talking with the government and a protection and pardon, which he urged an agent of his to secure as soon as possible, were sufficient to ease his fears.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, 18th April 1598, Dublin (SP 63/202 pt.2/no.9)

²⁶¹ Maginn, Christopher, *William Cecil*, pp.206-7

²⁶² Knott, Eleanor, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*, Vol. 2, p.76

²⁶³ Kerney Walsh, Micheline, *Destruction by Peace*, pp.236, 356, Hagen, J. “Miscellanea Vaticano-Hibernica, 1580-1631” *Archivium Hibernicum*, Vol. 3 (1914), p.303,

²⁶⁴ Maguire to one that hath been employed to him, 20th July 1595, Enniskillen (SP 63/182/no.26 ii)

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The prospect of a Spanish army being sent to aid them was another device used to maintain the integrity of the Gaelic confederacy. The hope that a Spanish army would invade was inculcated from the beginning of the war by the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Edmund Magauran. He made big promises and even went so far as to say that the Spanish invasion force would be so large that there would be more ‘shipp masts, then there were trees in a great woode that stode before them.’²⁶⁵ During the war such expectations were upheld by Spanish envoys who affirmed and reaffirmed the Spanish king’s intention to send an army. The first of these envoys arrived in May 1596, when three separate missions arrived in Donegal in quick succession. Further Spanish messengers came in October 1596, March 1597, June 1599, April 1600 and December 1600. The reassurances and encouragement that these Spanish messengers gave were much needed because the delays in sending the promised army had led to the Gaelic confederates becoming impatient, mistrustful and disheartened. When the Spanish came in 1597, without the promised army, the Gaelic confederates were incensed and an irate O’Donnell told the Spanish that ‘they were but a deceitfull nacion’.²⁶⁶ In 1600 April the Spanish messengers arrived ‘with empty hands, only again to repeat the old promises’ and one of the Spanish party, Mateo De Oviedo who was appointed the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, reported to the Spanish king that this caused the Gaelic confederates to become ‘overcome with sorrow and dismay’ and suspect ‘that they are beings played with.’²⁶⁷ Tyrone and O’Donnell had little option but to wait for a Spanish army but the emissaries were able to placate the confederates and reinvigorate their optimism for the much promised army. In 1597 Tyrone and O’Donnell reacted positively to the assurances of the Spanish and even gave them a present of nine horses.²⁶⁸ In April 1600 the Spanish tried to sooth the anger of the confederates by promising that a force would be sent as soon as possible and gave presents such as gold chains. The charm offensive worked as Tyrone and O’Donnell accepted the chains graciously and told the Spanish that ‘they would wear no other bonds nor chains than those your Majesty put upon them.’ More importantly Tyrone displayed that he was truly committed to the Spanish by giving them his son as a pledge.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ Declaration by Patrick M'Art Moyle [M'Mahon], 21st April 1593, Monaghan (SP 63/169/no.23 iii)

²⁶⁶ Declaration by Captain Anthony Brabazon to the Commissioners, 22nd April 1597 (SP 63/198/no.113 i)

²⁶⁷ *CSP Simancas* Vol.4, pp. 654-7

²⁶⁸ Morgan, Hiram. “Policy and Propaganda in Hugh O'Neill's Connection with Europe” p. 26

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 4, *CSP Simancas* Vol. 4, pp. 654-7

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The Spanish missions to Ireland brought more than just promises and trinkets. They also brought crucial military supplies and money. The 1599 expedition brought 1,000 guns, 1,000 pikes, 150 quintals of powder, lead and match. The December 1600 expedition brought double the amount of guns and 20,000 ducats.²⁷⁰ These supplies provided more than just logistical support. They were a physical representation of the link between Ireland and Spain that could boost morale and instil confidence.²⁷¹ Henry Dowdall experienced first-hand how this connection with Spain could inspire the Gaelic confederates. Dowdall was in Leitrim in June 1596, during a time of cessation and while negotiations with the Connacht confederates were taking place. The government party hoped to receive some provisions from the confederates so Dowdall went to O'Rourke to seek cattle. While with O'Rourke, Dowdall fell into conversation with Charles Trevor, O'Rourke's secretary. Dowdall claimed that Trevor had shown him some powder, lead and muskets sent by the Spanish and then proudly declared 'will not thenglish be glad to have peace with us, seeing we can have Spaniards to ayde us in this sorte.'²⁷² Hugh Buí MacDavitt also commented upon the importance of the Spanish connection to the spirits of the confederates. MacDavitt was from a prominent Inishowen clan but left for the continent in 1584, where he served in the Spanish army in Flanders. He returned to Ireland in 1595 and became an influential adviser to O'Donnell. He was initially pessimistic about the chances of the confederates but the presence of a small contingent of Spanish officers among them gave MacDavitt hope because these officers not only improved the confederates' military ability but greatly bolstered their morale.²⁷³

Tyrone and O'Donnell both knew the value of the link to Spain and that it could be used to embolden their confederates. Following a meeting with the Spanish in 1599, Tyrone wrote to numerous allies and told them to stand firm because a Spanish army would be sent to Ireland in the near future. On another occasion Tyrone tried to use the connection with Spain to solidify James MacSorley as a member of Gaelic confederacy. The Spanish expedition that came to Donegal in October 1596 brought two letters from the Spanish king which did not have an addressee. The Spanish were advised to give one of the letters

²⁷⁰ Silke, John J. *Kinsale the Spanish Intervention in Ireland at the End of Elizabethan Wars*. Liverpool University Press, 1970, pp.59, 86

²⁷¹ O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.114-5

²⁷² Examination of Henry Dowdall before the Lord Deputy and Council, 27th June 1596, Dublin (SP 63/190/no.41)

²⁷³ Hernán, Enrique García. *Ireland and Spain in the Reign of Philip II*. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2009, p.202

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to MacDonnell in order to flatter him. This was shortly after Tyrone and MacDonnell reconciled so Tyrone most likely hoped that this flattery and reconfirmation that the Gaelic confederates had Spanish backing would persuade MacDonnell to commit himself more fully to the Gaelic confederacy.²⁷⁴ O'Donnell also used the Spanish dimension to encourage his allies. In Connacht it was said that he made sure that his allies there remained hopeful of Spanish aid and on his way to Kinsale in 1601, O'Donnell showed his men Spanish silver and asked them if 'it were not better to follow such a royal King as sent such great pieces of silver than a Queen that spent her treasure as she was now driven, for want of better money, to coin all the brass pots and pans to be had in the country'.²⁷⁵ O'Donnell was referring to the recent currency debasement. O'Donnell could also use the Spanish connection to threaten. When raiding Connacht in January 1597, the mayor of Galway reported that O'Donnell and his men were giving out that those loyal to the crown would suffer a worse fate than Athenry, which they had just burnt, once the Spanish arrived.²⁷⁶

Its ability to galvanize made the Spanish connection an effective tool to motivate and hold together the fragile Gaelic confederacy. Conyers Clifford, and his predecessor as president of Connacht Richard Bingham, attributed the obstinacy of the Connacht confederates to 'their hope of Spanyerds.'²⁷⁷ Essex judged that his attempts to procure defections were frustrated by the 'inwarde hopes they have of the succor of Spain.'²⁷⁸ Mountjoy made similar complaints after the Spanish came and brought supplies in April 1600. Many had begun to lean towards the government and had contacted him about defecting but the arrival of the Spanish and the promises, supplies and presents revitalised the confederates because 'Tyrone hath so well used [them] to his purpose as all Ireland doth confidently believe' that they would receive some great succour from Spanish.²⁷⁹ One these men was Richard Tyrell, a prominent confederate from County Westmeath. A spy reported that the news of the Spanish emissaries' arrival and the promises of an invasion force caused him to dismiss the idea of defecting because 'what folly were it in me....to forsake the side where I have security, wealth, countenance and to betruest myself to the

²⁷⁴ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd July 1599, Dublin (SP 63/205/no. 103), *CSP Simancas*, Vol. 4, pp.637-40

²⁷⁵ Sir Conyers Clifford to Burghley, 30th September 1597 (SP 63/200/no.143), *Advertisements of November 1601* (SP 63/209/no.199 a)

²⁷⁶ Oliver Oge French, Mayor of Galway, to [the Lord Deputy], 19th January 1597, Galway (SP 63/197/no.50 v)

²⁷⁷ Sir Conyers Clifford to Burghley, 30th September 1597 (SP 63/200/no.143), Sir Richard Bingham to Sir Robert Cecil, 8th August 1596, Dublin (SP 63/192/no.5)

²⁷⁸ The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, 28th April 1599, Dublin (SP 63/205/no.38)

²⁷⁹ The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 9th June 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.93)

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English who I see shall have enough to do to deal for themselves.’ Tyrrell therefore planned to delay his defection until he knew whether or not the Spanish were truly coming.²⁸⁰ The Spanish link was thus one of the more effective unifying tools that Tyrone and O’Donnell had at their disposal.

It was of note that Tyrone and O’Donnell did not use poetry to maintain unity. On the face of it, poetry should have been a useful tool given the influence of the poets. Florence MacCarthy when advising the crown government on how best to influence the Irish suggested that poets be used because they, along with priests, had the ‘greatest ability and authority to persuade.’²⁸¹ O’Donnell certainly respected the power of the poets and took the tradition seriously. After a raid in Thomond he returned cows taken from a poet after he requested it and on another occasion he refused to pay an *ánroth*, a poet of the second grade, for a verse because it went against convention. Only an *ollamh* was entitled to address an O’Donnell chieftain.²⁸² After Yellow Ford a praise poem celebrated Tyrone and his victory. Presuming he commissioned it, this would suggest he had some respect for bardic poetry.²⁸³ The trope of the need for the Irish to unite against the English was common in poetry. A fourteenth century poem written for the chieftain of the Magaurans, an East Breifne clan, called for national unity as he lamented that

Éire is ruined by rivalry among the Gaoidhil [the Gaelic Irish], not mutual love in peace is their policy, their anger keeps them apart, sad they cannot agree.

Their rivalry in desire of Banbha’s land had deprived them of thick-grassed Fódla, instead of attacking the Goill [the English] every troop of Conn’s race is in turmoil.

...tis Éire herself which has ruined the isle of ours, we find the land too tempting an object of attack.²⁸⁴

Similarly, a sixteenth century Tadhg Dall poem written for Brian na murtha O’Rourke called for Ireland to unite behind the poem’s subject and defeat the English.²⁸⁵ Such a trope would appear to have been perfect when trying to establish a nationwide confederacy

²⁸⁰ Advertisements sent to Fenton, May 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.27 i)

²⁸¹ McCarthy, Daniel. *The Life and Letters of Florence MacCarthy*, p.362

²⁸² AFM, pp.2103-5, Breatnach Pádraig (ed and trans), “A Poem of Protest,” *Celtica*, Vol. 17 (1985), pp.94-5

²⁸³ Canny, Nicholas, “Taking Sides in Early Modern Ireland”, p.106

²⁸⁴ McKenna, Lambert (ed and trans) *The Book of Magauran = Leabhar Méig Shamhradháin*. Dublin, Inst. for Advanced Studies, 1947, p.362

²⁸⁵ Knott, Eleanor, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*, Vol. 2, pp.72-9

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to oppose the crown government. Why did O'Donnell and Tyrone, the only person who realistically had any chance to unite Ireland behind him, not use poetry? Firstly, calls for unity in poetry were insincere and self-interest and local issues remained at the fore. The Magauran poem brought up the problems of internecine violence among the Gaelic Irish only to excuse his patron being imprisoned by an O'Connor chieftain. This poem and Tadhg Dall only called for national unity in order to praise their patron's stature which they claimed was so great and pre-eminent that only they could unite under them such a riven land.²⁸⁶ Thus the trope of the need for the Irish to unify to confront the English was hollow and of little use. Furthermore, there is one approach to bardic poetry that argues that it was inflexible, archaic and localised. As a result, while poetry could reflect and influence events, it could not fully register and engage with new political developments such as the increasing attempts of the crown government to penetrate into Gaelic Ireland and eradicate its culture in the latter sixteenth century. Nicholas Canny has argued that the poets remained concerned with local issues and the prospects of their patron. They did not politically engage with the crown's attempt to expand their presence into Gaelic areas and when writing about chieftains who fought against the English, the poets just repeated motifs that had been used by their antecedents to deal internecine Gaelic violence. Thus, they did not distinguish between conflict against the English or a Gaelic neighbour.²⁸⁷ Tyrone or O'Donnell may have known that bardic poetry, while influential and important, was too rigid and localised to be of any use when genuinely attempting to unify Gaelic Ireland on a national level in order to confront a new threat from England. Therefore, they declined to use it for that purpose.

In conclusion, Tyrone was faced with a daunting task as he had to hold together a large confederacy riven with divisions and potential defectors. Shane MacBriain and Niall MacPhelim O'Neill continued to feud over North Clandeboyne and Tyrone tried to find a compromise and divide the lordship but reconciling the rivals and keeping them both under his authority was not possible. Thus, for the most part Shane sided with Tyrone and Niall with the government. This inability to once and for all settle a dispute and the disaffected party joining the government was mirrored elsewhere. Tyrone attempts to mediate between

²⁸⁶ Leerksen, Joep, *Mere Irish and Fíor Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, Its Development and Literary Expression Prior to the 19th Century*. Cork, Cork University Press, 1996, pp.178-9, 396

²⁸⁷ Canny, Nicholas, "The Formation of the Irish Mind: Religion, Politics and Gaelic Irish Literature 1580-1750." *Past & Present*, Vol. 95, (May,1982), for a summary of the debate around bardic poetry see Caball, Marc. *Poets and Politics Continuity and Reaction in Irish Poetry, 1558-1625*. Cork University Press, 1998, pp.1-13

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the Magennis failed and Glasney MacAgholy, seeing his hopes for Iveagh dashed, switched sides early in 1600. Tyrone hoped to find an acceptable partition of the Route but MacDonnell would not consent. Tyrone decided to back the stronger MacDonnell and MacQuillan was left with little and allied with the government. Solving the three-way feud over East Breifne proved an insurmountable task for Tyrone. He killed one of the contenders, Philip, and could not reconcile the other two, leading to Maolmordha O'Reilly's defection. Internally Tyrone had to worry about the MacShanes and Art O'Neill. Tyrone kept the MacShanes imprisoned but Art O'Neill escaped his confinement and Tyrone's talks with his rival were unsuccessful. Art therefore remained aloof and was posed to defect as soon as forces arrived at Lough Foyle. O'Donnell too had difficulties within his clan as Niall Garbh retained his desire for Tyrconnell. However, except for brief imprisonments and talking pledges, Hugh Rua seemed to have valued and trusted Niall Garbh but if he thought that he had fully resolved his issue with Niall Garbh then he was sorely mistaken.

Irreconcilable succession and precedence disputes were not the only difficulty Tyrone and O'Donnell had to contend with because they had to impose exactions and cess bonnachts on *uirríthe* and this could cause problems with those who had to bear the burden. Shane MacBrian resented the O'Hagans who were sent to his county. Maguire also experienced problems with the bonnachts in his country and this may have contributed to his disillusionment with Tyrone and his desire to defect and be independent. O'Doherty continued to want to be free from O'Donnell. Turlough MacHenry's relationship with his brother broke down and he defected and wanted to be independent. Yet despite all these difficulties Tyrone and O'Donnell were largely successful in keeping their fragile confederacy together for several reasons. Before Docwra's arrival the confederates in Ulster were in a strong position. The government's presence in the province was limited so most Ulster confederates had little chance of military assistance from crown forces. In such circumstances going it alone against the powerful Tyrone and O'Donnell was dangerous as Shane MacManus Óg found out. Thus, the fear of the consequences of crossing the confederate leaders without any government support was a major factor preventing defections. Moreover, the government forces at this time were not inspiring as they were undermanned, under resourced and badly trained so the government's side looked like the losing one and there was little incentive to join them. Tyrone and O'Donnell also implemented several tactics to hold their confederacy together and these tactics varied

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in effectiveness. Imprisonment clearly prevented defections and detaining cattle did appear to make potential defectors think twice. The taking of pledges and the use of faith and fatherland seems to have had little effect on stopping defections. The confederates spread that trusting the English was dangerous, an argument with merit, and that they planned to ethnically cleanse Ireland. This was reportedly believed by many, but the case of Shane MacBriain demonstrates that this tactic did not always work. The Spanish link greatly helped to maintain the cohesion of the confederacy because it boosted morale and confidence. Lastly prior to Docwra's landing, the Gaelic allies of the government in Ulster showed the pros and cons of exploiting divisions. Gaelic allies could prove to be unreliable as they could revert to their previous rebellious course especially if not defended as Turlough MacHenry shows. However, Maolmordha and his success in East Breifne showed the advantages and ultimately relying solely on reinforcements from England was not feasible. Therefore, the government, no matter their reservations, would have to exploit divisions and avail of the services of Gaelic allies.

Chapter Five

'Little or nothing could have been done of ourselves': Docwra's arrival, defections and the turning of the tide of war

The defeat of the Gaelic confederate army at Kinsale on Christmas Eve 1601 was, as James O'Neill claims, 'the hammer blow that shattered the Irish confederacy.' However, O'Neill also acknowledges that the fortunes of Tyrone, O'Donnell and the Gaelic confederacy had already begun to decline after Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, arrived in Dublin and took up the position of Lord Deputy in February 1600.¹ One reason for this decline was the landing at Lough Foyle of Henry Docwra and an army of about 4,000 men in May 1600. By the time the Spanish arrived, Docwra had expanded his influence throughout much of northwest Ulster to such an extent that he had largely pushed O'Donnell out of his own lordship. Docwra had achieved this by securing defections through exploiting the internal rivalries among the O'Donnells, O'Neills and other clans as well as the wish of *uirríthe* to be free from their overlord. The most prominent defectors were Art O'Neill, Niall Garbh O'Donnell, Hugh Buí MacDavitt and Cahir O'Doherty. The help these men gave Docwra was invaluable and without it his Derry garrison would likely have become a white elephant or been abandoned. Elsewhere in Ulster, Tyrone also suffered setbacks. In Fermanagh and East Breifne the deaths of Hugh Maguire and Turlough MacShane O'Reilly led to the usual political instability that followed a chieftain's death: this too would result in defections. Chichester at Carrickfergus exploited divisions in east Ulster while the less committed Gaelic confederate chieftains on the border with the Pale also submitted. The successes of Docwra, the other government forces in Ulster and the newly won Gaelic allies of the crown meant that when the Spanish finally arrived in September 1601 Tyrone, O'Donnell and the Gaelic confederacy were in a very weak position. Years after the war Tyrone and O'Donnell's brother Rory would tell King Philip III of Spain about their dismal circumstances at the time of the Spanish landing at Kinsale. They said that they were 'almost to the point of destruction....we had lost most of our brothers, kinsmen, principal people and vassals, and....we had exhausted all our resources.'²

¹ O'Neill, James, *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, p.166

² Kerney Walsh, Micheline, *Destruction by Peace*, p.193

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The actions of government forces and their Gaelic allies in Ulster and its contribution to ending the war should not be underestimated. Tyrone and O'Donnell were the heart of the Gaelic confederacy. If they remained untouched and secure in Ulster there was little prospect of the war ending, even if they suffered a major setback outside the province because they still had the option of retreating to the safety of Ulster and regrouping. By reducing the power of Tyrone and O'Donnell in Ulster, Docwra and others prevented this from happening after Kinsale. O'Donnell had been expelled from Tyrconnell so he could not even return home and instead left for Spain while Tyrone upon his return to Ulster could do little to rally support and launch a new offensive. Contemporaries were aware of how important the operations in Ulster were, especially the Lough Foyle expedition. George Carew knew that Ulster was where the strength of the rebellion lay and that what happened there would play a central role in determining the fate of the war nationwide. Therefore, shortly before Docwra landed at Lough Foyle, Carew told Cecil that he hoped God would grant 'that garrison to prosper, the success whereof gives lyfe or destruction to this rebellion for uppon the fortune of the Northe the rest of the kingdom depends.'³ After the war the significance of Docwra's contribution to ending the war in the imperative Ulster theatre was also acknowledged. Robert Boyle, Earl of Cork, praised him for his 'reducing the province of Ulster to peace.'⁴ In recent times John McGurk has highlighted that Docwra and his Lough Foyle expedition were crucial to victory and that this had been overlooked.⁵ If Docwra was crucial to the victory over Tyrone and O'Donnell then so was his exploitation of the fissures among the confederates in northwest Ulster and the support defectors gave him. This chapter will examine how Docwra took advantage of the fractured nature of the Gaelic confederacy to secure several important defections and how help from defectors enabled the Lough Foyle expedition to prosper and lay the foundations for the defeat of the Gaelic confederacy in the period before Kinsale. The chapter will also look at other parts of Ulster, like Fermanagh and the border region with the Pale, where Tyrone struggled to keep the Gaelic confederacy intact and how the defections that did occur there caused him problems.

Prior to Henry Docwra's landing at Lough Foyle in May 1600, Tyrone, O'Donnell and the Gaelic confederacy were at the height of their power. Tyrone's ability to march to

³ Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd May 1600, Shannon (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.6)

⁴ The Earl of Cork to [Lord Dorchester], 28th June 1631, Dublin (SP 63/252/no.83)

⁵ McGurk, John. *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631*, pp.11, 52, 270-3

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Munster and return home almost entirely unscathed displayed how strong the Gaelic confederacy was and how helpless the government had become. However, the one major setback that Tyrone did suffer in Munster highlighted the fragility of the Gaelic confederacy. At any moment an unexpected death of a chieftain could result in an internal clan war which threatened the stability of the confederacy and provided fertile ground for Dublin Castle to sow divisions. This threat always loomed over the confederates and Tyrone already suffered the consequences of it when Sean O'Reilly died in 1596. Tyrone would again have to deal with the dangerous fallout of a chieftain's death after the killing of Hugh Maguire. In early March 1600, Maguire broke from Tyrone's main force in order to raid the area surrounding Cork. They encountered forces from Cork under Henry Power and Warham St Leger and in the ensuing skirmish both Maguire and St Leger were killed.⁶ Following Maguire's death the coordination problem reared its head as there was contention over who should succeed him. Conor Rua Maguire again sought the chieftainship but his claim was contested, this time by Hugh Maguire's brother Cúchonnacht. Without any prompting from the government a violent dispute soon broke out and the violence was substantial. Only a month after Hugh Maguire's death about 200 people had been killed in Fermanagh.⁷ These developments provided the government with a great opportunity as not only would a clan war threaten Tyrone's control of Fermanagh but the competitor who failed to become chieftain would potentially defect. Francis Stafford gleefully pointed this out to Cecil, telling him that the killings in Fermanagh would allow the government to make a 'party in that country, which will be a good means to reduce it...., and also to withhold its forces from the service of Tyrone.'⁸

The recently arrived Mountjoy was also well aware of the opening Hugh Maguire's death presented and looked to take advantage by sending spies into Fermanagh to enquire about the disposition of each of the contenders.⁹ At the same time Tyrone was trying to put an end to the strife in Fermanagh but his initial support of Conor Rua alienated Cúchonnacht, who continued to use force to defend his claim.¹⁰ According to Ó Cléirigh, Tyrone supported Conor Rua because they were cousins but this was unlikely a deciding factor because Tyrone was also a first cousin of Cúchonnacht. A more probable reason for

⁶ Sir Henry Power to the Privy Council, 4th March 1600, Cork (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.9), *AFM*, pp.2161-3

⁷ Garrett Moore to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy 15th April 1600, Mellifont (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.116 i),

⁸ Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, 28th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.147)

⁹ Intelligences out of the north of Ireland, 31st March 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.63i),

¹⁰ Garrett Moore to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy 15th April 1600, Mellifont (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.116 i), Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, 28th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.147)

Tyrone's support of Conor Rua was that Cúchonnacht was not a reliable ally at that point because of his relationship with his sister's husband, Art O'Neill. The two men were close enough that Art was confident that Cúchonnacht would defect alongside him and the two certainly must have had conversations about Cúchonnacht's possible defection because Art began to act as an intermediary for his brother-in-law and made requests on his behalf. From the government Art requested that Cúchonnacht and his heirs hold Fermanagh. In return Cúchonnacht was to keep Fermanagh in 'such fear that all the inhabitants thereof shall quit their dwellings, except such as shall be subjects to Her Majesty; and that he will keep as many men for the Queen as shall cause the same to stand in obedience.'¹¹ Tyrone may well have had suspicions about Cúchonnacht's commitment and so Conor Rua, even given his previous service with the government, would have been the more trustworthy and better choice. Alternatively, Tyrone's penchant for supporting the stronger, and consequently more useful ally, may have dictated who he initially supported.

Tyrone soon switched support from Conor Rua to Cúchonnacht but he may have done so against his will. Ó Cléirigh stated that Cúchonnacht could not compete with Conor Rua and looked to O'Donnell for help. Shortly after Cúchonnacht's plea, O'Donnell received a message from Tyrone, informing him that he intended to inaugurate Conor Rua as Maguire. O'Donnell responded swiftly and went to Dungannon, bringing Cúchonnacht with him. When O'Donnell arrived, a feast was held and the succession issue discussed. O'Donnell urged Tyrone not to inaugurate Conor Rua because his previous service with the government meant they could not be sure of his loyalty. O'Donnell could not convince Tyrone to change his mind but O'Donnell would not be denied and took matters into his own hands. He called Cúchonnacht over to him, raised a cup over his head and declared him the Maguire in front of Tyrone, Conor Rua and many of the 'nobles' of Ulster.¹² The story would explain Tyrone's sudden change of heart but the validity of Ó Cléirigh's version is questionable because of his bias towards O'Donnell. The story about the feast could have just been an attempt to diminish Tyrone's importance in favour of O'Donnell. Furthermore English sources make no mention of O'Donnell's involvement in the succession dispute and instead just state that it was Tyrone who denied Conor Rua the

¹¹The service that Sir Arthur O'Neill will undertake for Her Majesty, if his requests be granted, March 11th 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.2/no. 29) The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 15th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.104)

¹² *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.243-7

Maguire chieftainship and installed Cúchonnacht as chieftain.¹³ Tyrone's switching support from one candidate to another was not out of the ordinary and his shifting support from Conor Rua to Cúchonnacht was reminiscent of the Magennis succession dispute, when Tyrone changed from his original choice. Why Tyrone initially supported Conor Rua and then changed his mind is in doubt but what was certain was that the bitter animosity and fighting between the two Maguires continued without any government input. By June Tyrone was feeling the detrimental effects of the violent Maguire succession dispute as the availability of the Fermanagh forces was diminished because Cúchonnacht could not fully help Tyrone as he was too preoccupied with fighting Conor Rua. For example on the 9th June, Cúchonnacht was forced to leave Tyrone's army and return to Fermanagh in order to deal with Conor Rua. By 22nd June, Cúchonnacht had burnt much of Conor Rua's country and killed some of his men. The succession dispute and losing the full use of Fermanagh happened at a most inopportune for Tyrone as he needed Cúchonnacht and his full assistance to contain the newly established garrison at Derry.¹⁴

Docwra and his army of 4,000 foot and 200 horse arrived at Lough Foyle on the 14th May and they disembarked at Culmore the following day.¹⁵ To ease their landing Mountjoy had led an incursion into southeast Ulster in order to distract Tyrone. Tyrone took the bait and left Newtown in west Tyrone and hastily made his way to Dungannon on the 13th May. Mountjoy occupied Tyrone's attention for the remainder of the month and some light skirmishing between the two occurred.¹⁶ Docwra greatly benefited from Mountjoy's diversionary tactic as it resulted in his encountering little resistance upon landing and according to Captain Humphrey Willis the expedition did not see a confederate force above 700 in the first week.¹⁷ This enabled Docwra to quickly establish garrisons at Culmore, Derry and Elagh (Aileach).¹⁸ However there was some resistance in the first few weeks after Docwra landed because neighbouring O'Donnell, O'Doherty and O'Cahan still posed threats. This resistance and the dangers of lodging deep in hostile territory are apparent when looking at Captain Humphrey Willis' journal for the first week at Lough Foyle. On the 18th May, Willis recorded that six soldiers were killed and the next day two

¹³ Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary*, Vol.2, p. 348, Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 10th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.66)

¹⁴ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.130)

¹⁵ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.42-6, The discourse of our journey to Lough Foyle from Chester, 25th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.59 i)

¹⁶ The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 9th June 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.93),

¹⁷ Captain Humphrey Willis to Symon Willis, 25th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.59)

¹⁸ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.43-4, 97-98

sergeants and 60 soldiers were attacked when getting wood. They were forced to retreat and lost four men.¹⁹ This cutting trees for wood was one of the most hazardous tasks during the first days of the Lough Foyle garrisons and Docwra stated that whenever he sent men to fetch wood there was none 'brought home, but first well fought for.'²⁰ The danger for Docwra and his men increased after Mountjoy, once assured Docwra had fortified his position, returned to Dublin at the end of May and Tyrone was able to focus on Derry and aid O'Donnell and the other confederates.²¹ To face this new dangerous threat Docwra would now have the services of Art O'Neill who submitted at the beginning of June.²²

Art's long wait for the arrival of forces at Lough Foyle had finally ended and he wasted no time in contacting Docwra. He quickly sent Docwra a message informing him of his intent to submit and requested that they meet at Dunnalong but Docwra asked Art to meet him at Derry instead.²³ Docwra was receptive to Art's offer as he had been authorised by London to listen 'to such overtures, offers parlees of the Rebels as in your discrecion you shall thincke meete to entertaine' and instructed by the Lord Deputy and council to 'drawe in soe many of the better sorte of Irishe as yow canne....whereby the Arch-traitor maye be weakened and yow strengthned.'²⁴ Furthermore Art had been singled out as a likely defector for Docwra to target and in fact negotiations between Art and the Lord Deputy over the terms of his submission had actually began in the months prior to Docwra's arrival. Art demanded liberty of conscience and to hold the earldom of Tyrone from the Queen.²⁵ When the demands were sent to London, the Privy Council gave the usual answer to the 'arrogant' demand of liberty of conscience, saying that the Queen never did nor would persecute any in Ireland for their religion. They were more responsive to his demand for the earldom and would give the Dublin government permission to promise Art the earldom and an appropriate amount of land.²⁶ However, Art submitted before he was assured of any conditions. He was in no position to wait until negotiations were finished as Tyrone had not relented in his attempts to capture Art and ambushes were laid near Derry to intercept him. Therefore, when Art finally arrived at Derry, 'he was so hard followed

¹⁹ The discourse of our journey to Lough Foyle from Chester, 25th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.59 i)

²⁰ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.44

²¹ *Ibid* p. 45

²² Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 4th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.76),

²³ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 24th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.57)

²⁴ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.92, *APC*, Vol.30, pp.105-6

²⁵ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry* p.46, Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 15th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.104)

²⁶ *APC*, Vol.30, pp.333-5, 514-5

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that he left part of his horses.’²⁷ Tyrone, as was his wont, did not just rely on force and had tried to stop Art’s defection by making him ‘great offers.’ Tyrone would continue to do so after Art’s submission, but all his offers were refused.²⁸

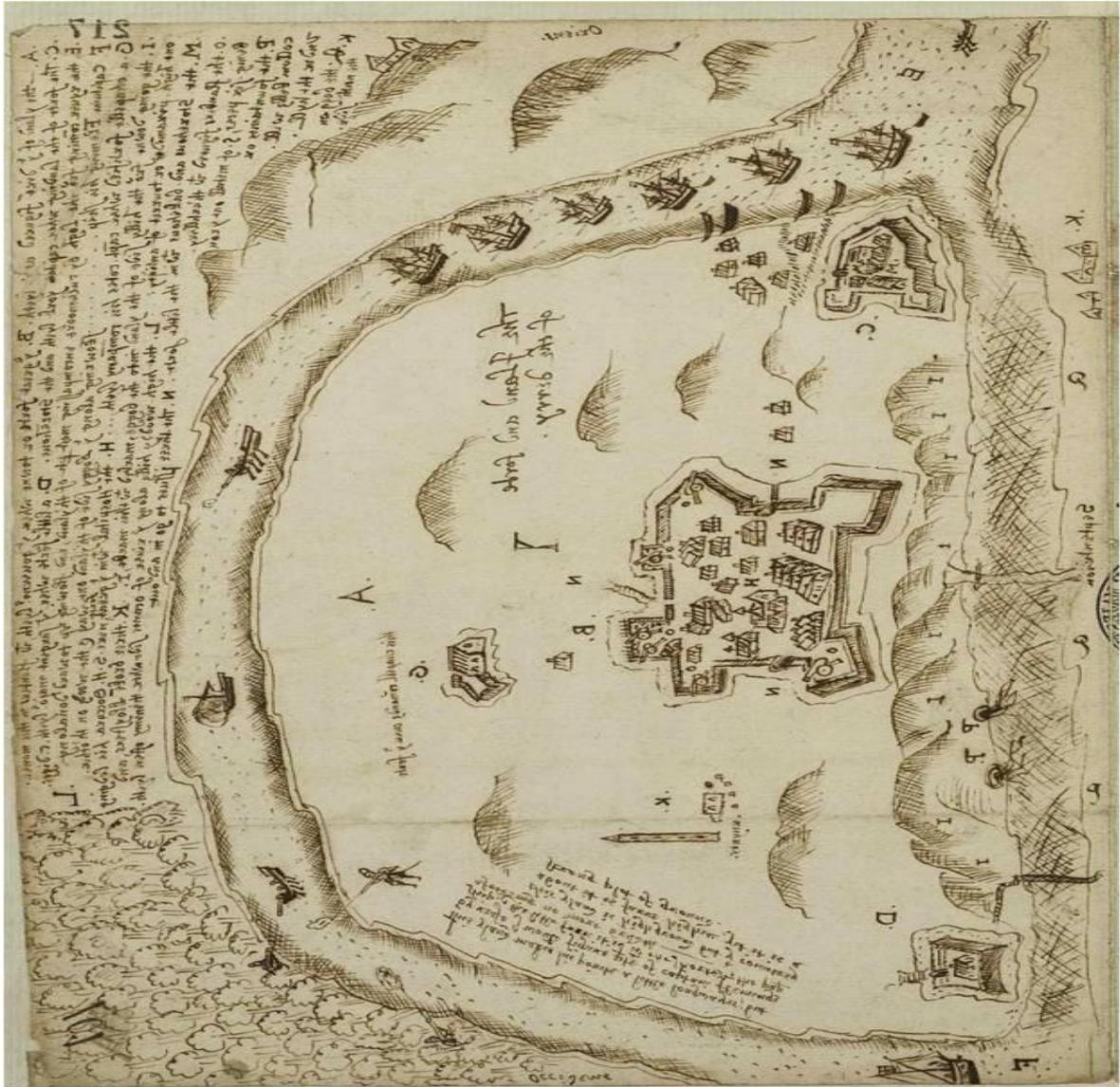


Figure 6. The garrison at Derry (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.84)

²⁷ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 21st May 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.53), Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 4th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.76), The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 9th June 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.93)

²⁸ The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 9th June 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.93), Extracts from letters received by Sir Geoffrey Fenton, July 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.44 i)

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Art quickly displayed the importance and benefits of having local Gaelic allies. Prior to Art's submission the Derry garrison was struggling because it lacked guides and spies which, as highlighted in the previous chapter, were indispensable. Without much knowledge of the enemies' movements or the terrain, Docwra was restricted in his own movements because he had to be cautious. Otherwise there was the real danger of blindly marching into disadvantageous terrain and falling into an ambush. This restriction was evident from one of the first skirmishes with O'Donnell's forces. O'Donnell's men attacked some soldiers getting wood and after two hours of skirmishing O'Donnell's men retreated. Docwra could not give chase because of the topography and the fact that 'we were merely ignorant for want of guides.'²⁹ Art's defection was therefore of great importance as it quickly solved this problem. This benefit was not lost on the Derry garrison as Captain William Windsor welcomed Art's submission because it 'stood us in good stead, in regard we had no guides, nor no intelligence before he came.'³⁰ Docwra after the war also acknowledged that the guides and intelligence provided by Art O'Neill and the other Irish who defected was invaluable. He would go so far as to say that without this 'intelligence & guidance little or nothing could have been done of our selves.'³¹

There were several early examples of how Art's intelligence and guides greatly helped Docwra and his forces. On 11th June a force of 800 foot and 20 horse were guided by three of Art's men and sent into Inishowen, where they took some sheep, pigs and cows and killed twelve confederates.³² Two days later Art's intelligence proved its worth. O'Donnell had planned an ambush and was trying to lure some soldiers at Derry out of their garrison but his ambush was foiled because Art had been tipped off about it.³³ Furthermore on 21st June, Art advised Docwra to raid O'Cahan lands. Docwra heeded Art's advice and he sent one of his chief cavalry officers, John Chamberlain, with 900 foot and some of Art's men acting as guides to O'Cahan's country. They went by boat from Inishowen because the way by land was watched and the confederates would therefore be forewarned of an attack. They managed to take 800 cows but when returning they could not transport all the cows by boat so instead they killed many of them. The confederates did manage to recover about 100 cows that broke free but in general this raid was successful

²⁹ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council. 24th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.57)

³⁰ *Salisbury Manuscript* Vol.10, p.226

³¹ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*: p.52

³² Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.130)

³³ *Salisbury Manuscript* Vol.10, p.226,

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thanks to Art's advice and guides.³⁴ Art also helped to thwart a plot by Tyrone and the O'Cahans. Rory O'Cahan, brother of the O'Cahan chieftain, submitted in August and brought 12 horse, 30 foot and 60 cows with him. The cows were the most important as Docwra and the Derry garrison were in desperate need of fresh meat. The next day Rory gave Docwra another 40 cows and asked for 800 men to assist him in an important service against the Gaelic confederates. Docwra agreed to give him about half that number but before they set out Art, who initially thought Rory was sincere, warned Docwra that O'Cahan could not be trusted. Docwra took heed of Art's warning and refused to give Rory the promised men. Rory asked for permission to leave and swore that he would return with proof of his honesty. Docwra consented after Rory gave pledges and swore on a bible. Yet, Rory would be another example of how unreliable the taking of pledges to ensure loyalty could be. Rory returned to Docwra the next day as he promised but declared that he no longer wanted to serve against his brother. He offered cows to redeem his pledges and threatened to kill any Englishman that came into his hands if his pledges were not released. The offer of cows and the threats had little effect on Docwra and he hanged Rory's pledges. Art's intervention here was significant as it helped the Derry garrison avert a possible disaster because Rory had planned to lead Docwra's men to where Tyrone and his forces lay in wait, ready to ambush them.³⁵

The relationship between Docwra and Art was however strained at times. Some of Art's men did slip back to the confederates, which for Docwra was cause for concern. There were also tensions over money as Docwra became increasingly frustrated with Art's demands for more. Tensions could turn violent as well. At the Dunnalong garrison, which was established on the 2nd July, some of Art's men brawled with men from the garrison, ending in one of Art's men being killed. Art was furious and wanted revenge but there was no proof of who did the killing so Docwra refused to take the matter any further, much to Art's annoyance.³⁶ Another problem was that in terms of manpower Art's contribution was very limited. When he submitted in June he brought only forty followers with him and by August there were complaints that while Art was considered faithful, few men came to him after his submission.³⁷ Tyrone reportedly even mocked Art's small force and referred to

³⁴ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.130), Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.46

³⁵ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.48-9

³⁶ Sir Henry Docwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th August 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.93)

³⁷ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 4th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.76), *Carew manuscripts*, Vol.3, p. 435

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him as ‘Queen Elizabeth’s Earl, that cannot command 100 kern.’³⁸ Despite these tensions and problems Docwra was overall quite happy with Art. In October he praised Art for how carefully and diligently he employed his men in the field and how he and his men gave warning of many plots. Docwra was therefore optimistic about Art’s ‘honest and true disposition to loyalty.’³⁹ Art’s service for the government did not last for much longer: he died on 18th October 1600.⁴⁰ Arthur Chichester, governor of Carrickfergus, said that Art died after drinking too much at his wedding and Captain Willis did think ‘immoderate drinking’ was the cause of death but Art was badly sick with fever the previous month so Art may have died of a more long term illness.⁴¹ Chichester described Art’s death as no great loss but Art should not be so easily dismissed.⁴² Even though he brought few men, Art’s guides and intelligence were of paramount importance and without it, as Docwra acknowledged, there would have been little done by the Lough Foyle garrisons during its first few months. Moreover, Art’s contributions were especially important because they came in the precarious early months of Docwra’s garrison.

There were some military setbacks during the first months at Lough Foyle. Docwra lost John Chamberlain. Chamberlain was killed at the end of June when Docwra responded to an attack by O’Doherty’s men on the Elagh garrison. Docwra came to the aid of the garrison with 500 foot and 40 horse, O’Doherty’s men retreated and Docwra pursued. Chamberlain and about ten horsemen, including Docwra, had pushed too far ahead and became isolated. They were attacked, Docwra had his horse killed and Chamberlain was slain.⁴³ At the end of July, the Derry garrison received another blow when 60 of its horses were taken by O’Donnell and Docwra was wounded while attempting to recover them.⁴⁴ Fenton was very concerned that Docwra might die and that his death would leave the Derry garrison with no effective leadership as John Bolles, Docwra’s second in command, was in England and the other captains were young and inexperienced. With no leadership Fenton worried that the Derry garrison would at best be greatly hindered and at worst utterly overthrown.⁴⁵ Docwra managed to pull through but was bedridden for two weeks and

³⁸ *Carew manuscripts*, Vol.3, p. 450

³⁹ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 1st October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.66)

⁴⁰ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 29th October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.127)

⁴¹ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 21st October 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.102), Sir Geoffrey Fenton to [Sir Robert Cecil], 15th September 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.27), Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 29th October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.127)

⁴² Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 21st October 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.102)

⁴³ McGurk, John. *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631*, pp.71-3

⁴⁴ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 31st July 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.49)

⁴⁵ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th August 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.75)

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restricted to his cabin for another week.⁴⁶ Following Docwra's recuperation it became evident that Derry was threatened by something even more dangerous, disease.

Camp diseases such as dysentery and typhus were unavoidable in the sixteenth century whenever an army remained in the same place for a week and even if there was enough food and money, sickness would still be a problem because of an ignorance of basic hygiene.⁴⁷ Derry and the other garrisons were no exception and disease flourished. There was bad weather, poor lodgings and not enough alcohol so men had to drink dirty water.⁴⁸ There were food shortages and when food was sent it was sometimes of poor quality or not properly stored when it arrived.⁴⁹ When Docwra first took a view of his forces after he recovered, the severity with which disease had hit his army was strikingly apparent. After only four months, the initial 4,000 men sent were reduced to 800 men fit for service and the soldiers continued to 'daily fall down, beyond expectation and almost all credit'.⁵⁰ The state of affairs at Derry deteriorated further and by September the situation was grim. There had been a hospital built but it could not cope and Docwra complained about 'how small a drop of water all this hath been, in respect of the seas of sick men that daily increased.' Sickness and mortality was so high that 'it is hard to conceive to one that hath not seen it' and it was enough to make Docwra's 'soul to grieve.'⁵¹ Disease was not the only problem that Docwra and the Lough Foyle garrisons had to contend with, as desertion was also prevalent. Docwra complained that his 'English men as well as Irish daily ran to the rebel' and Captain Willis' record of the events of 20th July confirms how desertion was a daily problem. Men from Derry were sent to get wood and two Irish and one English soldier ran away. On the very same day at Dunalong five English soldiers ran to the confederates.⁵² The desertion problem would continue and was compounded by Tyrone and O'Donnell's offer of free passage through their territories and shipping to Scotland to anyone who wished to abscond.⁵³ O'Donnell and Tyrone made good on their offer as Thomas Walker observed. Walker was a young Londoner who went to Ireland in July 1601 to assassinate Tyrone, allegedly for patriotic reasons but the head money placed on Tyrone may have been his

⁴⁶ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.48

⁴⁷ McGurk, John. *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631*, pp.79-80

⁴⁸ Ibid, Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 29th October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.127), Sir Robert Cecil to the Lord High Treasurer Buckhurst, 12th August 1600, Nonsuch (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.66)

⁴⁹ *APC*, Vol.31 pp.126-7, Vol.32 pp.333-4, Sir Patrick Barnewall to Sir Robert Cecil, 10th August 1600, Chester (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.62),

⁵⁰ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th August 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.93)

⁵¹ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd September 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.3)

⁵² Ibid, Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 31st July 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.49)

⁵³ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 24th January 1601, Dublin (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.18)

real motivation. He managed to make contact with Tyrone and whilst with the Earl, four deserters came from Derry and they had gotten from O'Donnell a guide and letter giving them permission to go through his territory. Once Tyrone read it, he made another and sent the men with a guide and two soldiers to Randal MacSorley MacDonnell at Dunluce. From there they were to be sent into Scotland.⁵⁴

Given the problem of disease and desertion, the prospects of Docwra's Derry garrison were not encouraging. Its survival was not guaranteed either and there was a precedent of a Derry garrison struggling and eventually being abandoned. During the rebellion of Shane O'Neill, a garrison under Edward Randolph was established at Derry in September 1566. The garrison got off to an inauspicious start as Randolph was killed in a skirmish with O'Neill's forces. The fortunes of the garrison did not improve because, like its 1600 counterpart, sickness wrought havoc. The sickness was so bad that it paralysed the garrison, rendering it largely useless. The garrison was on the edge of collapse and an explosion of its gunpowder was the final straw as the garrison was quickly vacated thereafter.⁵⁵ Docwra's Derry, with its similar struggles, appeared to be following in the footsteps of its predecessor. One major defeat or disaster could result in its demise. During such a perilous and uncertain time, Art's assistance was valuable for Derry and Docwra himself acknowledged that Art helped them at the 'time of our greatest danger.'⁵⁶ Such assistance helped ensure Derry's survival and of all Art's contributions, the discovery of potential plots was one of the most important. If Art had not warned Docwra about the plot of Tyrone and the O'Cahans, then a force of about 400 men could have been routed which would have put a serious strain on an already struggling garrison. Furthermore, Art helped uncover another, possibly more dangerous, stratagem involving O'Donnell and Maolmordha MacSweeney Doe. This stratagem began when O'Donnell approached a *bonnacht* named Eoghan Durrough and told Eoghan that he had a special task for him. O'Donnell specifically picked Eoghan as he 'had served in former time[s] amongst the English and was the fittest man to be imployed into their camp.' Eoghan had been a soldier under Maolmordha MacSweeney Doe, who served with the government in Connacht after being banished from Tyrconnell in 1598. Eoghan and MacSweeney were part of Conyers

⁵⁴ Morgan, Hiram, "Treason against Traitors': Thomas Walker, Hugh O'Neill's Would-Be Assassin." *History Ireland*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (March-April 2010), pp.18-21, Thomas Walker's narrative, 1601 *Cecil papers* Vol.88/no.121

⁵⁵ Lord Treasurer Winchester and Edward Basshe to Lord Deputy Sidney, 26th March 1567, (SP 63/20/no.54) Barty, Ciaran, *Shane O'Neill*, p.61

⁵⁶ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 1st October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.66)

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Clifford's army that was sent to relieve O'Connor Sligo at Collooney in August 1599. This army was defeated in the Curlew mountains and Clifford killed. Once Eoghan saw that Clifford and his army were overthrown he went over to O'Donnell and found employment as one of his 'bonnonghes.'⁵⁷

O'Donnell, hoping to exploit this background, tasked Eoghan with bringing a message to Maolmordha MacSweeney Doe, who had remained with the government after the Curlews defeat and had been sent with Docwra to Derry. Eoghan informed MacSweeney that O'Donnell would be willing to restore him to his lands if he performed some service against the English. MacSweeney was initially not open to O'Donnell's offer, citing previous deceptions as a cause for him to have no trust in O'Donnell. MacSweeney did say that if O'Donnell gave him a third of Tyrconnell and command of a large force, then he would re-join the Gaelic confederacy, but these large demands were thought to be 'a jest' by O'Donnell. Negotiations continued and Eoghan brought an unnamed man, just referred to as a scholar, to help with the talks. To disguise these machinations and excuse their being with MacSweeney, the two men met Docwra and said they came because they wanted to offer to be spies, an offer Docwra accepted. The negotiations were not a lost cause as MacSweeney had been showing signs of discontentment and frustration with the English. He was unhappy that Art O'Neill received more entertainment than him and that his requests for a company in pay were at first denied by Docwra and then only forwarded on to the Lord Deputy, who subsequently forgot about them. Furthermore, the poor circumstances of the disease-ridden Lough Foyle garrison did little to inspire confidence. Therefore, the discontented MacSweeney, perceiving the how weak the government army was, eventually decided to serve 'his turn upon the opportunity offered.'⁵⁸ The exact terms of O'Donnell and MacSweeney's agreement were not disclosed but restoring MacSweeney to his lands or part of them must have been part of the accord because later O'Donnell took half the MacSweeney Doe lordship and Doe castle from Maolmordha's rival and gave them to him.⁵⁹ A command of soldiers may have been another term of their composition as O'Donnell gave MacSweeney 200 men.⁶⁰ MacSweeney's first service was helping O'Donnell steal the 60 horses from Derry and his men secretly drove the horses towards

⁵⁷ The causes of suspicion against McSwine Nee Doe, 28th August 1600, (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.96)

⁵⁸ Ibid, Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd September 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.3)

⁵⁹ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th February 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.47)

⁶⁰ The causes of suspicion against McSwine Nee Doe, 28th August 1600, (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.96), Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 1st October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.66)

O'Donnell's men early in the morning. A more dangerous plot was next planned. Eoghan Durrough was to bring hawks to Docwra and that was a signal for MacSweeny, who that night was to meet O'Donnell in a nearby wood, give him the watchword and bring his whole force to Docwra's camp. If this plot was successful, then it could have resulted in Docwra and Derry's overthrow but Docwra had been tipped off about MacSweeny's composition with O'Donnell. This was confirmed by Art who received news from some of his friends in Tyrconnell. Once Docwra received this confirmation he acted quickly and imprisoned MacSweeny, who later escaped, and confronted Eoghan when he arrived with the hawks. Eoghan subsequently confessed to his part in the plot.⁶¹

By foiling dangerous plots and his guides helping Docwra achieve some military success, Art played an important role in helping the Lough Foyle garrisons endure in testing circumstances. That being said, while Art helped the Lough Foyle garrisons survive, his assistance was not enough for it to prosper. During Art's time with the government they did not inflict any decisive or serious defeat upon the Gaelic confederates, leading to complaints by Cecil that they had 'done nothing of importance.' Docwra and his weak forces did secure garrisons at Culmore, Derry, Elagh and Dunnalong but this accomplishment was of minimal impact. Simply having such garrisons was not much good if they performed little service and this was pointed out to Docwra when the Privy Council reminded him that the Queen's service is not furthered by a garrison 'unlesse yt be to reduce the countryes by strong incursions unto them.'⁶² What is more these garrisons were clustered relatively close together (see figure 7) so their range of operations was limited and this left much of the Gaelic confederates' territory in northwest Ulster untouched and comparatively safe.

How ineffective the Lough Foyle garrisons had become can be seen during Mountjoy's over two-month Ulster expedition which began in September 1600 and lasted until November. Mountjoy planned to erect a garrison at Armagh and thought this could have been done easily, because the Lough Foyle garrisons would distract and divert most of Tyrone's forces. Mountjoy soon found that this was not the case and bitterly complained that 'from thence we expect no ease of our burden' because the Lough Foyle garrisons had been immobilised by sickness and death. Docwra's losing 'the use of 4,000 men' meant

⁶¹ Ibid, Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.48

⁶² *APC*, Vol.30, p.576, *Carew manuscripts*, Vol.3, p. 435

Tyrone was able to focus his full attention and the bulk of his forces on fortifying and defending the dangerous Moyry pass.⁶³ Consequently when Mountjoy reached the Moyry pass he encountered a strongly fortified and defended pass and could not break through until Tyrone withdrew north on 17th October. Even then Mountjoy was forced to abandon his initial plan and had to settle for building a fort in between Armagh and Newry called Mountnorris.⁶⁴

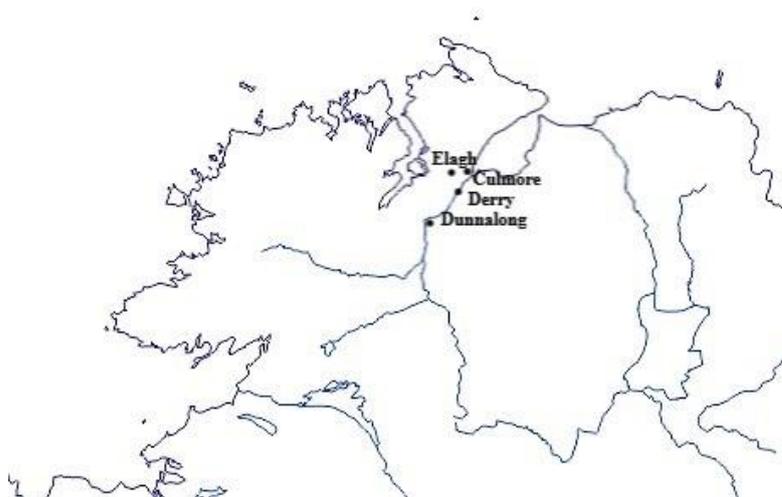


Figure 7. Docwra's Garrisons, September 1600

The reaction of the O'Donnell to Docwra's progress further illustrates that the Lough Foyle garrisons had not seriously troubled the confederates.⁶⁵ O'Donnell's actions certainly show that he was not too troubled by Docwra and his garrisons. O'Donnell, after some small skirmishes with Docwra during the first few weeks after his landing, left Tyrconnell and raided Connacht, even going as far as Thomond.⁶⁶ According to Ó Cléirigh, O'Donnell was unimpressed with the English garrisons and his decision to go to Connacht and Thomond was to show his contempt for them.⁶⁷ Carew had similar thoughts on O'Donnell's expedition to Connacht and Thomond. Carew reasoned that O'Donnell was able to leave Tyrconnell because Docwra did not have much success and 'our forces in those parts are not so fearful unto him as I do wish.'⁶⁸ O'Donnell returned at the beginning of July, after about three weeks away, and by October O'Donnell's confidence was

⁶³ Carew manuscripts, Vol.3, p. 465, The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th October 1600, camp near Newry (SP 63/207pt.5/no.119), The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and some of the Council to the Privy Council, 28th October 1600, camp near Newry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.121)

⁶⁴ Ibid, O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.139-40

⁶⁵ Tyrone to Florence McCarthy, 20th September 1600 (SP 63/205 pt.5/no.110 i)

⁶⁶ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.130)

⁶⁷ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.261-3

⁶⁸ Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th June 1600, Killmallock (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.129)

undiminished because he planned another journey to Connacht and Thomond.⁶⁹ However on 3rd October an event transformed the fortunes of Docwra and the Lough Foyle garrisons. That event was the defection of Niall Garbh O'Donnell and three of his brothers.

Niall Garbh was one of those likely defectors who Docwra had been 'directed by the state to winne to the Queene's seruice' and his defection had been anticipated for some time.⁷⁰ Niall's close friend, Art O'Neill, had been informing the government of Niall's intention to defect since at least 1599 and continued to do so after his own submission, often reassuring Docwra that Niall would abandon the Gaelic confederacy.⁷¹ Niall Garbh also tried to reassure Docwra of his good intentions and did so by helping to uncover the MacSweeny Doe plot. Niall Garbh had witnessed the writing of the treaty between O'Donnell and MacSweeny and acted as a surety for the 'performance of the covenant.' Niall then told a man named Hugh Murray, his friend and a spy for Docwra, of the plan to betray the Derry garrison. Niall instructed Murray to give Docwra 'notice of it as the first earnest piece of his service'.⁷² Secret negotiations between Docwra and Niall Garbh would soon follow in August 1600 and Niall's first and foremost demand was his lifetime ambition, Tyrconnell in the same manner as his grandfather held it. His other demands were liberty of conscience, 500 foot and 150 horse in pay, the authority to choose the sheriff of Tyrconnell and a pardon for him and his followers along with anyone else he could bring in. Docwra promised Niall that the Queen would agree to grant him Tyrconnell and gave the usual response to the question of liberty of conscience, telling Niall that the Queen had never bothered anyone in Ireland for their religion and he had no cause to complain about liberty of conscience. In response to the demand for 500 foot and 150 horse in pay, Docwra promised to provide victuals for those who came in with Niall and later to give money instead once he heard from the Lord Deputy. To the final two demands Docwra assented.⁷³ Niall had to defect earlier than anticipated and before he was fully assured of the terms of his submission, although accounts of the immediate cause of Niall's hasty defection differ. Docwra said that one of Art's men, who had been used to write letters in Irish to Niall,

⁶⁹ Intelligences from the north, 9th July 1600, (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.13), Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, 22nd October 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.108)

⁷⁰ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.51

⁷¹ O'Neill's son to Sir Samuel Bagenall, 1599 (SP 63/206/no.149), Sir Henry Docwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th August 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.93), Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd September 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.3)

⁷² The causes of suspicion against McSwine Nee Doe, 28th August 1600, (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.96)

⁷³ The demands of Neeale Garve to me the Governor of Her Majesty's forces at Lough Foyle, 27th August 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.2 i),

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absconded and Niall, fearing his secret communications with Docwra would be exposed, defected earlier than planned. On the other hand, Fenton received intelligence that claimed that Niall held an unspecified grudge against his uncle Neachtan and in a drunken fight he and his men killed Neachtan. Neachtan was well regarded by Hugh Rua so Niall feared there would be retaliation for the murder and fled to Docwra before O'Donnell could return from his second expedition to Connacht. Docwra's version was more probable because he was directly involved in Niall's defection and would have known the circumstances behind it.⁷⁴

Niall Garbh's defection was a massive shock to O'Donnell because his misplaced trust in his rival persisted right up to the moment Niall arrived at Derry. O'Donnell had so much faith in Niall that, as at Collooney the previous year, he gave him command of the besieging forces at Derry when he went to Connacht in June 1600. On that occasion Niall, ostensibly as least, was loyal and did not shy away from military conflict with the Derry garrison. On 19th June for example, 24 of Niall Garbh's horse killed one of the garrison's scouts, wounded another and took five horses.⁷⁵ This supposed loyalty must have lured O'Donnell further into a false sense of security and so, when he decided to lead another incursion into Connacht in October it was once more Niall who he gave command of the besieging forces.⁷⁶ O'Donnell had only reached Ballymote when he heard of Niall Garbh's defection and his reported shock highlights how badly he had misjudged Niall. According to Captain Willis when 'O'Donnell heard of Neale Garve's coming in, he was so dumb-stricken, that he did neither eat nor drink in three days' and Ó Cléirigh stated that O'Donnell 'wondered greatly, and was surprised that one who was kinsman and brother-in-law should turn against him.'⁷⁷

Niall Garbh's defection was a defining moment for the Lough Foyle expedition and the war in general as it transformed the prospects of the struggling and nearly paralysed garrisons in northwest Ulster. Contemporaries were well aware of how pivotal this moment was and that it was the catalyst for the improvement in the effectiveness of Derry and the other garrisons. Fenton immediately upon hearing of Niall Garbh's defection recognised

⁷⁴ Advertisements out of Fermanagh sent to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 22nd October 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.120), Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 2nd November 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.9)

⁷⁵ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.251, Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th June 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.130).

⁷⁶ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.263-5

⁷⁷ *Ibid* p.267, Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 29th October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.127)

its importance and that it would ‘alter greatly the affairs of Ulster in those parts.’ Fenton also highlighted that Niall’s defection was well-timed for Docwra given the weak state of the garrisons and his desperate need of help. Fenton would go so far as to say it was evidence of divine intervention.⁷⁸ In the immediate aftermath of the war Richard Hadsor also remarked that Niall Garbh’s defection was the cause for the previously faltering Lough Foyle expedition’s turnaround in fortunes. Hadsor also claimed that Tyrone confessed to him that it was Niall who had ‘undone himself and them.’⁷⁹ Docwra too, in his *Narration*, would identify Niall’s submission as a watershed moment for his expedition. He, like Fenton, noted the good timing of Niall’s defection and how he was indispensable because they ‘made many uses of [Niall] and could ill have spared’ him.⁸⁰

Irish sources also recognise Niall Garbh’s defection as the turning point of the war and suggest that his help played a crucial role in the crown’s ultimately overcoming the Gaelic confederacy. Ó Cléirigh for example greatly lamented Niall’s betrayal. Before he joined the English, the O’Donnells ‘success was unbroken’ because when they were united ‘it was not simple or easy to wound or maim them, to surround or circumvent them.’ Ó Cléirigh also believed Niall Garbh’s defection was timely for Docwra because the disease ridden, badly supplied and besieged Derry garrison was in desperate straits.⁸¹ Donough Mooney, a soldier turned friar, was at Donegal Abbey at the time of Niall Garbh’s defection and, writing in 1617, he said that Niall ‘multum juvit Anglos superiore bello’ (i.e. Niall greatly helped the English in the recent war).⁸² According to O’Sullivan Beare, Niall Garbh himself thought that ‘Ireland preserved to the English crown, not by the English, but by him.’⁸³ The importance of Niall Garbh’s defection can be discerned from the local poet Fergal Óg Mac an Bhaird. The disunity and fighting between Niall Garbh and O’Donnell and others in the northwest was so pervasive that it seeped into Fergal’s poetry. This is evident from the theme of *tnúth* becoming a major feature of his poetry after 1600. *Tnúth* meant ‘envy’ betokening disunity and such references to *tnúth* and other terms that denoted jealousy were ‘code for disunity and signal aspirations to leadership marked by turbulence

⁷⁸ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 27th October 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.127)

⁷⁹ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol. 15, p.145

⁸⁰ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.51

⁸¹ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.265, 273

⁸² Jennings, Brendan, (ed). “Brussels MS. 3947: Donatus Moneyus, De Provincia Hiberniae S. Francisci.” *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 6, (Nov. 1934), p. 116, McCafferty, John. “A Mundo Valde Alieni: Irish Franciscan Responses to the Dissolution of the Monasteries, 1540–1640.” *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2017, p.52

⁸³ O’Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, pp.180-1

and opposition.’ For Fergal this *tnúth* was the only way a powerful and skilled warrior could be brought down and when looking at the violent succession disputes, the actions of Niall Garbh and others who fought with Docwra and the fate of the Gaelic confederacy, it is not surprising that he thought *tnúth* was so destructive.⁸⁴

By examining Niall’s actions with the government and contrasting the state of affairs before and after he submitted, it is clear that Fenton, Docwra, Hadsor, O’Clery and Mooney were correct to give Niall such prominence. Niall’s first major contribution was at Lifford where he was ‘a principal actor in the possessing of that place.’⁸⁵ On 8th October Niall urged Docwra to take Lifford before O’Donnell, who had just returned from Connacht, could reach it. Docwra agreed and sent 500 foot and 30 horse under the command of John Bolles to assist Niall in taking Lifford.⁸⁶ Disease, desertion and casualties from fighting meant this was nearly the full extent of the fit men that Docwra could bring into the field and in that context the numbers that Niall brought were substantial. When Niall first submitted he brought with him 120 foot, which added an extra 24 percent to the force that Docwra could provide for taking Lifford at that time. In terms of horse, Niall’s contribution was even greater as the 30 horse he brought was as many as Docwra could send with Bolles.⁸⁷ Moreover, Niall enjoyed a lot of local support and was able to increase his forces and would later have 300 foot and 100 horse on half-pay.⁸⁸ Therefore Niall’s contribution in terms of manpower was significant. As an ally Niall was also useful because he was a very capable and valiant military leader. Docwra described him as ‘a man of a singular spirit, forward (no man more) upon all services’ and ‘valiant and hardy as any man living’⁸⁹ Even Niall’s detractors could not deny this and O’Sullivan Beare described him as ‘a man of great spirit and daring, skilled in military matters’ and Ó Cléirigh conceded that Niall was a ‘hero in valour and fighting.’⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Ó Machán, Pádraig. “An Elegy for Seaán Óg Ó Dochartaigh.” *Celtica*, Vol. 26, 2010, pp. 89, 93, Ó Machán, Pádraig. “The Iconography of an Exile; Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaired in Louvain.” In Pádraig A Breatnach. et al (eds)., *The Louvain Manuscript Heritage*, Dublin, 2007, pp. 77–81, Ó Machán, Pádraig. “A Poem on the Death of Tadhg Ó Ruairc.” *Celtica*, Vol. 28, 2016, pp. 35–36.

⁸⁵ Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.79)

⁸⁶ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 29th October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.127)

⁸⁷ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 2nd November 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.9)

⁸⁸ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol. 15, p.145, The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, 7th February 1601, Trim (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.38)

⁸⁹ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd November 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.10)

⁹⁰ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.55, O’Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.136

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Lifford was lightly defended so Niall and the government forces were able to quickly capture it on 9th October. The ward of about thirty men were put to the sword, with Niall killing six men personally. O'Donnell quickly responded and encamped near Lifford and over the next month there were a number of skirmishes between him and the garrison. The most notable occurred on the 21st October when O'Donnell's forces tried to burn some of the garrison's turf. Niall Garbh and the Lifford garrison responded by sallying out and Niall displayed why he was praised for his valour. Niall did not shy away from danger and when the garrison forces charged at O'Donnell, Niall and his three brothers took the vanguard. O'Donnell's forces were repulsed and in the fight, Niall remained in the thick of the action. He barely escaped as he was 'thrice stricken upon his shirt of mail with a staff' and then had his horse slain but not before he personally killed O'Donnell's brother Manus.⁹¹ This was especially pleasing for Docwra as it increased the animosity between Niall and O'Donnell to the extent that reconciliation was out the question. Docwra told Cecil that they 'needed no better hostages for his fidelity' than the killing 'with his own hands (in fight and open view of our men that saw him) O'Donnell's second brother.'⁹² Niall Garbh's vital assistance in taking and securing Lifford was also beneficial as it obtained for Docwra a strategically very important location. Lifford was on the border between Tyrconnell and Tyrone so the garrison could lead incursions into both territories. The limited range of operations of the Lough Foyle expedition was therefore greatly broadened and soon the Lifford garrison took advantage of its location by launching several raids into Tyrone. On the 15th November Niall Garbh's brother along with some of the Lifford garrison penetrated 12 miles into Tyrone where they took 500 cows and some horses and 'killed man, women and child.'⁹³ According to the *Annals of the Four Masters* Niall Garbh was very active at Lifford and led a number of raids into Tyrone before the year was out. During his first raid Niall Garbh encountered some of Tyrone's men at a place named Burndennet, a few miles north of Lifford on the Tyrone side of the Foyle. Niall defeated Tyrone's men and returned to Lifford 'with many spoils and in triumph.' On another occasion Niall Garbh and the Lifford garrison raided the valley of Glenney and they would also later defeat some of Tyrone's forces at Knockavoe.⁹⁴ By launching raids

⁹¹ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 29th October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.127), Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 2nd November 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.9), *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp.271-3

⁹² Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd November 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.10)

⁹³ Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 18th January 1601, Dublin (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.18)

⁹⁴ *AFM*, pp.2225-7

into Tyrone and expanding the government's reach in the northwest, Lifford took pressure off Derry somewhat as it was no longer the focal point for the Gaelic confederates. Consequently, as Ó Cléirigh put it, Niall's taking of Lifford had 'released them [the English] from the narrow prison in which they were.'⁹⁵

By December 1600, the prospects and view of the Lough Foyle expedition had completely changed from the pessimism at the beginning of Mountjoy's Moyry expedition and there was no doubt that Niall and his service was the primary cause. Chichester for instance was very pleased with Docwra and the forces at Lough Foyle as they 'do often good services upon O'Donnell, and have lately slain one of his brothers, and much the more by the help of Neale Garve.'⁹⁶ John Bolles also noted the 'happy change' at Lough Foyle.⁹⁷ How central Niall was to the present and future success of Lough Foyle was discernible when he was absent. Docwra agreed to allow Niall Garbh to go to Dublin in December 1600 in order to see the Lord Deputy and negotiate his reward for his defection.⁹⁸ Mountjoy and the Dublin government acknowledged that Niall was 'a very rare instrument' that could greatly advance the service in Ulster and so they decided to appease him. They promised Niall Tyrconnell as his grandfather had it with some exceptions. Ballyshannon, 800 acres of land surrounding it and the fishing rights of the Erne were to be reserved for the government. Dublin Castle did not have the authority to grant Niall letters patent for Tyrconnell and they asked the Privy Council to 'procure us warrant from Her Majesty in this sort to pass his country to' Niall. In the meantime, Mountjoy and the Irish council awarded Niall Tyrconnell as a 'custodian' with the intent of giving him letters patent at a later date. While at Dublin, Niall also gave his son and foster brother as pledges for his loyalty.⁹⁹

Niall did not return until April and during his time at Dublin his absence was sorely felt by government forces. In a similar fashion as Art, Niall provided invaluable intelligence and guides and Docwra acknowledged that without them he would not have been able to do much.¹⁰⁰ Therefore when Niall left there were serious concerns that crown forces would

⁹⁵ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.265

⁹⁶ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.78)

⁹⁷ Sir John Bolles to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th March 1601, Dunnalong (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.67)

⁹⁸ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 19th December 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.84)

⁹⁹ The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, 7th February 1601, Trim (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.38), An imaginary estimate of such points as I can aim at, [and] the Lords of the Council will be desirous to be informed of, March 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.126), *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Vo.2, p.587

¹⁰⁰ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*: p.52

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be hampered and Captain Humphrey Covert urged Cecil to tell Mountjoy to send Niall back as soon as possible because 'upon his intelligences our winter enterprises chiefly consist.'¹⁰¹ In March 1601 Covert reiterated his pleas for Niall's hasty return because their losing his intelligence and guidance had, as predicted, greatly hindered them. Covert would further elaborate that through Niall's 'absence O'Donnell gains too much liberty, for Neale is their only guide for Tyrconnell.'¹⁰² Even some of the service done during Niall's time at Dublin was not free from his influence as his brothers remained and helped the Lifford garrison. In January one of Niall's brothers led some of the garrison towards a camp where O'Donnell had left 100 men. O'Donnell's men were chased away and Niall's brother and the government forces burned about 200 dwellings and much of the Gaelic confederates' corn.¹⁰³

When Niall Garbh returned in April, he quickly helped Docwra secure control over northwest Tyrconnell. Now others began to defect. Shane MacManus Óg O'Donnell once again defected, about three years after his failed uprising against O'Donnell, but initially Docwra rejected his overtures because he thought Shane's demand for 100 foot and 100 horse in pay was unreasonable. After his Gaelic allies told him of Shane's courage and ability, Docwra reconsidered and beat Shane down to only 50 foot and 25 horse in pay but with an incentive that if he delivered pledges and served well, Docwra would appeal to the Lord Deputy on his behalf for a further 50 foot and 25 horse. To further placate Shane, Docwra gave him £40 which would later be deducted from his pay if the Lord Deputy agreed to grant Shane money for a company of horse and foot. Shane agreed to these conditions and gave his son as a pledge. Shane would soon prove that he was a good investment because he launched attacks from his base on Tory island as far as Killybegs

¹⁰¹ Memorandum from Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, December 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.

¹⁰² Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 28th March 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.111)

¹⁰³ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 12 February 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.47)

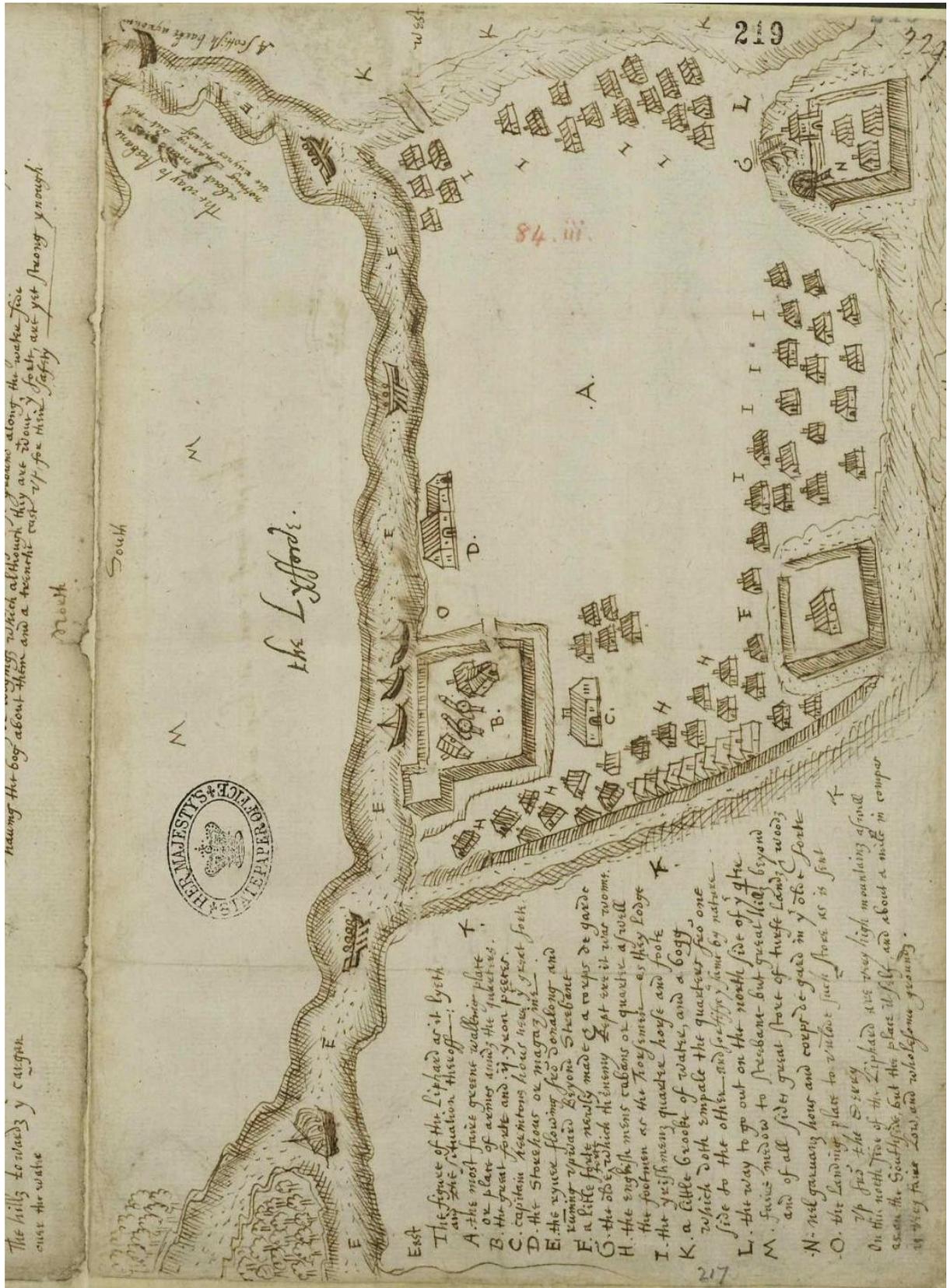


Figure 8. Lifford Garrison (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.84 iii)

in south Tyrconnell.¹⁰⁴ Docwra was also able to exploit another succession dispute, this time it was among the MacSweenys. When Maolmordha MacSweeny Doe re-joined the Gaelic confederacy it appeared to be a great coup for O'Donnell but there was one problem: Eoghan MacSweeny Doe who was already in possession of the MacSweeny Doe lordship. O'Donnell was faced with the unenviable task of mediating between two rivals and not alienating one party to the extent that they defected. Tyrone's numerous failures to arbitrate between rivals during the first six years of the war had already shown this was a near impossible job because in the end there could only be one chieftain. The consolation prize of some land was not enough to appease those who lost out as the '*tnúth*' was too strong. The MacSweeny Does were no exception. Even though the MacSweeny Doe lordship was split in half it was clear that Maolmordha was favoured and made *de facto* chieftain by O'Donnell. The main stronghold, Doe castle, was taken from Eoghan and given to Maolmordha and Eoghan was also forced to give pledges who were kept by Maolmordha in Doe castle.¹⁰⁵

Being relegated to a secondary position caused a disgruntled Eoghan to look to the government for help regaining the MacSweeny Doe lordship. He contacted Docwra about submitting in February and he did so again in April 1601 when he sent Docwra a message informing him that his pledges in Doe castle had escaped and held the upper part of the castle but were besieged by O'Donnell's brother Rory and Maolmordha MacSweeny Doe. Eoghan asked for help relieving his pledges in return for his submission. Docwra obliged and sent a force by sea to succour the besieged at Doe but contrary winds prevented them from reaching the castle. Not long after, Docwra was raiding the neighbouring Fanad and Eoghan personally came to him and repeated his request for help. Docwra demanded that if he forced the besieging army to flee then Eoghan was to hand over Doe castle. Eoghan declined and instead it was agreed that Docwra would march near Doe castle and pretend that he would go there in order to frighten Rory O'Donnell and cause him to break off the siege. More importantly, Docwra promised Eoghan that he would be granted the MacSweeny Doe lordship. Eoghan agreed, submitted and gave two pledges.¹⁰⁶

When Docwra got within eight miles of Doe castle, Rory O'Donnell decided to raise the siege and retreat south. This left Eoghan and Docwra in control of the MacSweeny

¹⁰⁴ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 23rd April 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.19)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th February 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.47)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 15th May 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.69)

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Doe lordship. Eoghan was also quite active and there was much conflict between him and Hugh Rua as Docwra reported that ‘Mc Swinie himself is daily preyed by O’Donnell and O’Donnell by him.’¹⁰⁷ At the same time as the MacSweeney Doe lordship was subdued, Docwra and Niall Garbh secured control of Fanad and the lands of Hugh Dubh O’Donnell around Ramelton. Docwra, before he marched towards Doe castle, took 1,000 cows from Fanad and Ramelton. To further suppress the region, he established a garrison at Ramelton under Niall Garbh and gave him a further 150 English soldiers. Ramelton was to be backed up by a garrison at Rathmullan Abbey which was located about six miles north of Ramelton and had been established in March 1601. Niall quickly subjugated Fanad, secured pledges from the region and delivered them to Captain Bingley at Rathmullan.¹⁰⁸ O’Donnell did respond and he took a prey from Niall Garbh but this was quickly retaken and control over Fanad re-established so Docwra and the government were assured of much of northwest Tyrconnell.¹⁰⁹

Niall Garbh after his return from Dublin may have helped subdue Fanad but the first signs of tension between him and Docwra became visible. When Niall Garbh returned from Dublin he did so with assurances that he would be given Tyrconnell and he presumed that he could act like a traditional independent O’Donnell chieftain and exert the O’Donnells’ claims over areas which they historically viewed to be part of their overlordship. These areas included Connacht, Inishowen, Fermanagh, part of Tyrone and ‘wheresoeuer any of the O’Donnells had at that time extended their Power.’¹¹⁰ Niall Garbh was mistaken as the government granted him Tyrconnell, and only Tyrconnell. There was no chance that he would be given anything more as it went against the government’s policy of restricting the influence and strength of Gaelic chieftains. It did not take long for Niall to discover that he could not act in the traditional manner and this led to a tense argument between Niall and Docwra. Niall Garbh demanded that he be able to exercise the O’Donnells’ traditional claim of overlordship of Inishowen and told Docwra that the ‘country is mine...and so is all Tyrconnell, and I will use and govern it to my own pleasure.’ Docwra replied by asking him what he planned to do with Inishowen and Niall Garbh answered that ‘I will cress my people...upon the churls, I will take such things as I want.’

¹⁰⁷ Notes by Sir Henry Dockwra on the countries of O’Dogherty, MeSwyne Ne Doe, and MeSwyne Fanaght, 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.127)

¹⁰⁸ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 23rd April 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.19)

¹⁰⁹ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 12th May, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.58)

¹¹⁰ Kelly, William, *Docwra’s Derry*, p.54

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Docwra replied that Inishowen was poor and the Queen had said that she was content not to impose anything on Inishowen for a year and Docwra hoped Niall would not challenge this. Niall dismissed the Queen and told Docwra to let 'the Queen do with her rights what she will. Ennisowen is mine, and were there but one cow in the country, that cow would I take and use as mine own.... let 1,000 die, I pass not of a pin; and for the people, they are my subjects. I will punish, exact, cut, and hang, if I see occasion, where and whensoever I list.'¹¹¹ This reply indicates that Niall did not fully understand the consequences of his defection. He believed that it would be business as usual and Docwra and the government would not stop him from acting as Gaelic chieftains customarily did. This helps to explain somewhat why Niall, and possible others, was willing to defect, as he did not think by doing so he was complicit in ending the traditional Gaelic order and way of life.

Docwra grew more forceful and forbade Niall or his men from meddling with Inishowen or any man's country. If they did then they would be executed and Niall sent to Dublin as a prisoner. Docwra further lambasted Niall for challenging the Queen's authority and reminded him that he was not 'Lord or Master of any part of Tyrconnell but by Her Majesty's favour and bounty.' Niall would eventually relent but it did not take long before tensions arose again.¹¹² Niall would complain about being forced to remain at Ramelton because he claimed that the county was too poor after Docwra preyed it and so he wished to return to Lifford. Niall Garbh was angered by Docwra's raid of Fanad and complained 'What shall I be the better for the country, when you leave me nothing in it, but the bare land desolate and destroyed?' Docwra had to give Niall part of the prey taken from Fanad to appease him and managed to convince him to go back to Ramelton for a while before eventually allowing him to leave. In his stead one of Niall's brothers with 100 men would remain and Shane MacManus Óg would also help keep Fanad in check.¹¹³ Docwra was becoming increasingly frustrated with Niall's independent streak and 'unreasonable' demands. This was reflected in Docwra's letters which more and more featured complaints about Niall. After his demand for Inishowen for instance, an irritated Docwra would describe Niall as 'proud, valiant, miserably covetous.....void of the knowledge of God, or almost any civility'.¹¹⁴ Yet Docwra still knew that Niall Garbh could be a useful asset if appeased or forcefully kept in line and the alternative should not be contemplated because

¹¹¹ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council. 23rd April 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.19)

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 12th May 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.58)

¹¹⁴ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council. 23rd April 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.19)

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Docwra thought he would be as dangerous a rebel as either Tyrone or Hugh Rua O'Donnell if let go. Docwra would therefore persist with Niall, albeit not completely trusting him.¹¹⁵

At the end of May, Niall once more displayed why he was such a useful ally. Niall Garbh was at Lifford and received intelligence that Tyrone and 400 of his men were going to fetch some cows near Dunnalong. Niall Garbh with his men and 100 English soldiers under Captain Windsor sallied out and routed Tyrone's forces. They killed 100 men, captured many arms and horses and chased Tyrone for six miles. Tyrone barely escaped, as the pursuing forces were 'so near that oftentimes Tyrone himself was within a stave's length of being killed.'¹¹⁶Niall continued to help Docwra make gains throughout the summer of 1601. In June Niall took Castlederg while Docwra was able to capture castles at Newtown in Tyrone and Enagh in O'Cahan's country.¹¹⁷ At the beginning of August, Niall Garbh and his men, along with about 400 English soldiers from Docwra, gained control of Donegal Abbey.¹¹⁸ Donegal was strategically important because its location in south Tyrconnell meant it could act as a stepping stone to capture Ballyshannon which in turn could be used to cut O'Donnell off from his Connacht allies. Furthermore, by capturing Donegal Abbey Niall Garbh had expanded the government's reach into south Tyrconnell where previously they had no presence. Donegal Abbey also took more pressure off Derry and the other garrisons as O'Donnell gave Niall Garbh his full attention and besieged him. Without any serious force to challenge them, Docwra and his forces throughout Tyrconnell were able to destroy much of the harvest and take many cows, to the extent that areas surrounding government garrisons were uninhabited and wasted with Docwra confident that a famine was inevitable. Docwra gave the Donegal garrison full credit for this as he conceded that he would not have accomplished what he did 'if so great a number of that rebellious body had not been kept off by that garrison.'¹¹⁹

The doubts over Niall Garbh's loyalty still lingered but at Donegal he once more displayed his usefulness. During the siege Niall endured harsh conditions as he lacked men, horse and victuals and had regular skirmishes with O'Donnell but he remained resolute. This was most evident on the 19th September when a fire broke out, whether on purpose or

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 31st May 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.103), Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 10th June 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.12)

¹¹⁷ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 2nd July 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.53)

¹¹⁸ Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, 10th August 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.16)

¹¹⁹ Sir Henry Docwra to Secretary Cecil, 28th September 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.108)

accident it was never determined, in the abbey. The soldiers of the garrison desperately attempted to remove the barrels of gun powder but could only save four before the rest exploded. Once O'Donnell saw the fire and explosion he looked to take advantage and his forces attacked the abbey. O'Donnell's men managed to gain part of the garrison's storehouse but with 'much travill and a long fight' Niall and his men were able to repulse O'Donnell's attack.¹²⁰ Niall and the garrison lost much in the fire and subsequent battle. The crown forces lost 31 men and Niall Garbh lost 16 men including his brother Con Óg. Much of the garrison's munitions, victuals and other supplies were also destroyed so Niall and the rest were in a precarious position.¹²¹ Yet the following day when O'Donnell sent a messenger, who offered them the option to leave unharmed, he was 'violently' rejected.¹²² Niall's actions at Donegal and his remaining loyal in testing circumstances again forced Docwra to praise him despite his suspicions and misgivings. When telling Cecil about Niall's actions at Donegal, Docwra commended Niall for 'the helps he gave our men in time of their greatest wants when O'Donnell besieged them' and for 'standing firm in so dangerous a time.' Docwra would also acknowledge that Niall had sacrificed much by 'standing firm' during the siege including the loss of his brother and many of his men.¹²³ Niall Garbh did parley with O'Donnell during the siege but he did so with permission from Docwra. Docwra gave Niall Garbh permission because he hoped that Niall could use the talks to play for time or possibly make gains through a feigned agreement and alliance with O'Donnell. Niall almost did when O'Donnell provisionally agreed to hand over a castle at Lough Eske but ultimately nothing came of it. The siege would end after about two months when the Spanish arrived at Kinsale and O'Donnell and Tyrone went to the aid of their continental allies.¹²⁴ When examining the position of Docwra when O'Donnell left for Kinsale and where he was prior to Niall Garbh's defection the contrast is stark. Before Niall Garbh's defection the Lough Foyle expedition was nearly completely immobilised, derided for its inactivity and confined to a 'narrow prison.' After Niall Garbh defected, he took Lifford, Castlederg and Donegal Abbey. Niall Garbh's defection therefore led to an

¹²⁰ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.60, Neil Garve O'Donnell to Sir H. Docwra, 1st September 1601, Donegal (SP 63/209 pt.1/ no.50 b) Neale Garve to Sir Henry Docwra, 20th September 1601, Donegal (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.110 c)

¹²¹ Neale Garve to [Sir Henry Docwra], 24th September 1601, Donegal (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.110 a), Captain Paul Gore to [Sir Henry Docwra], 24th September 1601, Donegal (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.110 a)

¹²² Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.60-1

¹²³ *Ibid*, Sir Henry Docwra to [Secretary Cecil], 4th January 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.3)

¹²⁴ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol. 15, pp.145-6, Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, 2nd September 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.50), Neale Garve to [Sir Henry Docwra], 24th September 1601, Donegal (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.110 a)

expansion in the number of government garrisons in the region and in turn greatly extended the geographical reach of the Lough Foyle expedition. How drastic this expansion was can be seen from comparing figures 7 and 9. The garrisons were no longer dormant either. Niall personally was quite active and this was immediately apparent following his defection. Niall's temporary absence in Dublin emphasised his importance as he was an important guide and purveyor of intelligence without whom Docwra's forces were flying blind. How successful Docwra and the government were following Niall's defection can be discerned from how far the fortunes of O'Donnell had fallen.

Before Niall defected O'Donnell was so confident and had such little regard for Docwra and the Derry garrison that he felt comfortable enough to leave them behind and go to Connacht. His response to Florence MacCarthy's request for aid in February 1601 shows how the situation had changed. O'Donnell said that he wished he could send



Figure 9. Docwra's garrisons, August 1601

Florence aid and even go in person, but Hugh Rua was now deeply concerned about the 'strangers neighboured upon my Country' so he refrained from doing so.¹²⁵ By the time he left for Kinsale O'Donnell was almost completely expelled from Tyrconnell and only possessed Ballyshannon and a castle at Lough Eske.¹²⁶ He was also so weak in Tyrconnell that he was forced to evacuate his family, many of his followers and their livestock and

¹²⁵ Stafford, Thomas, *Pacata Hibernia*, Vol.1, Dublin, Hibernia Press, 1810, pp.301-2

¹²⁶Sir Theobald Dillon to Secretary Cecil, 13th September 1601, Mullingar (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.75)

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send them to Connacht.¹²⁷ Before the defeat at Kinsale, O'Donnell was therefore already on the verge of a complete collapse and his going to Kinsale was a desperate last ditch attempt to get foreign aid to recover his lordship. This was noted by Fenton when describing O'Donnell's situation. Fenton stated that O'Donnell was 'dryven out of his countrey and hath no waie to be restored but to seeketh the ayde of a foreine prince.'¹²⁸ With little left in Tyrconnell, O'Donnell decided not to return home after Kinsale and instead decided to go to Spain and solicit the Spanish king for further help but he died there in August 1602.¹²⁹ Docwra's securing Tyrconnell thus greatly helped hasten the conclusion of the war because if not for his actions, O'Donnell would have been able to continue following the defeat at Kinsale. Docwra could not have achieved what he did but for Niall Garbh.

There was another defection that was very influential and helped Docwra pacify northwest Ulster, specifically Inishowen, that was the defection of Cahir O'Doherty and the MacDavitts. Sean O'Doherty's well known distaste for being an *uirrí* of O'Donnell and his previously expressed desire to submit meant a number of government officials thought he would quickly defect once Docwra arrived at Lough Foyle. Henry Bird for example mentioned that O'Doherty was 'thought to come to Her Majesty upon the landing of forces' at Lough Foyle.¹³⁰ Almost immediately upon Docwra's landing these expectations seemed to be correct as O'Doherty sent a message requesting a parley. However, O'Donnell had taken measures to prevent O'Doherty's defection. He detained O'Doherty's goods and took pledges, the most notable was O'Doherty's teenage son Cahir.¹³¹ There was also the presence and influence of Hugh Buí MacDavitt. MacDavitt returned to Ireland in 1595 after a decade fighting in the Spanish army in the Low Countries. After his return he quickly became one of the most influential Gaelic confederates due to his military expertise. Alonso Cobos was the first Spanish envoy sent to treat with the Gaelic confederates in 1596 and he noticed how esteemed MacDavitt was. Cobos stated that MacDavitt was a 'very good soldier' who was 'curious about every kind of military matters

¹²⁷ Ibid, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.305, Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, 20 October 1601, Massereene (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.150)

¹²⁸ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, 24th November 1601, Dublin (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.200)

¹²⁹ McGettigan, Darren. *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, pp.115-6

¹³⁰ Henry Bird, Commissary, to Sir Robert Cecil, 10th May 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.28)

¹³¹ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.53, Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 24th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.57)

which he understands very well....and all the lords of that kingdom ask his opinion.’¹³² MacDavitt was especially close to O’Donnell and described as ‘one of the dearest men to O’Donnell of all that follow him’ and the MacDavitts in general were said to ‘be wholly addicted and tied to O’Donnell.’¹³³ Hugh Buí was also very influential in his native Inishowen as the MacDavitts were one of the most prominent clans under the O’Doherty and very closely tied to them by fosterage. Hugh Buí was a foster brother of O’Doherty and the MacDavitts fostered O’Doherty’s son Cahir.¹³⁴ Hugh Buí and the MacDavitts were in fact said to be so influential that it was thought that they were dictating O’Doherty’s course of action because the Inishowen chieftain ‘suffers his country to be led’ by them.¹³⁵ The MacDavitts’ ties to O’Donnell and their influence in Inishowen meant O’Doherty was in a difficult situation if he wanted to defect. Hugh Buí was watching him so if he conspired with the government O’Donnell would be quickly informed. Furthermore, if O’Doherty actually managed to defect he risked alienating the influential MacDavitts.

When Docwra accepted O’Doherty’s offer to parley and met him it was apparent that O’Donnell’s preventive measures would obstruct O’Doherty’s defection. Captain Willis, who attended the meeting as a translator, observed that O’Doherty was ‘so far engaged unto him [O’Donnell] by his pledges, goods, and promise, that he knew not in what sort to withdraw to free himself.’¹³⁶ The shadow of Hugh Buí hanging over O’Doherty and making sure he remained in line was also palpable at the parley. Docwra was sure that O’Doherty may have still been willing to defect and or at least wished to say more but did not ‘for fear of one Hugh Boy a creature of O’Donnell's that was in his company.’¹³⁷ To overcome the impediments stopping O’Doherty’s defection, Docwra tried to use a carrot and stick approach. The carrot was ‘Her Majesty’s clemency’ and a promise that those who returned to obedience would ‘be more favourably dealt’ with than ‘rebels’ deserved. Also, Docwra promised O’Doherty that he would help recover his goods from O’Donnell and later employ his forces to help O’Doherty when needed. The stick was the threat of expulsion if O’Doherty refused to submit. Docwra’s persuasions did not have the desired

¹³² Quoted in Recio Morales, Óscar. “Spanish Army Attitude to the Irish at Kinsale,” in Hiram Morgan (ed), *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Wordwell, 2004, p. 96.

¹³³ Sir John Bolles to Sir Robert Cecil, 1st December 1600, Dunalong (SP 63/207pt.6/no.53), A description of Lough Foyle and the country adjoining, 19th December 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.85)

¹³⁴ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.53, John Bolles to Sir Robert Cecil, 1st December 1600, Dunalong (SP 63/207pt.6/no.53)

¹³⁵ A description of Lough Foyle and the country adjoining, 19th December 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.85)

¹³⁶ Captain Humphrey Willis to Symon Willis, 25th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.59)

¹³⁷ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 24th May 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.57)

effect as O'Doherty asked for a day to think over the proposal but never returned an answer.¹³⁸ Following the parley O'Doherty would become a thorn in the side of Docwra and the Derry garrison and Bolles would describe him as 'one that hath ever since our first arrival annoyed us to his uttermost power.'¹³⁹ His most notable piece of service against the Derry garrison was when his men killed John Chamberlain in June. During this period O'Donnell certainly seemed confident in O'Doherty because, like with Niall Garbh, he gave him command over forces at Derry when he was absent in Connacht.¹⁴⁰

Following Niall Garbh's defection in October there were renewed hopes that O'Doherty would follow suit and to hurry this along Docwra immediately led an army into Inishowen, hoping a show of force would intimidate O'Doherty into submitting. When Docwra entered Inishowen he sent a message to O'Doherty and gave him an ultimatum, return to obedience or suffer the destruction of his country. Docwra gave O'Doherty until 10 the next morning to respond but O'Doherty missed the deadline. A messenger did arrive after and requested a parley. Docwra agreed to meet with O'Doherty and when they met Docwra found O'Doherty more amenable than before, though some of his demands were deemed unreasonable such as the demand for 'liberty of conscience.' In the end Docwra agreed to obtain a pardon for O'Doherty and that he should hold Inishowen except for Culmore which was to be retained by the government. In return, O'Doherty promised to sell Docwra 100 beeves and allow his country to trade with government forces. Access to a new source of foodstuffs was a major benefit of recruiting local Gaelic allies especially for garrisons like those at Lough Foyle which were isolated and difficult to supply. Lough Foyle could not be supplied overland as it was too remote and would have required a long journey through enemy territory. It could only be provisioned by sea but even then there was the problem of contrary winds delaying ships and consequently victuals. Therefore, provision shortages were a constant problem and when Docwra parleyed with O'Doherty the Derry garrison was short of victuals. To further add to Docwra's woes the winds were not in his favour so 'there appeared no hope of speedy supply to relieve' Derry.¹⁴¹ In such dire circumstances cattle and supplies from O'Doherty were badly needed and this was why Docwra was so willing to treat with him and seek an acceptable agreement. Initially it

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Sir John Bolles to Sir Robert Cecil, 1st December 1600, *Dunnalong* (Sp 63/207 pt.6/no.53)

¹⁴⁰ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, p.251, Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 1st October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.66)

¹⁴¹ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 2nd November 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.9)

looked like Docwra had made the correct decision as trade with the locality proved to be ‘the preservation of most of our men's lives.’¹⁴²

O’Doherty’s country may have provided Docwra with invaluable supplies but the Inishowen chieftain was not fully trusted. Firstly, Hugh Buí was still with O’Doherty and Bolles was suspicious of someone so close to O’Donnell. Bolles also thought O’Doherty was just wasting their time with dilatory talks in order to preserve his country from attacks by government forces. It also appeared that O’Doherty and Hugh Buí were trying to sow discord between Niall Garbh and Docwra as they accused Niall of planning to betray Docwra and deliver his head to O’Donnell.¹⁴³ Docwra too suspected O’Doherty who asked to defer accepting his pardon and that the truce be extended until May 1601. Following these suspicious demands, Docwra had spies watch O’Doherty and soon another dangerous plot was discovered. This plot began when a Lieutenant Roberts at Culmore killed a fellow lieutenant in a brawl and fled to O’Doherty and was then taken to O’Donnell. Roberts informed them that the commander of Culmore, Captain Lancelot Alford, could be bribed and would hand over Culmore. Hugh Buí was the one used to negotiate with Alford and he offered him £1,000, a further £300 for his men and a £300 bonus if Alford could persuade Niall Garbh to come to the fort when it was to be handed over. The reward for Niall Garbh further illustrates how bitter the dispute between him and O’Donnell had become and how much of a threat O’Donnell thought he was. O’Doherty himself was not directly involved in the plot but Hugh Buí assured Alford that O’Doherty was still very much on O’Donnell’s side and would do nothing against him. Docwra was aware of these proceedings and had told Alford to play along in the hopes they might get an opportunity to trick Hugh Buí and O’Donnell and assassinate them. Hugh Buí was very cautious and would not be lured into such a trap. He did give Alford a gold chain, which had been given to O’Donnell by the Spanish, as proof of their good intentions towards him. The gold chain was sent to Docwra who had enough of the charade and sent word to O’Doherty, demanding that he hand over Hugh Buí or if that was not possible then at least all Hugh Buí’s goods and cattle. Hugh Buí’s brother, Phelim Riabhach MacDavitt, or someone else of Docwra’s choosing were also to be handed over as a pledge. If O’Doherty rejected Docwra’s demands then

¹⁴² Statement by Sir Henry Dockwra concerning the truce with Sir John O’Doherty, December 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.77 i)

¹⁴³ Sir John Bolles to Sir Robert Cecil, 1st December 1600, Dunnalong (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.53)

their truce would be discontinued.¹⁴⁴ O'Doherty's responded with a rather belligerent message which criticised Docwra for his recent behaviour, including the execution of three of his men whom Docwra alleged were spies.¹⁴⁵ The truce was called off and hostilities between O'Doherty and Docwra recommenced.

O'Doherty died in January 1601 and in an elegy for him by Fergal Óg Mac an Bhaird, *tnúth* was a major theme. Fergal warned of the dangers of *tnúth* as it could bring down a mighty warrior and led to death as was the case for O'Doherty because 'the only threat to his reign was jealous eyes, great envy caused his defeat.'¹⁴⁶ Given the ramifications of his death it was not surprising that Fergal warned of the dangers of *tnúth* because once more a chieftain's death resulted in the coordination problem and a bitter feud which threatened the unity and stability of the Gaelic confederacy. The two main contenders for Inishowen were Sean O'Doherty's brother Phelim and his son Cahir. O'Donnell chose Phelim and according to Ó Cléirigh, he did so because Phelim was the eldest.¹⁴⁷ Seniority probably had little to do with O'Donnell's decision. Rather, Docwra's claim that Phelim had bribed O'Donnell with 1,200 cows was the probable motivation behind O'Donnell's choice.¹⁴⁸ O'Donnell's appointment infuriated Hugh Buí and the MacDavitts as they 'tooke it as the highest iniurie [that] could be done vnto them, that their Foster Child should be deprived of that, which they thought was his cleere & vndoubtible right.'¹⁴⁹ With O'Donnell rejecting their foster son, Hugh Buí and the MacDavitts had no other alternative but to appeal to Docwra and the government for help if they wished Cahir to possess Inishowen and they quickly made such an appeal.¹⁵⁰ Docwra was at first not receptive to Hugh Buí's overtures because of his previous involvement in the Culmore plot and instead he hoped to support Phelim O'Doherty. A message was then sent to Phelim notifying him of Docwra's willingness to favour his claim but no reply was forthcoming and once Docwra heard that Phelim was the claimant backed by the Gaelic confederates he decided to negotiate with Hugh Buí.¹⁵¹ The two were able to come to an agreement in February 1601 and in their treaty Hugh Buí promised that he, the MacDavitts

¹⁴⁴ Statement by Sir Henry Dockwra concerning the truce with Sir John O'Dogherty, December 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.77 i), Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir John O'Dogherty, 9th December 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.77 ii)

¹⁴⁵ Sir John O'Dogherty to Sir Henry Dockwra, December 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.77 iii)

¹⁴⁶ Ó Machán, Pádraig. "An Elegy for Seán Óg Ó Dochartaigh," pp.93, 99-101

¹⁴⁷ *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, pp. 287-9

¹⁴⁸ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 10th March 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.71)

¹⁴⁹ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.53

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁵¹ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th February 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.47)

and their followers would renounce all previous allegiances to the Gaelic confederacy and acknowledge the Queen as their only lawful sovereign. Hugh Buí also vowed that they and Cahir would do all they could to suppress the Gaelic confederates and aid government forces. Pledges were to be given as well and Hugh Buí would deliver his nephew. In return Docwra promised them all pardons and that Cahir would hold Inishowen from the Queen in the same manner as his father had. Liberty of conscience was also discussed. Docwra once again gave the routine response and assured them that he would not interfere with anyone because of their religion if they remained loyal. Docwra further assured them that the Queen had never bothered anyone in Ireland because of their religion and he was confident that this would continue.¹⁵² Docwra appears to have been sincere in his reassurances that he personally would not trouble his Gaelic allies over their Catholic faith as he allowed Hugh Buí's men to have a Catholic chaplain.¹⁵³ This helps to further explain why the Gaelic Irish serving Docwra could do so without seeing it as betraying their Catholic faith.

Docwra and Hugh Buí may have managed to come to an agreement but there was one major hitch and that was Cahir, who O'Donnell continued to detain after his father's death. Hugh Buí was in a delicate position. He needed Docwra's help to establish Cahir in Inishowen but by siding with Docwra, Hugh Buí risked O'Donnell's ire and this could have had deadly consequences for Cahir. Hugh Buí appeared to be in an impossible position but with Machiavellian scheming he managed to overcome his precarious situation and secure Cahir's release. Hugh Buí informed O'Donnell of his talks with Docwra and told him that it was not his intention to join Docwra. Rather he would gain Docwra's confidence and when the time was right, he would betray him and all the English. To reassure O'Donnell that his loyalty really lay with him, Hugh Buí 'gave him slight intelligence as testimony.' This was enough for O'Donnell and he released Cahir. Upon his release Hugh Buí promised that when O'Donnell gathered his forces and invaded Inishowen he would 'either seize upon the Derry and the other forts, or come so stiffly upon' the rear of the governments'

¹⁵² Agreement between Docwra and Hugh Boy McDavitt, 14th February 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.48) An imaginary estimate of such points as I can aim at, [and] the Lords of the Council will be desirous to be informed of, March 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.126)

¹⁵³ McGurk, John. *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631*, p.20

forces.¹⁵⁴ When Cahir was released he was only in his early teens so his youth allowed Hugh Buí to remain as *de facto* leader in Inishowen.¹⁵⁵

Docwra's agreement with Hugh Buí was treated with suspicion by Docwra's subordinates because it was feared that MacDavitt was duplicitous and still loyal to O'Donnell. Captain Covert doubted that someone previously so close to O'Donnell and who had fought with the Spanish for so long would truly defect. Covert thought Hugh Buí only submitted because reinforcements had arrived at Derry and O'Donnell was not on hand to provide support so Hugh Buí was defenceless and Inishowen vulnerable. His submission was therefore just an attempt to preserve Inishowen and its cattle and provisions. When the garrison became weak again through sickness, Covert was concerned that Hugh Buí would return to the Gaelic confederates as was the wont of the Irish that submit. Furthermore, Covert was concerned that Hugh Buí could do more harm as a fake ally than he could as an open enemy because he could give O'Donnell valuable intelligence.¹⁵⁶ Bolles retained his scepticism towards Hugh Buí and like Covert he thought his defection was just a ploy to preserve Inishowen. Bolles was also afraid that Hugh Buí would help the confederates by hindering Docwra. For example, Bolles claimed that Hugh Buí had wasted Docwra's time by taking him on pointless journeys and was trying to drive a wedge between Docwra and his Gaelic allies. Hugh Buí did so by continuing to allege that Niall Garbh had conspired with O'Donnell and telling Docwra to be severe with his Gaelic allies because they would not respect him otherwise. Bolles was sure this was just a stratagem to cause Docwra to alienate his Gaelic allies and compel them to leave.¹⁵⁷ Docwra did not fully trust Hugh Buí either and promised to 'be wary and circumspect of his doings.'¹⁵⁸ In fact as a result of his prior experiences of being double crossed Docwra retained a suspicion towards the Irish generally. On one occasion an especially exasperated Docwra told the Privy Council that he was cautious when using intelligence from Irish sources because he 'seen so little good in respect of their general perfidiousness (having been abused by at least a dozen in that kind), as I am utterly discouraged from employing them any more.' He later complained of the 'inconstancy of these peoples' natures' and that there were none of his allies that he

¹⁵⁴ Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 31st May 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.103)

¹⁵⁵ Captain John Vaughan to Secretary Cecil, 4th September 1601, Kilmacduagh (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.58)

¹⁵⁶ Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 22nd March 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.98)

¹⁵⁷ Sir John Bolles to [Sir Robert Cecil], 16th March 1601, Dunnalong (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.86)

¹⁵⁸ An imaginary estimate of such points as I can aim at, [and] the Lords of the Council will be desirous to be informed of, March 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.126)

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‘reposed trust in.’¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, Docwra knew that many of those who offered to serve were only doing so because it was in their interests and offered them an opportunity for ‘private revenge.’ However, Docwra also knew this desire for private revenge could be harnessed ‘for the furtherance of the Publique service’ and that native allies were essential so he took a needs must approach.¹⁶⁰

Docwra justified his co-operation with Hugh Buí by claiming that it would result in the surrounding area being re-inhabited by the locals, who would bring their cattle with them and farm the land. This could supply Derry with victuals. Another benefit of allying with Hugh Buí was that a secure Inishowen could provide extra horses and men. The problems of sickness, decay and getting reinforcements from England meant these extra men and horses would be of great assistance.¹⁶¹ Hugh Buí’s help in provisioning Derry was not always to the satisfaction of some. Shortly, after Hugh Buí submitted Captain Covert complained that he and his people gave them too few cows and at expensive prices. Covert dismissed the excuses for not providing more as insincere and thought the real reason why they gave so few was malice.¹⁶² Captain Vaughan also criticised Hugh Buí for prohibiting the locals from freely trading with them. Instead Hugh Buí had a monopoly on the trade with Derry and profited by selling meat at exorbitant prices.¹⁶³ Yet Hugh Buí and Inishowen did on occasions provide Derry with cows. In September 1601 MacDavitt supplied over 1,000 cows for the relief of the army and by the end of the year Docwra counteracted the claims of extortionate prices and praised the MacDavitts for sending him ‘cows whenever I ask for them at reasonable rates, and in large numbers considering how small and poor their country is.’¹⁶⁴ After the war Docwra saw the provision provided by the MacDavitts and other aids, such as intelligence and guides, as crucial to his success and ‘without all which, I must freeilie confess a truth, it had beene vtterlie impossible wee could haue made that sure & speedie Progress in the Warres that afterwardees wee did’.¹⁶⁵

When looking at the immediate aftermath of Hugh Buí’s submission, Docwra and the Lough Foyle expedition certainly did benefit. The most important consequence of Hugh

¹⁵⁹ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 10th June 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.12) Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 1st October 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.66)

¹⁶⁰ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.52

¹⁶¹ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 10th March 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.73)

¹⁶² Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 22nd April 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.17)

¹⁶³ Captain John Vaughan to Secretary Cecil, 4th September 1601, Kilmacduagh (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.58)

¹⁶⁴ Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, 28th September 1601, Derry (SP 63/209

pt.1/no.109), Sir Henry Docwra to [Secretary Cecil], 4th January 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.3)

¹⁶⁵ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.53

Buí's submission was that it enabled Docwra to secure control over O'Doherty's country by fortifying the narrow neck at the entrance into the Inishowen peninsula. A fort was built at Coelmackaytren (Castelforward) in the west and at Carrigans in the east. In between these forts six more were built. Docwra had been planning to do this since September 1600 but could not until Hugh Buí submitted and he no longer had to contend with a hostile Inishowen.¹⁶⁶ These forts effectively cut off the peninsula from O'Donnell and it was so isolated from the rest of Tyrconnell that Captain Willis thought Inishowen may have as well been an island.¹⁶⁷ One only needs to look at figures 10 and 11 to see the truth of Willis' comments. This is especially the case for figure 10 which shows the water levels of the time. The map discernibly shows how the physical landscape, the defection of Cahir and the MacDavitts and the fortifications helped give Docwra a strong and secure defensible position. The stranded inhabitants had little option but to side with the government because without O'Donnell's help they could not offer any effective resistance. The choice of abandoning Inishowen was not feasible either because the line of fortifications meant it was not possible to leave with one's cattle.¹⁶⁸ The only real resistance within Inishowen was Phelim O'Doherty but he was not able put up much of a fight and was quickly expelled and his son was captured by Docwra.¹⁶⁹ Clearly O'Donnell had made a terrible mistake by backing Phelim instead of Cahir who had the support of the influential and competent Hugh Buí. With no internal resistance and the entrance into the peninsula fortified, Inishowen was firmly in the hands of Docwra, so much so that Captain Vaughan said that 'the countrey is nowe as surely in subjection as any countrey in Ireland.'¹⁷⁰ There was still however the question of Hugh Buí's loyalty but his early service would suggest that his break with O'Donnell was genuine and this was most evident in May 1601 when O'Donnell launched an invasion of Inishowen.

When Docwra heard of O'Donnell's plan to invade Inishowen he decided against making a stand at the line of fortifications at the neck of the peninsula. He did so because he was still sceptical about the loyalty of Inishowen and his Gaelic allies and therefore thought it dangerous to confront O'Donnell with uncertain allies among his forces and a

¹⁶⁶ Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd September 1600, Derry (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.3)

¹⁶⁷ Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 22nd April 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.17) Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, 15th May 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.69)

¹⁶⁸ Description of Lough Foyle and the country adjoining, 19th December 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.85), Captain John Vaughan to Secretary Cecil, 4th September 1601, Kilmacduagh (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.58)

¹⁶⁹ Notes by Sir Henry Dockwra on the countries of O'Dogherty, MeSwyne Ne Doe, and McSwyne Fanaght, March 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.127)

¹⁷⁰ Captain John Vaughan to Secretary Cecil, 4th September 1601, Kilmacduagh (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.58)

large country of questionable loyalty at his back. Docwra secured cattle from Inishowen and his allies, about 3,000, and drove them to a defensible position on the coast at the ‘furthest end’ of the ‘bottom of the country’ and placed 200 English soldiers there. Thus, the problem of a large country of dubious loyalty at one’s back was negated. Docwra took others measures to assure himself of his Gaelic allies. He took pledges and took the castle of Burt from Hugh Buí and kept it for three weeks. He also kept Niall Garbh at Derry so he could not conspire with O’Donnell. On the 26th May 1601, O’Donnell entered Inishowen with 1,200 men and met with no resistance at the fortified neck of Inishowen. O’Donnell had still expected to receive help from Inishowen and that Hugh Buí would fulfil his part of their agreement and betray Docwra. O’Donnell would be sorely disappointed. All the messengers he sent to ‘sundry particular men’ returned with ‘answers nothing to his liking’ and instead of helping O’Donnell the MacDavitts resolutely helped in the defence of Inishowen.¹⁷¹ When O’Donnell approached where the cattle were kept, he assaulted a nearby fort but he was beaten back and Hugh Buí’s brother Phelim Riabhach was singled

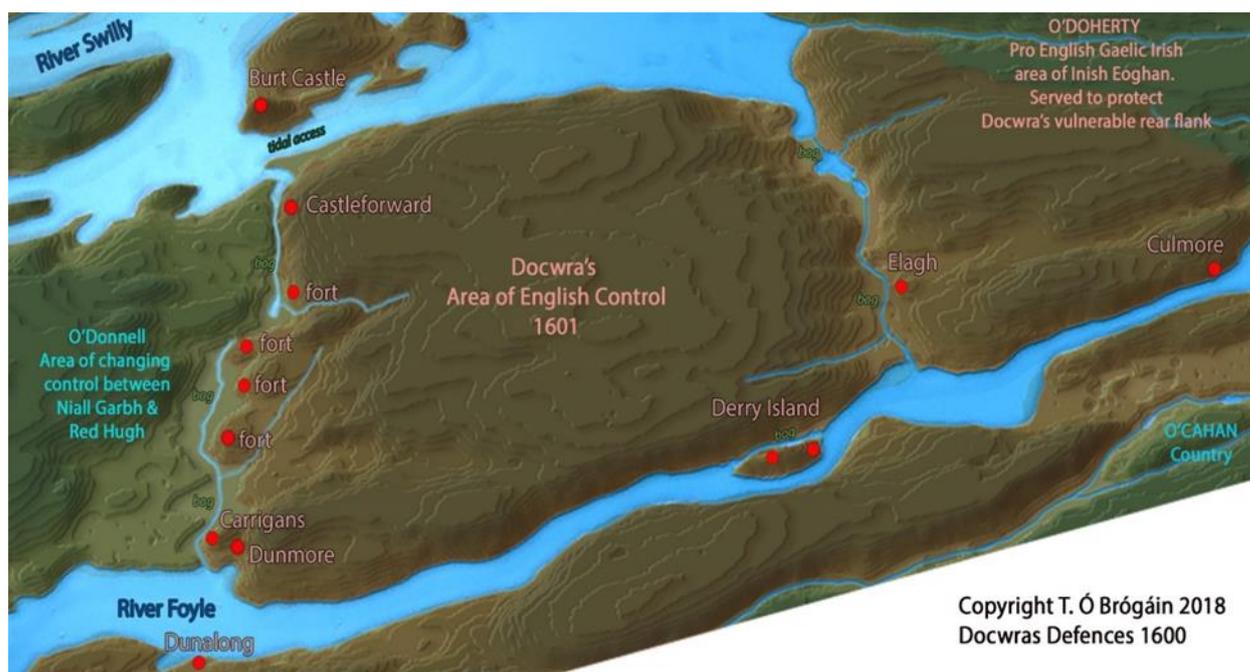


Figure 10. Docwra's defences 1600-1. Reprinted courtesy of Tomás Ó Brógáin

¹⁷¹Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 10th June 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.12), Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 31st May 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.103), Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.56-7

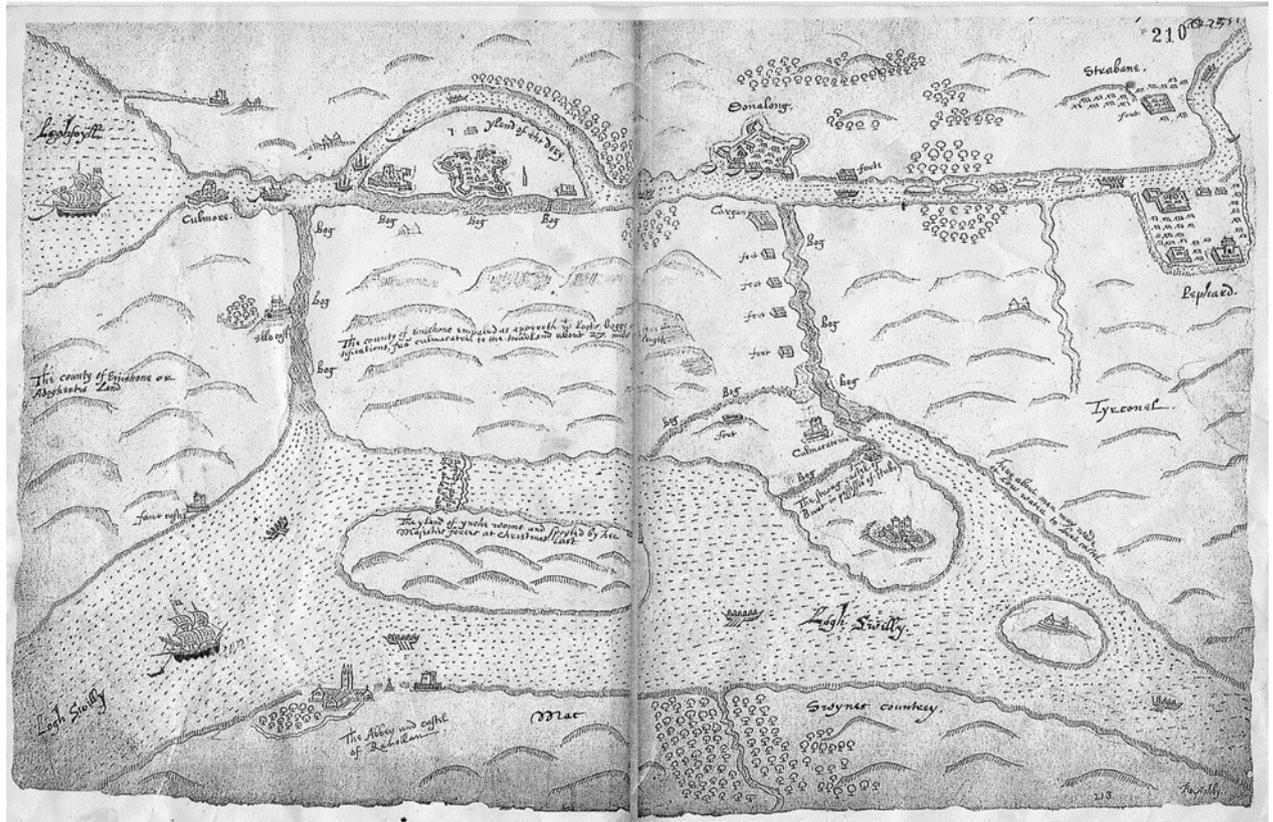


Figure 11. Robert Ashby's map of Foyle valley, 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.77 i)

out for his courage. He was said to have been the first man to charge the Gaelic confederates when they attacked and entered the fort. He killed one of the confederates' captains, received a wound and 'by all men's confession was a principal instrument of driving them out.' Hugh Buí was also praised by Docwra for his behaviour during O'Donnell's incursion and he said that MacDavitt had 'honestlie acquitted himself.'¹⁷² Following his failed attack, O'Donnell changed tack and tried to win over the men of the fort by offering them rewards and trying to convince them that their situation was hopeless. He told them their position was weak while he could rely on help from Tyrone and O'Cahan and they would prevent any succour from Docwra reaching them. His offers and threats had no effect and when O'Donnell heard that reinforcements from England had landed at Derry he decided to retreat.¹⁷³

The war in Ulster was not restricted to Docwra and Lough Foyle and before Kinsale divisions and defections were causing problems for the Gaelic confederacy elsewhere. The

¹⁷² Ibid

¹⁷³ Ibid

civil war in Fermanagh continued and in July 1600 Conor Rua Maguire went to Mountjoy who was at that time near Cavan. Conor Rua submitted and avowed that he would do good service for the Queen.¹⁷⁴ He soon made good on his promise when he took part in Mountjoy's Ulster campaign in September 1600 and was praised for his actions during the battle for the Moyry Pass. Furthermore, during the campaign Conor Rua's son Turlough escaped from Tyrone on the day before he was to be hanged and went to his father. He had been a pledge with Tyrone for his father's loyalty but once more the practice of taking pledges proved to be ineffective as it did little to deter Conor Rua from defecting. Turlough would serve with his father during the battle at the Moyry Pass and likewise was praised for his actions. In one skirmish with Tyrone's forces on October 2nd both the father and son served 'exceeding forwardly' and the latter 'was seen to kill two or three with his own hands.'¹⁷⁵ Turlough was then sent back to Fermanagh where he was able to garner support and assemble a force of 300 men. Tyrone's brother Cormac and some forces of Fermanagh attempted to deal with Conor Rua's son but in a skirmish with him they were defeated, had 100 men killed and Cormac's own son was captured. These disturbances meant Cormac and the forces of Fermanagh were diverted from Moyry and thus Tyrone was deprived of such forces when he fought with the Lord Deputy during the latter part of his Ulster campaign.¹⁷⁶

Following the Moyry campaign Conor Rua would go to Dublin and his son would soon follow. He handed over Cormac's son despite receiving great offers of cows and land for his release, an act that greatly pleased the Dublin government and assured them of Conor Rua and his son's loyalty.¹⁷⁷ Conor Rua would remain in Dublin for months, where he continually pressed his claim for Fermanagh and requested letters patent. Dublin Castle urged London to agree to Conor Rua's request and Mountjoy claimed having Conor Rua as an ally was as good as having a 1,000 garrisoned in Fermanagh.¹⁷⁸ There arguments were persuasive enough for London, who allowed Dublin to grant Conor Rua letters patent for 'the entire country called Fermanagh' in February 1601.¹⁷⁹ Conor Rua would return to

¹⁷⁴The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 7th August 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.59)

¹⁷⁵ A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north, 28th October 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.5/no.122), The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.69), Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.79)

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.79)

¹⁷⁸ The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.69)

¹⁷⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls* Vol.2 pp. 584-5

Fermanagh and by May 1601 it was reported that he was firmly settled there.¹⁸⁰ While Conor Rua was in Dublin his son Turlough had been sent back to Fermanagh and given £50 as a reward for his service and to buy military supplies. When he returned to Fermanagh, he continued to be an effective tool against the Gaelic confederates and by March 1601 he had destroyed much of Cúchonnacht's country. He also once again bested Cormac in a skirmish in which 'eight gentlemen of Fermanagh' were killed and others imprisoned.¹⁸¹ Turlough even began to create problems for the Gaelic confederates in East Breifne as he and his 300 men 'doth with that small number give them very great annoyance.'¹⁸² The ongoing succession dispute among the Maguires consequently had serious ramifications for Tyrone and the Gaelic confederates. They lost influence in Fermanagh and Tyrone was prevented from fully utilizing the resources of the Maguire lordship as local forces needed to remain there on occasions in order to preserve the waning authority of Cúchonnacht.

The O'Reillys, like the Maguires, suffered a death that upset the fragile political stability in their lordship. In July 1600 Patrick Plunket, the Baron of Dunsany, came upon Turlough MacShane O'Reilly who only had a small force of 30 horse. Dunsany was able to capture Turlough and killed the rest of his men.¹⁸³ Turlough was executed shortly after. Turlough was nominally *tánaiste* but in reality Tyrone had made him *de facto* chieftain and the aging Edmund was relegated to being merely a figure head. Turlough's death left a power vacuum and Tyrone had to step in. Tyrone employed his usual strategy of mediating between the claimants and he decided that Edmund would remain chieftain and his nephew and brother of Shane and Philip, Eoghan, was made *tánaiste*. Eoghan was not content with just being *tánaiste* and continued to pursue the O'Reilly chieftainship. The divided O'Reillys met soon after and attempted to resolve their differences but no progress was made and they nearly came to blows 'but were parted by the old Reilly and the friars of the Cavan.'¹⁸⁴ Fighting between the two opposing O'Reilly factions followed but Edmund was in a strong enough position to send 200 men to Tyrone when he fought with Mountjoy at Moyry Pass. Edmund died the following summer in July 1601. The manner of his death

¹⁸⁰ Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary*, Vol.2, p. 377

¹⁸¹ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 10th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.66), An extract of a letter sent unto me, 12th March 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.113 i), Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, 11th December 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.68)

¹⁸² The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, 7th February 1601, Trim (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.38)

¹⁸³ Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th July 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.15)

¹⁸⁴ Document endorsed by Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 23rd August 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.87)

further reflected how divided the O'Reillys were and how destructive these divisions could be because it was a skirmish with his own son that led to the Edmund's death. Edmund was shot and killed when pursuing his son Farrell who was on the Queen's side and serving under the command of Dunsany.¹⁸⁵ Eoghan replaced his uncle as chieftain but the weakened and divided O'Reillys were in a bad state by August 1601. The raids of Dunsany's forces, from a fort at Liscannon in East Breifne, had 'left man nor cattle in....Cavan' and this caused many of the O'Reillys to flee to Fermanagh.¹⁸⁶

The MacMahons were equally divided as the dispute between Brian and Patrick endured and both men appealed to Mountjoy for help and offered to submit in July 1600. Mountjoy rejected their overtures but did tell Brian that he would accept his submission if he killed Patrick. Mountjoy made the same offer to Patrick. Nothing came of Mountjoy's offers at this time but the wavering loyalty of the MacMahons forced Tyrone to intercede in February 1601. He travelled to Monaghan and took more pledges.¹⁸⁷ Tyrone managed to keep the MacMahons under his authority and they in fact secured one of the few military victories in 1601, albeit a minor one. Dunsany and his forces from Liscannon during a raid in Monaghan in August were set upon by some of the MacMahons, about 40 or 50 of Dunsany's men were killed and a Captain Laurence Esmond was captured.¹⁸⁸

In general, in Ulster during 1601 Tyrone was desperately trying to keep the Gaelic confederacy together and used 'all instruments and means possible to uphold that combination.' According to Patrick Barnewall, a Palesman, one 'instrument' Tyrone used was assuring his allies that he had received intelligence of the weakness of the government army, their plans and movements which Tyrone 'frameth for the present, as may best serve the drift of his own practice.'¹⁸⁹ Tyrone's previous legitimate intelligence and government contacts meant many believed these claims. The belief in Tyrone's intelligence led to some becoming apprehensive about submitting. They feared Tyrone could use his intelligence to discover their intentions and 'being discovered, they might be suddenly apprehended.'¹⁹⁰ Tyrone also continued to rely on Spanish aid and the hope of an invasion force to boost morale and convince his allies to remain in the Gaelic confederacy. The arrival of Spanish

¹⁸⁵ *CSPI 1603-6*, p.537

¹⁸⁶ Richard Hadsor to Secretary Cecil, 1st August 1601, Temple Bar (SP 63/209/no.1)

¹⁸⁷ Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th July 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.15) John King to Sir George Carey, 9th February, Dublin (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.43)

¹⁸⁸ Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary*, Vol.2, p. 437

¹⁸⁹ Sir Patrick Barnewell to Sir Robert Cecil, 29th January 1601, Dublin (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.23)

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*

ships with supplies of arms, munitions and money in December 1600 provided Tyrone with a chance to uphold his allies' belief in Spain and he quickly made a proclamation at Dungannon stating that anyone who wanted to serve the King of Spain would receive pay, 20s a month, and Spanish coin should be circulated and accepted throughout the country.¹⁹¹ The Spanish supplies and coin among the Gaelic confederates did have a positive effect and helped keep the hopes of a Spanish expeditionary force alive in Ulster. Captain Covert observed the effect of the Spanish supplies in March 1601. He noted that there was a 'great store of Spanish money among the Irish' and 'they most confidently believe some forces of the Spaniards will be with them in May next.'¹⁹² The importance of Spanish coin and its ability to bolster morale among the Gaelic confederates would increase following the debasement of coin in Ireland in the summer of 1601.¹⁹³ Tyrone and O'Donnell thought that the debasement of coin by the government was due to its poverty and this was in contrast to the Spanish King who still was wealthy enough to pay with silver. Therefore, it was better to follow the wealthier and stronger monarch than the pauper one. O'Donnell would use this argument to recruit allies on his way to Kinsale and Thomas Walker experienced this rhetoric when he showed Tyrone the new debased coins. When Walker showed Tyrone the new coins some of his men remarked that the war had 'made the Queen of England poor, that she coins copper money' and one of Tyrone's Spanish soldiers bragged that his King 'yet pays of the royallest of any in the world.'¹⁹⁴ Even well after the war and during his exile on the continent, Tyrone would still brag how he reduced the Queen to such poverty 'that, instead of silver, brass money was coined.'¹⁹⁵ The Spanish link continued to help Tyrone keep his disintegrating confederacy somewhat together right up to the Spanish landing at Kinsale in September. Mountjoy in the month prior for instance complained that the "brute [bruit] of the Spaniards coming to his assistance (which he gives out so confidently as his countrymen do very believe the same) doth for a while hold them so fast unto him.'¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Ibid, Abstracts out of two several letters directed to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 21st and 22nd January, Dungannon and Drogheda (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.17 i)

¹⁹² Captain Humphrey Covert to Sir Robert Cecil, 22nd March 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.98)

¹⁹³ For the basement of coin in Ireland see McLaughlin, Joseph "What Base Coin Doth Wrought: The Effects of the Elizabethan Debasement in Ireland," in Hiram Morgan (ed), *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Wordwell, 2004, pp. 195–203

¹⁹⁴ Advertisements of November 1601 (SP 63/209/no.199 a), Thomas Walker's narrative, 1601 *Cecil papers* Vol.88/no.121

¹⁹⁵ Kerney Walsh, Micheline, *Destruction by Peace*, p.254

¹⁹⁶ Lord Deputy to Sir George Carey, Treasurer at Wars, 8th August 1601, camp near Mountnorris (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.9)

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However, while the expectations of a Spanish invasion helped, it could not completely stop defections. Not only were the divisions too entrenched but the turning tide of the war in favour of the government meant those who were only allies of Tyrone because of coercion and fear were now confident enough to defect. Even those who were more committed to the Gaelic confederacy would change sides for the sake of self-preservation as Tyrone could no longer defend them and looked to be on the decline. These points were highlighted by Mountjoy when he stated that those who ‘love Tyrone will quit their affections when hope of his fortunes failes, and such as doe not, their dependency on him will fall when their fear of his greatness shall be taken away.’¹⁹⁷ Turlough MacHenry and Ever MacCooley defected in March 1601. Ever was one of those who defected because he was undefended and needed to save himself. Farney had been completely ‘burned and preyed’ by the Lord Deputy and many were killed including one of Ever’s sons so he had ‘none other shift’ but to submit.¹⁹⁸ MacHenry on the other hand needed little prompting. After Tyrone released him from his confinement Turlough continued to resent his half-brother’s authority over him and repeatedly indicated his desire to submit.¹⁹⁹ Following his submission MacHenry was quite active and he took part in Mountjoy’s expedition to Ulster in the summer of 1601 when a garrison at Armagh was finally established. He was heavily involved in the fighting at Benburb between Tyrone and government forces on 16th July. This was reflected in the list of casualties: Turlough MacHenry had 6 men killed and 7 wounded.²⁰⁰ The casualties in general show how central Gaelic troops, whether under Irish chieftains or English captains, were to Mountjoy’s campaign. At Benburb 27 were killed and 76 were wounded. Only one of the dead was English, the Lord Deputy’s chaplain.²⁰¹ The Gaelic aspect of Mountjoy’s force was a considerable portion, Fynes Moryson estimated up to a third of the army in general were Irish, and at the forefront of the military action and success.²⁰²

The fact that all those who died were Irish greatly pleased Mountjoy because for him when his Irish soldiers fought with the enemy it was a win-win situation. His Gaelic troops either killed the enemy, which obviously was a positive, or were killed themselves

¹⁹⁷ Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary*, Vol.2, p. 447

¹⁹⁸ Sir Theobald Dillon to Sir Robert Cecil, 25th March 1601, Dublin (SP 63/208 pt.1/no.105)

¹⁹⁹ Sir Francis Stafford to Sir George Carey, July 1600 (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.43 ii), Sir Thomas Maria Wingfield to Sir Robert Cecil, November 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.47)

²⁰⁰ A note of such as were slain and hurt in a skirmish at Benburb, July 1601 (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.83 i)

²⁰¹ *Ibid*,

²⁰² McGurk, John, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: The 1590s Crisis*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2009, pp.42-3

which Mountjoy saw as nearly as good because his allies were future ‘rebels.’²⁰³ How little he valued his Gaelic allies can be seen by his reaction to the defeat of Dunsany and capture of Captain Esmond in August. When Mountjoy and the Dublin government heard Dunsany lost 40 or 50 Irish troops they considered the loss ‘to be no more then the taking of the Captain.’²⁰⁴ Mountjoy was not unique in his attitude towards his Gaelic allies. Essex had a similar outlook. He thought when his Gaelic allies and soliders fought with the Gaelic confederates it was a case of good ‘riddance of either side.’ He also wanted to use his Gaelic troops as a human shield to preserve his English soldiers.²⁰⁵

Turlough MacHenry would continue his service throughout the summer of 1601 and towards the end of his summer campaign Mountjoy praised him for being ‘most eager in the Queen's service, cutting down corn with his own hands.’²⁰⁶ Another defector was Art Rua Magennis whose ‘alliance and inward credit’ with Tyrone through their marriage ties was not enough to prevent his defection because he had come under a lot of pressure from Mountjoy in the summer of 1601. Mountjoy had taken all Magennis’ castles in Lecale and left a garrison there which banished Art Rua. Losing Lecale and with Tyrone unable to defend him, Magennis felt compelled to submit in July.²⁰⁷ O’Hanlon submitted in April 1601 and his defection along with those of Magennis, Ever MacCooley and Turlough MacHenry meant much of the strategically important border between Ulster and the Pale was secured.²⁰⁸ It remained so throughout the summer even though Tyrone had made threats against the chieftains in southeast Ulster. He told them that it was their last chance to make peace with him and if they sought reconciliation later he would reject them. The fact that Tyrone’s threats did not work show how weak he had become as he no longer had the power to instil fear among the chieftains in southeast Ulster as he once had.²⁰⁹ Tyrone did unknowingly avoid a far more dangerous defection. Tyrone’s son-in-law, Henry Óg MacShane, was still far from loyal and had sought to defect. His defection would have been far more threatening for Tyrone because Henry Óg not only offered to submit but also

²⁰³ The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, 14th June 1601, camp at Moyry (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.17), The Lord Deputy and Councillors in Camp to the English Privy Council, 12th August 1602, Newry (SP 63/212/mo.13)

²⁰⁴ Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary*, Vol.2, p. 437

²⁰⁵ The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, 15th July 1599, Dublin (SP 63/205/no.109)

²⁰⁶ The Lord Deputy to [Secretary Cecil], 7th August 1601, Camp near Mountnorris (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.7)

²⁰⁷ Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary*, Vol.2, pp.404-5, The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 26th June 1601, camp at Donanuray (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.37)

²⁰⁸ Moryson, Fynes, *An Itinerary*, Vol.2, p.374

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.437

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vowed to assassinate Tyrone in February 1601. In the end the assassination plot failed as Henry Óg either lost his ‘courage’ or ‘faith.’²¹⁰

In east Ulster the governor of Carrickfergus, Arthur Chichester, was also relying on Gaelic allies. By the time Docwra arrived in May 1600 Chichester had the assistance of Niall MacHugh O’Neill in North Clondeboye, Niall McBrian Fertagh O’Neill in South Clondeboye and Rory Óg MacQuillan in north Antrim. James MacSorley Buí MacDonnell was considering defection but was apprehensive. He feared the governor of Carrickfergus sought revenge for James’ killing his brother John in 1597.²¹¹ James MacSorley did not defect and remained aloof but this did not hinder Chichester and the Carrickfergus garrison much because by July 1600 they had ‘laid all waste about them for twenty miles, taken great preys, and done very good service.’²¹² Chichester left for England soon after and did not return to Carrickfergus until October 1600. In his absence the progress of Carrickfergus not only stalled but regressed as it experienced the dangers and unreliability of Gaelic allies. Niall MacHugh O’Neill betrayed the ward of Edenduffcarrick and when Chichester attempted to take it back, Niall shot at him and killed one of his sergeants.²¹³

This betrayal especially highlighted how precarious trusting Gaelic allies could be as it shows their unpredictability. Niall MacHugh had been a long-time ally of the Carrickfergus garrison and Chichester stated he had served the garrison admirably for the last three years. Thus, there was no indication that he would re-join the Gaelic confederacy. Chichester did have an opportunity to negate the loss of Niall as there was still the dispute between him and Shane MacBrian over North Clondeboye. The two bitter rivals could not be on the same side so ‘when one is a subject, the other is a rebel.’ Chichester was conscious of this and immediately made an appeal to Shane MacBrian to defect in return for a pardon, letters patent and a company in pay. Shane duly submitted.²¹⁴ Niall MacHugh’s time with the Gaelic confederacy did not last long. His rival receiving government support and Chichester ‘often hunting him from place to place’ made Niall rethink his position and by April 1601 he submitted again and handed over Edenduffcarrick. Chichester spilt North Clondeboye between Niall and Shane and took pledges from both men.²¹⁵ Chichester was

²¹⁰ Ibid, p.354

²¹¹ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 21st May 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.3/no.53)

²¹² The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 4th July 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.5)

²¹³ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.78)

²¹⁴ Ibid, Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th January 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.1.no.5)

²¹⁵ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th April 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.7)

not too impressed with either man's service or trusted them, calling them 'false and hollow hearted.' However, by securing their submissions and Niall handing over Edenduffcarrick Chichester, did suppress North Clondeboye for the moment.²¹⁶

In South Clondeboye Eoghan MacHugh O'Neill looked to defect in April 1600. He did not however continue to challenge Niall MacBrian Fertagh for South Clondeboye and instead he set his sights higher. He aimed at the O'Neill lordship and tried to dissuade the government from supporting Art O'Neill and his claim. Eoghan was quickly dismissed by Mountjoy who thought him 'very meanly followed.'²¹⁷ Therefore Mountjoy largely ignored Eoghan who was forced to remain within the Gaelic confederacy and under the authority of Tyrone's main commander in east Ulster, Brian MacArt. By April 1601 Chichester had pushed Brian MacArt out of east Ulster and Eoghan defected either because he was free from Brian or was compelled to so by Chichester's raids. Eoghan did not look for the O'Neill lordship and instead sought South Clondeboye again. Niall McBrian Fertagh had died 'a good subject' in Carrickfergus so now Eoghan had to contend with Niall's son Con. Chichester already had given Con men in pay and did not want to 'so wrong Con' by supporting Eoghan's claim. Chichester decided to divide, temporarily at least, the lordship between the two candidates and promised that he would recommend to the Lord Deputy the candidate that 'did Her Majesty best service'. Chichester also placed Fulk Conway in South Clondeboye to keep the peace between the two.²¹⁸

Chichester had to rely on Eoghan and his other Irish allies because he was low on numbers as, like at Lough Foyle, conditions at Carrickfergus were not ideal and English soldiers suffered badly from sickness, especially the raw recruits. By the beginning of 1601 Chichester complained that out of the 600 men on paper he had, he could only bring about half that into the field and many of the new men sent from England were sick.²¹⁹ How much Chichester was forced to rely on his Gaelic allies can be seen in May 1601. Tyrone had sent Brian MacArt and 400 men back to east Ulster and hoped they would reassert his authority in the region. Brian MacArt would clash with Chichester and his forces and about 70 or 80 were killed between the two sides. Like at Benburb the casualties reflect how

²¹⁶ Ibid, Sir Arthur Chichester to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy, 14th May 1601, Massereene (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.91 i)

²¹⁷ Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council 15th April 1600, Dublin (SP 63/207 pt.2/no.104), Certain notes by Owen McHugh McNeill More O'Neill, 17th July 1600, (SP 63/207 pt.4/no.22)

²¹⁸ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th April 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.7)

²¹⁹ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th January 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.1.no.5)

central the Gaelic Irish were to Chichester and the government's army because they made up the entirety of the men slain. Hence, they were a substantial portion of Chichester's force, about half, and involved in heaviest and most dangerous fighting. Eoghan MacHugh was among the slain but Chichester was not perturbed by the loss of him and his other Irish soldiers. He shared Mountjoy's belief that when the Irish fought with each other it was a win-win. Therefore he thought the killing of 70 or 80 'was good service on both sides, for never an honest man was slain'.²²⁰ Chichester and his Gaelic allies' success against Brian MacArt continued and by July he had been banished from east Ulster.²²¹

In north Antrim James MacSorley continued to contemplate defecting and had been in communication with Chichester who assured MacDonnell that he bore him no malice for the death of his brother.²²² They never managed to come to an agreement because James died in April 1601 and was replaced by his brother Randal. Randal looked to defect like his brother and hoped in return he would receive letters patent for the Glens of Antrim and the Route. Chichester was amenable towards Randal at first and was confident that he could be 'an honest subject.'²²³ Randal was granted a pardon with the promise of letters patent but by July 1601 Chichester had lost faith in Randal and thought he was temporising with both sides.²²⁴ When Thomas Walker met Randal, Randal claimed to be 'sworn to the Queen of England' yet he was still helping Tyrone by assisting the Lough Foyle deserters get to Scotland. Randal was indeed temporising with both sides and was furious that Walker had uncovered his duplicity and threatened to kill him but relented when Walker claimed to be a Catholic.²²⁵ Randal may have been hedging his bets but in general Chichester had prospered before Kinsale because of his exploitation of the divisions in east Ulster and the assistance he received from his Gaelic allies. This assistance enabled him to expel Tyrone's main commander in east Ulster, Brian MacArt, which left Tyrone with much less influence in the region.

²²⁰ Sir Arthur Chichester to Robert Cecil, 15th May 1601, Massereene (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.68), The strength of the companies at Carrickfergus, 8th October 1601 (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.133 a)

²²¹ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th July 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.90)

²²² Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir James [McSorley Boy] McDonnell, 5th April 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.2/no. 7 iv), James [McSorley Boy] McDonnell to Sir Arthur Chichester, 8th April 1601, Dunluce SP 63/208 pt.2/no. 7 v),

²²³ Sir Arthur Chichester to Robert Cecil, 15th May 1601, Massereene (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.68)

²²⁴ Sir Arthur Chichester to the Privy Council, 8th July 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.59)

²²⁵ Thomas Walker's narrative, 1601 *Cecil papers* Vol.88/no.121, Morgan, Hiram. "Treason against Traitors': Thomas Walker, Hugh O'Neill's Would-Be Assassin." *History Ireland*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2010), p.21

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It should also be noted that Chichester's manipulating the internal clan rivalries in east Ulster to cause defections and his military reliance on Gaelic allies shows how necessary and unavoidable this policy was. Chichester was not keen about this approach and stated that it was an 'ill deed to give entertainment to the mere Irish upon their own lists.'²²⁶ Chichester was unenthusiastic because among the leading crown military figures in Ireland he possibly had the most disdain for the Gaelic Irish and the betrayals he experienced hardened this stance. Chichester said the war would not be ended until the Irish were 'wholly destroyed or so subjected as to take a newe impression of lawes and religion' because they were 'the most treacherous infidells in the world'.²²⁷ On another occasion Chichester stated that the Irish should 'be made perpetuall slaves to her Majesty.'²²⁸ This hatred was reflected in Chichester's unapologetic targeting civilians of any age or gender. In May 1601 he utilised boats on Lough Neagh to launch an amphibious raid into the heart of the O'Neill lordship, even coming within four miles of Dungannon. He proudly declared that they had 'spare none of what quality or sex soever.'²²⁹ Chichester also promoted the use of a scorched earth policy and famine to end the war. Others used these same tactics but did express some regret over having to use such brutal methods. Mountjoy's forces killed civilians and he employed a scorched earth policy in Ulster in the summer of 1602 which inflicted a devastating famine upon the province. Yet he would sometimes express remorse for having to resort to such measures and how it caused great suffering among the local populace.²³⁰ Bagenal thought 'some severitie' and killing 'persons of all sexes and ages' was necessary to end the war but he was at least aware enough to know that this 'may seeme cruell and inhumane'.²³¹ Chichester had none of these qualms with famine or targeting civilians of 'this damned nation.'²³² Yet no matter how much he wanted to, Chichester could not shun securing defections and depending on his newly won Gaelic allies because his weak and sick army would not have achieved much by themselves. The benefits of Gaelic allies simply outweighed the negatives so Chichester

²²⁶ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 12th April 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.7)

²²⁷ Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, 8th October 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.133)

²²⁸ Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, 15th January 1602, Carrickfergus (SP 63/210/no.24)

²²⁹ Sir Arthur Chichester to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy, 14th May 1601, Massereene (SP 63/208 pt.2/no.91
i)

²³⁰ O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.176-7

²³¹ Project by Sir Henry Bagenall for the prosecution of the Earl of Tirone, 20th February 1596 (SP 63/186/no.76)

²³² O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.176-7, 184-5, Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, 16th December 1600, Carrickfergus (SP 63/207 pt.6/no.78)

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had to persist with them and the occasional betrayal was just something that had to be endured.

In conclusion the period from the death of Maguire to the landing of the Spanish at Kinsale was a crucial time that had a massive impact on the outcome of the Nine Years' War. At the beginning of this period Tyrone, O'Donnell and their Ulster confederates had enjoyed six years of near continual success and were in firm control of their home province. By the time the Spanish arrived they were 'almost to the point of destruction' and their authority in Ulster was greatly damaged. They were brought to this low ebb mostly because of the efforts of Docwra and his Lough Foyle expedition. He established a firm foothold for the government in northwest Ulster. He started at Derry and after a slow start he expanded and had numerous garrisons throughout Tyrconnell and some in west Tyrone. From these garrisons, government forces led numerous raids on the previously undisturbed lands of O'Donnell and Tyrone. Docwra's success had left O'Donnell with only a toehold in his own lordship. Thus, after Kinsale was left with no option but to leave for Spain. Docwra managed to expel O'Donnell from Tyrconnell because he secured defections by taking advantage of the pre-existing divisions present in northwest Ulster and a rift that appeared between O'Donnell and the MacDavitts following the death of Sean O'Doherty. The help he received from those that defectors was vital. Art O'Neill gave some small help during the difficult initial stages of the Lough Foyle expedition when it seemed possible that the enterprise could fail. Niall Garbh completely transformed the fortunes of the Lough Foyle expedition which before his defection had achieved little. The assistance of Hugh Buí and MacDavitts consolidated Inishowen and supplied Docwra with precious extra provisions. That said, Docwra's relationship with his Gaelic allies was tense at times and he questioned their loyalty. The threat of betrayal was always there and Docwra and others like Chichester did experience some betrayals. However, the benefits of Gaelic allies and their assistance far outweighed the disadvantages so Docwra and others continued to persist with them. Elsewhere in Ulster Tyrone desperately tried to keep his Gaelic confederacy together. He lied about the strength of the government, made threats and used Spanish aid and the hope of a Spanish invasion force to boost morale. This had some impact but Tyrone could only briefly stem the flow of defections. In Fermanagh Conor Rua Maguire submitted, a number of chieftains in southeast Ulster defected and many in east Ulster did the like so Tyrone's strength and authority in Ulster was greatly diminished by the time the Spanish arrived. Without this the defeat at Kinsale would he been as much of 'hammer

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blow' as it was because Tyrone could still have returned home and regrouped. At Kinsale the war was not ended and continued for over a year. The progress made in Ulster, especially of that of Docwra, before Kinsale gave the government a solid footing to finish off the final embers of resistance during the last year of conflict. The fractures within the Gaelic confederacy and the exploitation of them continued to be a major factor during this final year.

Chapter Six

'All the nobles who were previously with us have now become our enemies': The final defections and the ending of the war

After the defeat at Kinsale on Christmas eve 1601, Tyrone retreated, reaching Dungannon on 10th January 1602. His Gaelic confederates force lost about 1,100 men in the battle and hundreds more died of their wounds and on the journey back to Ulster. Never one to shy away from unpleasant realities, Tyrone shortly after his defeat sent a messenger, Richard Owens, to the government to seek terms.¹ Notwithstanding his bleak situation and offer of submission, Tyrone continued the war for over a year and desperately tried to keep his crumbling Gaelic confederacy together. Thus, the government was not yet in a position to end the war but was poised to do so because of achievements over the preceding eighteen months by Mountjoy, Chichester and especially Docwra. The garrisons established during that period meant crown forces had a firm foothold in Ulster from where they could launch raids and suppress any remaining resistance in Ulster. The policy of exploiting divisions within the Gaelic confederacy and relying on Gaelic allies continued during the final year of the war. This chapter will examine this exploitation and how it helped defeat Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy in Ulster. The fate of prominent defectors will also be discussed. First though, an understanding of where allegiances lay following the landing of the Spanish is needed because the expectation of their coming and their eventual arrival did lead to a shift in loyalties.

The landing of a Spanish force in Ireland was anticipated widely and such expectations only increased after some Spanish ships landed at Sligo in August and informed the Gaelic confederates that their coming was close at hand.² The belief that a Spanish expeditionary force was coming caused some of Docwra's allies to reconsider their position and re-join the Gaelic confederates. One of these allies was MacSweeny Fanad who did not just think that the Spanish were coming but 'was drawn by the oaths of such men as he gave creditt of the Spaniards being alreadye arryved.' In August, under the guise of taking a prey from the Gaelic confederates, MacSweeny led Captain Bingley and 40 men away from their Rathmullam garrison. After 10 miles, MacSweeny turned on them and the

¹ For estimates of the casualties see Morgan, Hiram, 'Disaster at Kinsale' in Hiram Morgan (ed), *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Wordwell, 2004, pp.129-30, 137-8, 141

² Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.2, pp.430-1

survivors fled to a church. They would surrender shortly after and were held as prisoners.³ MacSweeny quickly regretted his actions because not only was he misinformed about the Spanish arrival, but he also had to endure Docwra's revenge. Docwra hanged two of MacSweeny's pledges and burned much of his corn and country. MacSweeny tried to excuse his behaviour by claiming that Captain Bingley had done him 'some wronges' but this was dismissed by Docwra who was certain that the coming of the Spanish determined MacSweeny's actions. A hard pressed MacSweeny looked to submit by using Niall Garbh as a mediator but the siege of Donegal Abbey disrupted negotiations.⁴ MacSweeny would not submit until December 1601.⁵

Shortly after MacSweeny's betrayal, another occurred at Newtown. Following his taking of Newtown, Docwra left a man named Turlough Magnylson O'Neill there to act as a guide for Captain Atkinson. Turlough had come in with Art O'Neill and had been a very useful asset for Docwra. Docwra would go so far as to say that of the Irish, Turlough had 'absolutely done the best service'.⁶ This service included uncovering spies, taking preys, killing many Gaelic confederates, supplying intelligence and being twice seriously wounded and this led to him being 'esteemed...the onlye trustie and true man of all his nation.' It therefore came as quite a shock when Turlough imprisoned Atkinson and put the rest of the 50 man Newtown garrison to the sword. Turlough's motivations were unclear. There was no report of Turlough making an agreement with Tyrone or O'Donnell or of what he hoped to gain. Docwra was dumbfounded by Turlough's betrayal and could only conclude his actions were caused 'by a sodaine and mere instigation of the devill.'⁷ However the prevalent talk of an impending Spanish expeditionary force was a better explanation for Turlough's actions than diabolic inspiration. Captain Dutton at Castlederg was also betrayed. He took an ill-advised walk outside the castle whereupon one of his Irish captains, Art MacHugh Mergach O'Neill, took him captive. Art threatened to hang Dutton unless the garrison surrendered and handed over Castlederg but Dutton's lieutenant refused and Art did not go through with his threat.⁸ Art was part of the Sliocht Art in west Tyrone and he wished to hold the lands of his sept but Tyrone supported his rival. Thus he looked

³ Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, 10th August 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.17), Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, 2nd September 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.50)

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 2nd January 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.2)

⁶ Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, 10th August 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.17)

⁷ Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, 28th September 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.109)

⁸ Ibid

to gain his sept's lands by siding with the crown and also requested to be completely independent of both O'Donnell and O'Neill.⁹ However by September Niall Garbh and his men were in possession of the lands of Sliocht Art so Art may have worried that he would not receive the lands he was promised. When a frustrated Art heard that a Spanish invasion force was coming soon, or had arrived, it may have emboldened him to seize Castlederg, ally with the Gaelic confederates, whose position now seemed much better, and obtain the lands of Sliocht Art through them.¹⁰

The betrayals of MacSweeney Fanad, Turlough Magnyslon and Art MacHugh Mergach, likely prompted by the rumours of a Spanish landing, again highlighted the dangers of depending on Gaelic allies and increased Docwra's distrust of them. Docwra vowed to never trust 'anie one of this nation whatsoever, where it maie with anie facultie lye in their power to betraye me.' The betrayals also prompted Docwra to take actions to further reassure himself of Inishowen. He took Burt castle from Hugh Buí, who give it up willingly although Docwra gave him little choice, and new pledges.¹¹ While the betrayals infuriated Docwra, they did not greatly damage him. These allies were not as important as Niall Garbh, the MacDavitts or Cahir O'Doherty. When Art MacHugh Mergach submitted he could only promise to serve with 60 foot and 10 horse and Turlough Magnyslon had just 50 men in pay so losing them was manageable.¹² O'Donnell was also too weak and preoccupied with Niall Garbh at Donegal to take advantage of Docwra's misfortunes. Docwra's losses were quickly recouped as well. The garrison at Newtown was retaken and Turlough Magnyslon and many of his accomplices were tracked down and killed by locals hired by Docwra. Others fell into Docwra's hands and he exacted brutal revenge: he 'caused the soudliers to hewe [them] in pieces with their sword.'¹³ Docwra could not catch Art MacHugh Mergach but he did get some revenge as he did 'spoil their [Sliocht Art] Country, & destroy their people, which I did with all the extremitie I could.'¹⁴

The Spanish finally arrived at the end of September 1601 and they occupied Kinsale. O'Donnell and Tyrone travelled to meet their allies at Kinsale and took much of

⁹ Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 2nd July 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.53)

¹⁰ Captain Lewis Orrell and others to Sir Henry Docwra, 17th September 1601, Donegal (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.109 a)

¹¹ Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, 28th September 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.109)

¹² Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, 2nd July 1601, Derry (SP 63/208 pt.3/no.53), Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, 10th August 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.17)

¹³ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.63

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.63-4

their forces with them, so the 'countray was...left voide and noe powerfull enemy to encounter.'¹⁵ Without any forces to oppose him, Docwra was largely free to do what he wanted and he decided to turn his attention to the O'Cahan lordship. Previously he had been unable to do much against the O'Cahan chieftain, Donal Ballach. This caused Captain Willis to complain that O'Cahan remained 'stout' because 'nothinge done on him.'¹⁶ When Docwra raided the O'Cahan lordship at the end of November 1601, it was evident that the war had little affected the area as the houses were untouched and corn was still in abundance. There was in fact said to be an 'infinite store' of corn. Docwra burned the houses and much of the corn, as well as taking cattle, sheep and horses. This would have a devastating effect on the O'Cahan lordship because soon there was 'amongst them.... such wants that they dye by the numbers.' Many others were killed by Docwra's forces and among the slain was the O'Cahan chieftain's brother, Rory who had attempted to feign a submission and lead Docwra's men into an ambush the previous year (see chapter five).¹⁷

Docwra's successful foray into the O'Cahan lordship was another example of how far he and the Lough Foyle expedition had come from the initial months and Fenton reported to Cecil that Lough Foyle 'beginneth to bee more fruitfull then it hath bin.'¹⁸ Hugh Buí was still suspected of being a double agent but he, his brothers and the teenage O'Doherty were heavily involved in the attack on the O'Cahan lordship and were praised as they 'did all serve so well in sight of our army.' The capture of Rory O'Cahan was solely down to the efforts of Hugh Buí's brother Edmund, who chased Rory down after he fell from a horse and caught 'him by the Coller.' Edmund was offered a large ransom to release Rory and could have accepted it without Docwra finding out, but he delivered O'Cahan to Docwra who quickly executed him. Hugh Buí sustained four 'dangerous wounds' and was captured by the Gaelic confederates but was later rescued by his brothers and O'Doherty.¹⁹ The MacDavitts and O'Doherty displayed once again how useful they were to Docwra.

Docwra prospered following the arrival of the Spanish and continued to get support from his most important allies, Niall Garbh, O'Doherty and the MacDavitts, but elsewhere in Ulster the government did lose some of their Gaelic allies. Randal MacSorley wrote to

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.61

¹⁶ Captain Humfrey Willis to Secretary Cecil, 2nd September 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.51)

¹⁷ Sir Henry Docwra to [unknown], 6th December 1601, Derry (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.214), Captain John Vaughan to Sir Robert Cecil, 2nd January 1602, Chester, *Cecil Papers* No.84/34

¹⁸ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, 21st December 1601, Dublin (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.247)

¹⁹ Sir Henry Docwra to [Secretary Cecil], 4th January 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.3), Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.61-2

Chichester and asked that he be given dispensation for he and his men assisting Tyrone, claiming that he was forced to do so. Given that Randal was still secretly aiding Tyrone by helping English deserters get to Scotland, it was unlikely that MacDonnell was really forced to join Tyrone and fight alongside him at Kinsale.²⁰ Others who joined Tyrone after the Spanish arrived were genuinely coerced. Turlough MacHenry was raided by Tyrone, lost much of his cattle and many of his followers abandoned him. Tyrone also threatened to drive Turlough out of the Fews and give it to ‘one of his [Tyrone] own name.’²¹ Taking someone’s lands and giving to a person outside his clan or sept was not a tactic that Tyrone regularly used. One of the rare occasions that he did do this was in the Fews in 1598 when Tyrone reportedly gave the region to his son for a time (see chapter four). Another instance occurred in 1593, after Tyrone had Phelim MacTurlough O’Neill assassinated. Following the assassination, he sent his men to Phelim’s country and they made a proclamation, banishing Phelim’s kinsmen and threatening to execute any who returned. Tyrone then annexed Phelim’s lands by placing his foster family, the O’Hagans, on them.²² Phelim was not a chieftain of a large clan but just a prominent member of the O’Neills of Clandeboye and head of a sept who held the lands of Killetra.²³ Deposing a chieftain, expelling his relatives and installing an outsider with no local support to defend his position was probably not possible on a larger scale. This might explain why Tyrone never permanently replaced Turlough MacHenry or other unreliable *uirríthe* with an outsider from within his inner circle.

Turlough MacHenry was concerned enough about Tyrone’s threats that he asked the Lord Deputy for permission to parley with Tyrone but promised that he would refuse to talk with Tyrone unless he was authorised to do so even if this meant his ‘destruction.’²⁴ Ever MacCooley was also threatened and asked Mountjoy if he could make ‘fair weather’ with Tyrone in order to save his lordship.²⁵ Tyrone’s threats and coercion had the desired effect as Ever and Turlough MacHenry re-joined Tyrone and accompanied him on a raid of the Pale, prior to his going to Kinsale.²⁶ There were few crown forces left to defend allies on the Ulster border with the Pale because most were with Mountjoy at Kinsale. With

²⁰ Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, 20th October 1601, Massereene (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.154)

²¹ Terlogh McHenry to the Lord Deputy, 1st October 1601, Glasdrummand (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.120)

²² Petition of Euer M’Rory O’Neale and Cowlo McFerdorogh O’Neale, 21st June 1593 (SP 63/170/no.14)

²³ Morgan, Hiram, *Tyrone’s rebellion*, pp.18,146

²⁴ Terlogh McHenry to the Lord Deputy, 1st October 1601, Glasdrummand (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.120)

²⁵ Ever MacMahon to the Lord Deputy, 4th October 1601, Lisbruke (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.129)

²⁶ Sir George Cary to Secretary Cecil, 15th October 1601, Dublin (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.150)

no likelihood of government assistance Turlough MacHenry and Ever MacCooley were in a very weak position and had little option but to join Tyrone if they wanted to avoid their own ‘destruction.’ In such circumstances Mountjoy ‘did never expect other from them’.²⁷ Turlough and Ever may have re-joined Tyrone but they did so with little enthusiasm and Henry Davers, commander of the Armagh garrison, predicted that these men would just join Tyrone in a ‘modest manner’ and provide as little assistance as possible so the government would be more willing to accept their submission later.²⁸ Intelligence from Tyrone’s camp near Kells during his march to Kinsale would suggest that this was the case for Turlough MacHenry. Turlough was in the camp but reportedly did not bring any forces and was trying to return to Ulster. It appears that Turlough got his wish because when Tyrone entered Westmeath, he sent his brother Cormac, O’Reilly and ‘some others’ back to Ulster. MacHenry appears to have been part of these ‘others’ as there was no evidence of him being at Kinsale.²⁹ Ever MacCooley on the other hand did give Tyrone some assistance as it was reported that he provided him with 40 foot and 15 horse and his sons were said to have gone to Kinsale but there was no mention of their father following them.³⁰ He may have returned home with Turlough MacHenry. Magennis and O’Hanlon, according to English sources, appeared to have refrained from joining Tyrone but the *Annals of the Four Master* state that some from Magennis’ lordship, who still ‘adhered’ to Tyrone, participated in the battle at Kinsale. It is unclear whether they did so with the blessing of Magennis, who could have been hedging their bets by appearing to remain loyal while also secretly giving Tyrone some assistance.³¹

According to Francis Stafford the prominent confederates that Tyrone brought with him included Cúchonnacht Maguire, Brian MacHugh Óg MacMahon, Eoghan O’Reilly, Henry Óg MacShane and Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon. An intelligence report states that O’Cahan while not going to Kinsale sent his rising out with Tyrone.³² Randal MacDonnell also went to Kinsale. The forces Tyrone amassed from Ulster were 2,500 foot and 500 horse and for the battle at Kinsale his army would be augmented by 1,500 foot and

²⁷ Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, p.29

²⁸ Sir Henry Davers to Secretary Cecil, 4th October 1601, Dublin (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.128)

²⁹ Ó Fiaich, Tomás, ‘The O’Neills of the Fews’, p.49

³⁰ Intelligence from the North, 19th November 1601 (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.194 a), Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, 7th December 1601, Dublin (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.222)

³¹ Canning, Joseph, ‘The O’Hanlons of Orior 1558-1691’, *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, Vol.18, No.2 (2001), p.66, *AFM*, p.2283, Intelligence from the North, 19th November 1601 (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.194 a),

³² Intelligence from the North, 19th November 1601 (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.194 a), Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, 7th December 1601, Dublin (SP 63/209 pt.2/no.222)

300 horse, mostly from Connacht, under O'Donnell and O'Rourke, 1,000 Munstermen, 400 men under Richard Tyrell and 200 Spanish soldiers who were part of a 650 Spanish army who landed at Castleheaven.³³ Altogether the Gaelic confederate army totalled about 5,600 foot and 800 horse and perhaps if they and their Spanish allies at Kinsale won an emphatic victory, the confederates may have been able to reverse their deteriorating position in Ulster. Or perhaps the foothold the government had already established in Ulster meant the situation was irreversible and a victory at Kinsale would only delay the inevitable demise of the divided Gaelic confederacy.

Following Kinsale, taking advantage of the lack of unity among the Gaelic confederates was easier because the defeat weakened the already fragile cohesion of the Gaelic confederacy. The already declining fear that tied many to Tyrone was reduced even further following the defeat so there was little preventing reluctant confederates, especially those who had been recently coerced, from defecting.³⁴ Turlough MacHenry and Ever MacCooley quickly abandoned Tyrone after Kinsale and proved Davers' prediction that they would do little and later submit was correct.³⁵ There was little incentive even for more committed Gaelic confederates to stay with Tyrone either. Tyrone's cause looked lost and, according to Fenton, 'some of the best of' Ulster thought they would 'hardly be sustained by him, who is not able to repair his own ruin.' Tyrone was thus failing as an overlord in his fundamental obligation to his *uirríthe*, to defend them. *Uirríthe* had no qualms about leaving an overlord who failed them if it meant preserving themselves. Fenton believed that 'many of them' were considering this and talking with each other about how best to 'provide for their particular safeties.'³⁶ To keep his Gaelic confederacy together Tyrone needed to counter the pessimism and doubts about his strength and instil some confidence in his wavering Ulster allies. Hence when he returned to Ulster he tried to portray the defeat at Kinsale as only a minor setback. He downplayed his losses, made excuses for his defeat and claimed that he did not leave Munster because he was badly beaten. Rather, Tyrone stated that he returned home because he wanted to 'succor his friendes in Ulster and preserve the contries from ruine.'³⁷ Tyrone also tried to convince his Ulster allies that after Kinsale he was not completely bereft of military power and resources. He boasted that he

³³ Morgan, Hiram, 'Disaster at Kinsale', p.118, O'Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.144

³⁴ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, 6th January 1602, Dublin (SP 63/210/no.4)

³⁵ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol.12, p.74, *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Vol.2, p.625

³⁶ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, 6th January 1602, Dublin (SP 63/210/no.4), Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, 5th February 1602, Dublin (SP 63/210/no.37), O'Neill, James, *Nine Years War*, p.167

³⁷ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, 5th February 1602, Dublin (SP 63/210/no.37)

had a lot of Spanish gold, hired *bonnachts* and announced that he intended to invade the Pale. He also spread a rumour that a large force of mercenaries and provisions were being sent from Scotland. Yet Tyrone's spreading of misinformation could not counteract the reality of the situation and what had happened in Munster because the remnants of his Kinsale army began to divulge the truth upon their return to Ulster.³⁸

There was one of Tyrone's rumours that did have some effect as it temporarily forestalled some defections and even stopped an assassination attempt. This rumour alleged that the government were seeking peace with Tyrone. In fact Tyrone had sent Richard Owen to Carew after the defeat at Kinsale and he informed Carew and Mountjoy that Tyrone was willing to submit. Owen was sent back to Carew and Mountjoy in February to reiterate Tyrone's desire to submit. Mountjoy responded by sending a Captain George Blount to meet with Tyrone in March to see if an agreement could be reached or at the very least it was thought that if word got out that Tyrone intended to submit, his allies would get anxious and look to submit themselves. Initially Tyrone seemed agreeable but then he asked for another commissioner, preferable Garret Moore of Mellifont whom he was friendly with, to be sent to conclude negotiations. Tyrone also told Moore that he would be unwilling to give up his right to the O'Cahan lordship and the lands of Turlough Breasalach's sons because they were part of his letters patent. He also refused to pay rent in arrears or a fine proposed by Mountjoy. Mountjoy refused to send another commissioner and ignored Tyrone's other overtures.³⁹ Tyrone however told his allies that it was the government who sought peace 'at his hands' and assured them that 'he can have peace whensoever he pleases.'⁴⁰ This caused some who were ready to turn on Tyrone and submit to change their mind. Captain Laurence Esmond witnessed this *volte-face*. Esmond had spent time as a prisoner with the Gaelic confederates and observed the growing dissatisfaction with Tyrone post-Kinsale. The resentment was so great that Esmond was able to conspire with Cúchonnacht Maguire, Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon and Henry Óg MacShane and they agreed to kill or banish Tyrone. After the talks with Captain Blount, the three men refused to go through with their plan and regretted ever agreeing to assassinate Tyrone. They were worried that they would remain under Tyrone's authority if

³⁸ Ibid, Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, 14th January 1602, Dublin (SP 63/210/no.22), *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol.12, p.159

³⁹ *Pacata Hibernia*, Vol.2 pp.455-60, The Lord Deputy to Secretary Cecil, 19th July 1602, Monaghan (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.88), Sir Garrett Moore to the Lord Deputy, 17th June 1602, Tyrone To Garret Moore, (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.88 a),

⁴⁰ Captain Laurence Esmond to the Earl of Shrewsbury, 8th April 1602, Kells (SP 63/211 pt.3/no.3)

he was pardoned and that if he found out about their conspiracy then he would seek revenge.⁴¹ This concern was warranted because after the war, Tyrone punished some of those who helped the English. Docwra complained that his former guides and spies were hated by Tyrone. One of them, almost as soon the war ended, was caught by Tyrone's men and hanged on his orders which Docwra was sure was done because of his service with the government. Tyrone allegedly continued to seek retribution because in 1607 he was accused of executing 'one that hath done good service unto the late Queen.'⁴²

Tyrone's rumour could not forestall defections for long. In March Eoghan O'Reilly offered to submit and he was pardoned in the summer of 1602.⁴³ By May Randal MacSorley had also submitted. During the summer more and more were willing to defect as the tide of war continued to turn against Tyrone. In the west Tyrone was coming under pressure from Docwra. Docwra was able to focus on Tyrone as there was little to fear from Tyrconnell where he and his Gaelic allies were in firm control. Docwra had strengthened his grip on the region in March 1602 when his forces took the strategically important castle at Ballyshannon, thus securing the southern entry into Tyrconnell.⁴⁴ In his absence, Hugh Rua had left his brother Rory O'Donnell in charge of his forces but Rory never threatened Docwra and remained in Connacht until he submitted in December 1602.⁴⁵ Docwra's main concern in Tyrconnell post-Kinsale was his most important ally. Docwra's relationship with Niall Garbh remained strained. Docwra regularly complained that Niall was arrogant, prideful, uncontrollable, hard to please and easily angered.⁴⁶ Mountjoy also described him as 'fierie and violent' and 'extremely proud and covetous.' It should be noted that Niall did have legitimate cause for complaint. He had been promised letters patent for Tyrconnell the previous year but had not received them. At first Mountjoy was willing to grant Niall Garbh letters patent and asked for permission from London to do so but when this was granted Mountjoy never actually followed through.⁴⁷ The English captains serving with Niall Garbh at the siege of Donegal thought his pay was not enough for him to supply his

⁴¹ Ibid, Captain Laurence Esmond to the Earl of Shrewsbury, 10th April 1602, Kells (SP 63/211 pt.3/no.4), Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, p.169

⁴² Earl of Tirone to the King, 23rd January 1607, Dungannon (SP 63/221/no.9), Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.75,79

⁴³ *Salisbury Manuscripts*, Vol.12, p.74, *The Irish Fiants*, Vol.3, p.566-7

⁴⁴ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.62

⁴⁵ The Lord Deputy and Councillors to the English Privy Council, 9th January 1603, Athlone (SP 63/212/no.114)

⁴⁶ Sir Henry Docwra to [Secretary Cecil], 4th January 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.3)

⁴⁷ Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, pp. 179-80 The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, 28th April 1602, Dublin (SP 63/211 pt.4/no.18)

men with food, clothes and arms and so some of Niall's demands may not have been 'covetousness' but out of necessity. Docwra however dismissed suggestions that Niall was poorly paid and later complained how his English captains encouraged Niall's demands because they 'flatter and extoll him beyond all measure.'⁴⁸

Docwra was still suspicious of Niall Garbh yet he could not simply rid himself of such an important ally, without whom there would be 'a singuler want for spyall of many things' and preying the enemy would be much more difficult.⁴⁹ Losing Niall's 300 foot and 100 horse was also something that Docwra could ill afford as he was struggling in terms of man power. In the summer of 1601 he only had about 1,600 men fit for service and the situation worsened because by 1603 Docwra stated he only had 1,000 foot and 50 horse left fit for service.⁵⁰ Another reason for Docwra's anxiety about losing Niall was the danger he could pose if he took up arms against them and started a new war.⁵¹ Mountjoy was of the same mind as he too thought Niall's ability, the assistance he provided and the danger he posed meant he was 'worth the cherishing.' Therefore, when Mountjoy met with Docwra and Niall Garbh near Dungannon in July 1602, he decided to appease Niall. He reiterated his intention to 'speedily' grant him Tyrconnell and to further mollify Niall Garbh, Mountjoy knighted him.⁵² Docwra and Mountjoy's reluctance to antagonise and drive away Niall Garbh reinforces again how indispensable he and other key Gaelic allies were to the government. They knew they would be greatly hamstrung without their Gaelic allies and so would put up with individuals they disliked and behaviour they were unhappy with. The tensions between Docwra and Niall were not enough of a problem to prevent the expansion of the Lough Foyle expedition eastwards. In June, just prior to his meeting with Mountjoy, Docwra fortified Omagh and placed a garrison there under Captain Edmund Leigh.⁵³

Tyrone was also coming under pressure from Chichester. The latter pushed west from Carrickfergus and took Toome on the Bann in June and established a garrison there. Tyrone also had to contend with Mountjoy. He entered Ulster at the beginning of June with

⁴⁸ Captain Lewis Orrell and others to Sir Henry Docwra, 17th September 1601, Donegal (SP 63/209 pt.1/no.109 a), Sir Henry Docwra to Secretary Cecil, 12th March 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.58)

⁴⁹ Sir Henry Docwra to [Secretary Cecil], 4th January 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.3)

⁵⁰ McGurk, John. *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631*, p.166, Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.23

⁵¹ Sir Henry Docwra to [Secretary Cecil], 4th January 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.3)

⁵² The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, 19th July 1602, Monaghan (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.87), Sir Henry Docwra to Secretary Cecil, 14th July 1602, Derry (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.84)

⁵³ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.64

an army of 3000 and during his time in Ulster he built a fort in between Armagh and Dungannon named Charlemont and another on the southwest side of Lough Neagh called Mountjoy fort. The scorched earth policy Mountjoy employed in conjunction with Docwra and Chichester also contributed to serious food shortages in Ulster and a brutal famine had begun by the summer of 1602. Tyrone could do little to prevent Mountjoy and the ease with which the Lord Deputy took his main stronghold at Dungannon in June 1602 exemplifies how weak and ineffective Tyrone had become. Mountjoy with an army of only 100 horse and 500 men was able to march to Dungannon completely unimpeded. Instead he retreated to the safety of the large forest of Glenconkeyne in the O’Cahan lordship.⁵⁴ Tyrone’s declining position led to several Gaelic confederates meeting Mountjoy at Monaghan in July and submitting. The most prominent among them were the less committed Gaelic confederates including Henry Óg MacShane, Patrick MacArt Maol and Tyrone’s half-brother Art MacBaron.⁵⁵ Another faction that joined the government during the summer of 1602 were old foes of Tyrone’s. Con MacShane, after over eight years as Tyrone’s prisoner, managed to escape in June and his brother Henry followed suit not long after. Evidently, they had retained some of their popularity in the O’Neill lordship because following Con’s escape, it was reported that many people flocked to him.⁵⁶ The MacShanes hoped to submit but Mountjoy was initially dismissive of them. He thought they would be of little use and that it would have been better if they remained imprisoned. However, the MacShanes were given land between Newry and the Blackwater and allowed to recruit followers. Mountjoy permitted this because he worried that if he rejected the MacShanes, they might take up arms and prolong the war.⁵⁷

The MacShanes and those who submitted at Monaghan did make a contribution to Mountjoy’s final campaigns during the autumn and winter of 1602-3, which snuffed out the last embers of resistance from Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy in Ulster. Their assistance was needed immediately because shortly after their submission Mountjoy returned north and picked up where he left off. He fortified and placed a ward in Dungannon at the end of August and then went on to destroy the inauguration site of the O’Neills at Tullyhogue. Docwra and Chichester were at the same time capturing the last

⁵⁴ O’Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.173-5

⁵⁵ Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, pp.182-3, Names of the submittees, 29th July 1602 (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.103 a)

⁵⁶ Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, 23rd June 1602, Newry (SP 63/211 pt.2/no.61 b), Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, p.200

⁵⁷ Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, pp.200, 207-8

Gaelic confederate strongholds. Tyrone's position was becoming increasingly more desperate as government forces were closing in on all sides. Figure 12 shows how the proliferation of government garrisons gave Tyrone little room for manoeuvre. One of the few places where the government lacked a heavy presence was in Fermanagh and that was where Tyrone fled.⁵⁸

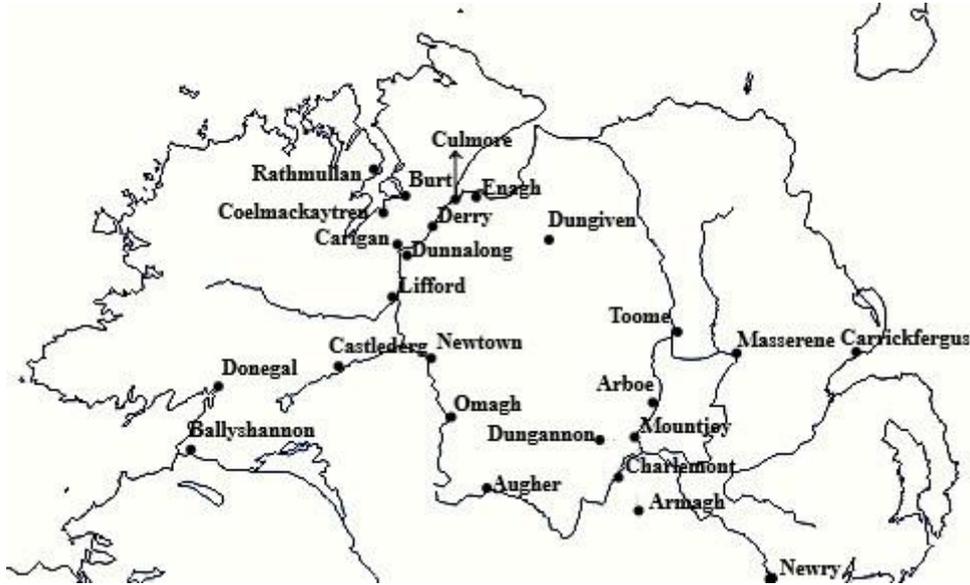


Figure 12. Garrisons in Ulster, September 1602

Mountjoy praised Henry Óg and Art MacBarron for their help during this period. He said that Henry Óg sent him ‘good advertisements and advises me good courses to overthrow Tyrone.’ Mountjoy was quite happy with Henry Óg’s service throughout the last months of the war, especially during the final weeks. Shortly before Tyrone submitted at Mellifont, Henry Óg had killed 60 of Brian MacArt’s men, a service Mountjoy deemed to have done ‘more good than anything that hath been done of long.’⁵⁹ Art MacBaron was often with the Lord Deputy while he was in Ulster and provided him with important intelligence on Tyrone’s movements when he was in Fermanagh.⁶⁰ The MacShanes also showed that Mountjoy had underestimated them as they proved to be useful. Con MacShane helped take 800 cows from the confederates and after the war Chichester stated that Henry MacShane ‘served often times against him [Tyrone] in my company.’⁶¹ The casualties Mountjoy and the government forces experienced in Ulster also reinforces the

⁵⁸ *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.4, pp.314

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp.314, 442-3

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp.314, 352,

⁶¹ Sir Arthur Chichester to the Earl of Salisbury, 6th January 1606, Dublin (SP 63/218/no.3), *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.4, p.315

impression that Gaelic allies were an integral part of the final campaigns. In August Mountjoy said that the government forces had lost less than 20 English soldiers, whereas they lost about 30 Irish.⁶² Irish deaths outnumbering the English deaths once again, indicates that the Gaelic portion of the army continued to be significant during the final phase of the war.

Mountjoy secured a number of defections during the summer of 1602 but Docwra obtained a far more important one, Donal Ballach O'Cahan. O'Cahan's fortunes continued to deteriorate after Docwra's raid in November 1601. The Derry garrison made further inroads into his lordship and by March 1602, the attacks of Docwra's forces had left the O'Cahan lordship despoiled and facing famine. The situation was so dire in the northwest that Docwra found it 'hard to express the misery which (by their owne confession and that lykewise wee see with our eyes) the poorer sort doe endure and the riche seeme to feele so near' that many of them would have submitted if not for a rumour of further Spanish aid raising their spirits.⁶³ In April Docwra took the important castle of Dungiven in the heart of O'Cahan's lordship.⁶⁴ O'Cahan's dismal circumstances would have played a major part in his decision to approach Chichester in June, when he offered 'his loyall service' but self-preservation was not his only motivation as Tyrone's continuing demise also presented Donal Ballach with an opportunity to free himself from O'Neill overlordship.⁶⁵ O'Cahan had appeared to be one of Tyrone's closest allies. During the battle of Clontibret in 1595, he saved Tyrone's life. After a cavalry charge by government forces, a Palesman named Sedgrave clashed with the Earl and the two men were knocked off their horses. Sedgrave managed to get on top of Tyrone and began choking him when O'Cahan cut off Sedgrave's arm and Tyrone finished him off with a knife.⁶⁶ After O'Cahan became chieftain in 1598, they strengthened their alliance through a marriage. Donal left his O'Donnell wife and married Tyrone's daughter Rose, the former wife of Hugh Rua O'Donnell.⁶⁷

After Docwra landed at Lough Foyle there was little indication that O'Cahan was discontented with Tyrone or had a desire to submit. On the contrary he was very active in his opposition to the Derry garrison and made an impression on the English soldiers

⁶² Ibid, p.315

⁶³ Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, 11th March 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.56)

⁶⁴ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.64

⁶⁵ O'Cahan to Sir Arthur Chichester, 21st June 1602 (SP 63/211 pt.2/no.60 a),

⁶⁶ Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, 9th June 1595, Dublin (SP 63/180/no.23)

⁶⁷ Casway, Jerrold. "The Decline and Fate of Dónal Ballagh O'Cahan and His Family.", p.48

because in 1607 George Montgomery, the protestant bishop of Derry, stated that veterans of Docwra's expedition remaining in Derry told him that O'Cahan and his men had often put them 'to their defence and fight, [more] than anie enimie they had to do withall, not suffering them to cut a bough to buyld a cabin without blowes'.⁶⁸ O'Cahan also tried to undermine the Derry garrison by subterfuge as he must have been involved in the planning of his brother's feigned submission and attempt to lead Docwra's men into an ambush. Despite his efforts to overthrow the Derry garrison and his close ties to Tyrone, O'Cahan still harboured the typical desire of *uirríthe*, to be free from their overlord.⁶⁹ This was another example that highlights the immense challenge Tyrone faced keeping his Gaelic confederacy together. Even his more committed *uirríthe* were not immune from the traditional animosity between an *uirrí* and his overlord and marriage alliances or good relations could never fully eradicate this animosity. Rather it remained dormant until Tyrone's misfortunes rekindled O'Cahan's interest in freeing himself from his overlord as he could now submit with less fear of reprisal. However, O'Cahan was still fearful and anxious that he receive an answer quickly and not be strung along only to be denied later. He knew that he would lose 'Oneyles favour' and this could still be dangerous and not to be done needlessly.⁷⁰

The government welcomed O'Cahan's offer and Docwra was ordered by Mountjoy to negotiate with him. Docwra did have some reservations as O'Cahan had 'often deceyved' him before, most recently in March 1602 when O'Cahan made an offer to defect.⁷¹ He did not show up for his appointed meeting with Docwra and when he finally contacted Docwra, he backtracked and instead offered a bribe for a three-month truce. At the end of the three months O'Cahan promised that he would submit if he was confident that he could be protected. O'Cahan had little intention of submitting at this point as Docwra's spies discovered that he had just received reinforcements from Tyrone and Randal MacSorley and was expecting more to be sent. An enraged Docwra responded by sending to the O'Cahan lordship Captain Badby, who took 160 cows and killed 30. Captain Windsor was also sent and he and his men killed over 100 including 'churles, women and children (for they spared none).'⁷² Despite this deception and his concerns, Docwra was

⁶⁸ Bishop of Derry to Salisbury, 1st July 1607, Dublin (SP 63/222/no.97)

⁶⁹ Casway, Jerrold. "The Decline and Fate of Dónal Ballagh O'Cahan and His Family.", p.48

⁷⁰ O'Cahan to Sir Arthur Chichester, 21st June 1602 (SP 63/211 pt.2/no.60 a)

⁷¹ Sir Henry Docwra to Secretary Cecil, 14th July 1602, Derry (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.84)

⁷² Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, 11th March 1602, Derry (SP 63/210/no.56)

more hopeful that O’Cahan was genuine this time. Donal Ballach and the Gaelic confederacy’s poor prospects meant that O’Cahan had little option but to abandon Tyrone as the alternative, remaining with him, could at that juncture only led to his ‘ruin.’⁷³ Docwra was correct about O’Cahan’s sincerity and the two managed to come to an agreement at the end of July. In return for his pardon O’Cahan ceded to the government land, castles and the fishing rights of the rivers Bann and Faughan. The rest of the land was surrendered with the promise that it would be re-granted and O’Cahan would hold it solely from the Queen.⁷⁴ O’Cahan ceded nearly a third of his lordship which delighted Mountjoy and he thought this was ‘more honourable for her Majesty than the which I know not how it could be devised.’⁷⁵ O’Cahan fulfilled his part of the agreement but Mountjoy and the Dublin government did not. They did not have ‘warrant from her Majesty to authorise’ O’Cahan’s surrender and regrant of his lordship so in October when O’Cahan sent two men to Dublin to request them, the Dublin government could only give Donal Ballach his lordship in a custodian capacity with a promise that he would get letters patent at a later date.⁷⁶

O’Cahan’s defection and its part in helping bring the war to an end should not be underestimated. O’Cahan was Tyrone’s most important and powerful *uirríthe*, the ‘greatest uriaight in Ulster.’ Even after Kinsale he was still strong enough to supply Tyrone with a force of 100 horse and 300 foot.⁷⁷ When O’Cahan submitted, Tyrone’s own forces were estimated to be about 900 foot and 30 horse and Brian MacArt had the command of a further 400 foot.⁷⁸ This was thought to be the entirety of the Gaelic confederate strength in Ulster so in that context O’Cahan’s forces were sizeable and losing them crippled Tyrone’s military ability. After the war Oliver St John would even contend that their loss was such a major blow to Tyrone that ‘it was confessed by all men...the Erle was never able to make warre to any purpose in the North’ afterwards.⁷⁹ Montgomery alleged that Tyrone confessed that O’Cahan’s defection ‘did undo him’ because ‘as long as he had his countrie sure behind him, he little cared for anie thing they could do unto him before.’⁸⁰ Tyrone fled to Fermanagh on 20 August, less than a month after O’Cahan’s submission. Losing his

⁷³ Sir Henry Docwra to Secretary Cecil, 14th July 1602, Derry (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.84)

⁷⁴ Articles of Agreement between Sir Henry Docwra and O’Cahan, 27th July 1602 (SP 63/211/no.98)

⁷⁵ *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol. p.314, The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, 11th October 1602, Dublin (SP 63/212/no.46)

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, Petition of Donald Ballagh O’Cahan, 2nd May 1607 (SP 63/221/no. 42 a)

⁷⁷ The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, 11th October 1602, Dublin (SP 63/212/no.46) Bishop of Derry to Salisbury, 1st July 1607, Dublin (SP 63/222/no.97)

⁷⁸ Sir Thomas Phillips to Secretary Cecil, 27th July 1602, Toome (SP 63/211 pt.1/no.97)

⁷⁹ Sir Oliver St. John to Salisbury, 1st June 1607, Dublin (SP 63/221/no.59)

⁸⁰ Bishop of Derry to Salisbury, 1st July 1607, Dublin (SP 63/222/no.97)

important *uirríthe* and not having his 'countrie sure behind him' must have been a driving force behind Tyrone's decision to abandon his own territory and go to Fermanagh, where he looked to Connacht for support.⁸¹

Just before he went to Fermanagh, Tyrone's forces did manage one more minor piece of resistance. At the beginning of August, Docwra was at Omagh and his guides tipped him off about the location of Cormac MacBaron's cattle. Docwra set out with a force of 400 foot and 50 horse and eventually found Cormac and 400 cattle three miles from Derry. Docwra's forces seized the cattle and in the fight Cormac and Maguire lost their horses and barely escaped. Cormac did not give up so easily and he later tried to retrieve his cattle by ambushing Docwra while he was passing through a wooded area. It was a vicious fight as once both sides ran out of powder they resorted to sword and pike. Cormac's forces proved to be quite resolute because after they were repulsed, they reformed and assaulted Docwra's men again and again. By the time Docwra passed through the wood, he had been charged by Cormac's men about twelve times and had lost 25 men. Inishowen again provided Docwra with valuable assistance as Cahir O'Doherty was present 'in the greatest heat of the freight, behaved himself bravely, & with a great deal of love & affection.'⁸² O'Doherty also continued to provide the Derry garrison with cattle during the summer of 1602.⁸³ Just before Docwra went to capture Cormac's cattle, Hugh Buí was on his way to meet him at Omagh but was set upon by some 'loose fellows' and killed. In his post-war *Narration* Docwra eulogised Hugh Buí as 'faithfull & honnest' and insisted those who would say otherwise were just ignorant or envious. He left three brothers behind who all were 'men of very good parts, & deserued a better Countenance at least from the state then my Credit was able to procure them.'⁸⁴ Docwra's panegyric of Hugh Buí and the MacDavitts presented a retrospectively rose-tinted view of his relationship with them, as he had questioned their loyalty on numerous occasions. In general though, Docwra benefitted greatly from his alliance with Hugh Buí, the MacDavitts and O'Doherty and there was no solid evidence that Hugh Buí was still secretly aiding the confederates and he had numerous opportunities to betray Docwra, notably during O'Donnell's invasion of Inishowen in May 1601, yet never did which suggest he truly had abandoned O'Donnell.

⁸¹ Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, pp. 202,235

⁸² Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.66, *Carew Manuscripts*, Vol.4, p.299

⁸³ Report on the state of the Victuals at Loughfoyle, February 1603, Derry (SP 63/212/no.139)

⁸⁴ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.65

Among Docwra's Gaelic's allies, MacDavitt's contributions to the success of Lough Foyle expedition were only second to Niall Garbh.

Tyrone spent August to December in Fermanagh where he tried to drum up support from the remnants of the confederacy in Connacht, including Rory O'Donnell and Donough O'Connor Sligo. Tyrone asked them to come to Fermanagh, so they could discuss whether to continue the war or make peace but the two never came. They and many others in Connacht were preparing to submit and in November 1602 an intercepted letter from Tyrone to O'Connor Sligo shows how these final defections destroyed what little hope Tyrone had that he could continue the war. He told O'Connor that with O'Donnell and the Connacht men's help he thought he could maintain the war for longer but now with everyone making 'peace for himselfe' Tyrone was resigned to the fact that 'wee may all be easily deemed men broken and not substantiall in warre.'⁸⁵ Tyrone returned to the forest of Glenconkeye in December and while there he wrote a letter to the King of Spain, outlining his desperate situation and pleading with the King to send more help or a ship to bring him to Spain. Like with his letter to O'Connor, Tyrone emphasised how the defections had taken their toll on him and his strength. He stated that 'all the nobles who were previously with us have now become our enemies so that the number of our followers is extremely reduced.'⁸⁶ Tyrone was for all intents and purposes defeated but the war would last for another three months. Tyrone's submission finally came on 30th March 1603 at Mellifont and he actually received generous terms. He was allowed to remain as Earl of Tyrone and retained most of the lands he had before the war, but he did have to renounce the title of O'Neill. This leniency was due in large part to Mountjoy's eagerness to reach a settlement with Tyrone because of the death of Queen Elizabeth. She had died six days before Tyrone's submission, but the Earl was unaware of this. Mountjoy was anxious to reach a settlement before Tyrone found out as he could then argue that he never took up arms against the new king, James I and VI, refuse to submit and hold out for better terms. Another reason why Mountjoy was lenient and eager to conclude a settlement with Tyrone was the danger that he would flee to Spain. When Tyrone wrote to the government in December 1602 and again offered to submit, he threatened to abscond to Spain if his offer was rejected and his letter to the Spanish king shows that this was no idle threat. Tyrone in Spain galvanising support and acting as beacon for the cause of another invasion force for

⁸⁵ Moryson, Fynes, *An itinerary*, Vol.3, pp.232, 235

⁸⁶ Kerney Walsh, Micheline. *Destruction by Peace*, pp.149-50

Ireland was something Mountjoy or the government was keen to avoid.⁸⁷ Furthermore there were fresh rumours about more Spanish aid being sent to Ireland and this also contributed to Mountjoy's decision to 'proceed with more haste' and 'open my hand to him more than otherwise I was determined'.⁸⁸

After the war some of the crown's most important Gaelic allies were no longer useful and now viewed as inconvenient. When Rory O'Donnell submitted, he was seen as a better alternative to Niall Garbh. While Niall was regarded as uncouth, unreasonable, fiery and avaricious, Rory was seen as a man 'of good spirit, active and wise.' Mountjoy and the government lamented that Rory had not submitted earlier as he could have been established in Tyrconnell as a counterweight to curb the power of Niall Garbh whose 'insolence' had become 'intolerable.' The Dublin government still had hopes that they could use Rory to limit Niall's influence so they planned to call the two men to Dublin and make an acceptable division of Tyrconnell that gave Rory a considerable portion.⁸⁹ These new developments deeply troubled Niall. He had fought with the government for over two years, had a brother killed and put his life in danger on numerous occasions all because he was promised letters patent for all of Tyrconnell but now Rory O'Donnell's submission threatened this. Niall was keenly aware of this and in a letter before Rory submitted he complained that Rory was trying to acquire Tyrconnell or a substantial part of it.⁹⁰ Niall responded by seizing some of Rory's cattle when he was in Dublin even though Mountjoy had wrote to him and specifically ordered him not to interfere with Rory's cattle. Niall also cut off communications with Docwra for three months and when he received news of Hugh Rua's death in Spain, he went to Kilmacrennan and was inaugurated as chieftain of the O'Donnells in the traditional Gaelic manner. It should be noted that despite his strength Niall did not take the title of O'Donnell until he heard of Hugh Rua's death much like when Tyrone had to wait for Turlough Luineach to die. Again this would suggests, that for some at least, that taking a Gaelic title while the current chieftain was alive was frowned upon.

When Niall Garbh informed Docwra of his inauguration, he justified it by claiming that the Lord Deputy had referred to him as O'Donnell in letters.⁹¹ He used the same

⁸⁷ O'Neill, James. *The Nine Years War 1593-1603*, pp.192-3

⁸⁸ The Lord Deputy to Sir George Cary, 23rd March 1603, Drogheda (SP 63/212/no.150)

⁸⁹ The Lord Deputy and Councillors at Athlone to the English Privy Council, 9th January 1603, Athlone (SP 63/212/no.114)

⁹⁰ Irish Letters and Papers translated into English, 9th January 1605 (SP 63/217/no.2)

⁹¹ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.70-1

justification in a letter to Cecil, where he also pointed out that he was referred to as ‘chief of his name’ when granted the custodianship of Tyrconnell. Therefore, Niall presumed he had authority to take the title of O’Donnell and that it would not be ‘offensive’ to the government.⁹² The crown’s use of the phrase ‘chief of his name’ could have led to a genuine misunderstanding but Docwra did not think so and claimed that many of Niall’s associates had warned him that his actions were provocative.⁹³ The real reason why Niall took the title of O’Donnell was that he simply had enough of waiting for letters patent and was not willing to stand idly by while Rory threatened to undermine his claim to Tyrconnell. He decided to take matters into his own hands and obtain Tyrconnell through the customary route. This rationale was palpable when Docwra confronted Niall about his inauguration and seizure of Rory’s cattle. Niall replied ‘you know the whole Country of Tirconnell was long since promised Me, & many services I have done, that I think have deserved it, but I saw I was neglected, & therefore I have righted myself, by taking the cattle, & People, that were my own and to prevent others, have made myself O’Donnell; now by this means the Country is sure unto me’.⁹⁴

Mountjoy used Niall’s inauguration as pretext to get rid of him and ordered Docwra to arrest him because it was supposedly treason to take the title of O’Donnell. Strictly speaking this was incorrect as only taking the title of O’Neill was treason. Docwra imprisoned Niall but he later escaped and skirmished with government forces when they attempted to take his cattle. It was now April 1603 and Tyrone and the rest of the confederates had already submitted so Niall was by himself. An isolated Niall Garbh was not much of a threat and Docwra easily dealt with him. He quickly captured Niall’s cattle and one of his brothers. He took Doe castle to which Niall planned to retreat. Soon after this a contrite Niall got permission from Docwra to go to Dublin in order to meet the Lord Deputy and submit.⁹⁵ Niall’s escapade gave Mountjoy another excuse to disregard previous promises made to Niall, who he maintained could never ‘be made honest.’ Mountjoy supported the more amenable Rory instead.⁹⁶ Niall did accompany the Lord Deputy when he travelled to London in May 1603 but this did not represent Mountjoy changing his mind about Niall because when they arrived at Beaumaris, Mountjoy wrote to Cecil and told him

⁹² *Salisbury Manuscript*, Vol. 15, pp. 146, 383, *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Vol.2, p.587

⁹³ Sir Henry Docwra to Sir Robert Cecil, 5th April 1603, Derry (SP 63/215/no.8)

⁹⁴ Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, p.71

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pp.72-3, Sir Henry Docwra to Cecil, 24th April 1603, Derry (SP 63/215/no.37)

⁹⁶ Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Cecil, 25th April 1603, Dublin (SP 63/215/no.38)

that Niall should not be ‘trusted or advanced.’⁹⁷ While in England, Niall tried to salvage the situation by appealing to Cecil on several occasions, reminding Cecil about his services, such as his killing of Hugh Rua’s brother, and sacrifices, like losing his own brother. He complained that the government had not made good on their promises. He requested letters patent for Tyrconnell and protested that Rory ‘never drewe [a] sword in service for the Queene’ yet he was favoured by the government and about to be given the O’Donnell lordship.⁹⁸

Niall’s appeals fell on deaf ears and in September 1603, Rory O’Donnell was created the first Earl of Tyrconnell and in February 1604 he received letters patent for the lands of Tyrconnell. Niall was given what he had under Hugh Rua before he defected, Castlefin and its accompanying land.⁹⁹ All the times he put his life in danger, all the hardships he endured especially at the difficult siege at Donegal, the death of his brother and followers and basically everything he had done following his defection in order to attain the O’Donnell lordship was for nought as he ended up in the exact same situation as he was in when the war began. He was denied Tyrconnell, ‘usurped’ by a son of Hugh MacManus O’Donnell and relegated to just holding Castlefin with some land in east Tyrconnell. Niall Garbh’s post-war fortunes worsened when he was implicated in Cahir O’Doherty’s rebellion in 1608. Niall Garbh’s involvement in the rebellion has been contested but modern historical judgement suggests that Niall encouraged and promised to support O’Doherty but ultimately failed to do so. McCavitt suggests that Niall may have betrayed O’Doherty because he hoped to be rewarded with Inishowen by siding with the government. While there is no definitive evidence for this such a betrayal was certainly not out of character for Niall Garbh.¹⁰⁰

Niall Garbh was arrested and tried in Dublin but John Davies, the solicitor-general of Ireland, stopped the trial because he claimed to have more evidence to present on behalf of the crown. The real reason for cancelling the trial was that it became apparent that the jury were going to find Niall not guilty and Davies did not want to see him go free. Niall

⁹⁷ *Salisbury Manuscript*, Vol.15, pp. 112

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.146, 383, Neele Garbye to Cecil, 12th August 1603 (SP 63/215/no.86)

⁹⁹ *A repertory*, pp.24-5, 59-60

¹⁰⁰ McCavitt, John, *The Flight of the Earls*. Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 2002, p.138, McGurk, John, 'Irish prisoners in the Tower of London: prerequisites for plantation,' in David Finnegan et al (eds.), *The Flight of the Earls: Imeacht na nIarlaí Derry*, Guildhall Press, 2010, p. 242

was then sent to the Tower of London but never received another trial.¹⁰¹ Niall died in the Tower in 1626 and by then he was not even important enough for his death to be mentioned by English sources.¹⁰² His death did not go unnoticed in Gaelic Ireland as Gofraidh MacBrian Mac an Bhaird wrote an elegy praising him. There was no hint of any recriminations for his cooperation with the crown. In fact, the poem portrays Niall as a defender of Ireland from the *Gallaibh*, the foreigners, and compare him to Hector defending Troy from the Greeks.¹⁰³ In an Eoghan Rua Mac an Bhaird poem dedicated to Niall during his confinement in the Tower, his service with the government was mentioned but not in a negative light. Rather, Eoghan tells Niall that he should be released if *an choróin*, the crown, remembered 'all thou hast borne for it.'¹⁰⁴

While bardic poetry was often antagonistic towards the English, Niall Garbh and those who served with the English were not chastised by their poets. Either their service with the government was ignored, as was the case in Niall Garbh's elegy, or the poets would find ways to justify their patron's submitting to and collaborating with the government. A poem for Phelim O'Byrne upon his submission in 1600 defends the subject's actions because resisting the English was futile and history had shown that the most politically successful in Ireland had been those who availed of outside help.¹⁰⁵ Another poem excused Cúchonnacht's surrender of Fermanagh in 1585 by portraying it not as a submission but as an agreement between peers. If one side was superior then it was Maguire as it was the English who depended on him because it was through his help that they were no longer vulnerable or suffered attacks.¹⁰⁶ The Earl of Thomond was one of the most committed and loyal Gaelic allies of the crown during the Nine Years' War and yet in his elegy he was still depicted as a defender of the Irish against the English as 'the boldness of the foreigners in seeking to occupy their [the Irish] lands was the less because of the threat against them from one man [Thomond].' At the same time his service with the English against his confederacy was celebrated and the apparent contradictions of

¹⁰¹ McCavitt, John. *Sir Arthur Chichester, Lord Deputy of Ireland, 1605-1616*. Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1998, p.147

¹⁰² Breathnach, Pól, 'Short Annals of Tirconail,' *Irish Book Lover*, Vol.22 (1934), pp.104-109

¹⁰³ Walsh, Paul, *Gleanings from Irish manuscripts*, Dublin, Three Candles, 1933, pp.27-53

¹⁰⁴ McKenna, Lambert, 'To Niall Garbh O Domhnaill,' *The Irish Monthly*, Vol. 56, No. 657 (1928), pp.153-6

¹⁰⁵ Bradshaw, Brendan, 'Native reaction to the westward expansion: a case study in Gaelic ideology' in Kenneth Andrews et al, (eds), *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650*. Liverpool, 1978, pp.77-8

¹⁰⁶ Caball, Marc. *Poets and Politics*, p.38

celebrating this while also portraying Thomond as a defender of Ireland did not trouble the poet.¹⁰⁷

Poets would not just defend their patron's service with the government after the fact but could also encourage collaboration with the English before their subject had shown any indication of a desire to do so. This was exemplified by a poem written by Maolmordha Mac an Bhaird. He wrote a poem for Hugh Rua O'Donnell while he was imprisoned in Dublin and urged cooperation with the English. He claimed that the O'Donnells had never fought against the English before and so the young Hugh Rua had nothing to fear from them. He should not resent them for imprisoning him because it was for his own good. O'Donnell was young and impetuous and necessary a spell in prison to moderate his behaviour which would leave him better equipped to rule. Maolmordha went too far for some as later scribes censured and edited one of his pro-English verses, the 37th which stated that the 'English' would allow O'Donnell rule over Tyrconnell but 'English' was later changed to God.¹⁰⁸ Maolmordha was not inveterately pro-English as he had no problems with Hugh Rua's activities against the government during the Nine Years' War and accompanied him on his raids of Connacht. Maolmordha was killed there in 1597 when Conyers Clifford's army clashed with O'Donnell's forces under the command of his brother Rory.¹⁰⁹ Poets could be pragmatic when needed so Maolmordha encouraged O'Donnell to rely on the English as he reasoned, at that particular juncture, that they represented Hugh Rua's best opportunity to obtain Tyrconnell. How poets personally interacted with the government highlights their pragmatic attitude as, like some of their employers, they would work with government officials if it was advantageous for them. While embroiled in a succession dispute with a rival, Tadhg Ó Dálaigh tried to gain George Carew's support by composing a praise poem for him.¹¹⁰ Financial gain was another incentive to work with the government and John Perrot during his deputyship gave 'money to rhymers to set forth her Majesty's most worthy praise.'¹¹¹ The poets' flexible attitude towards the crown further helps to explain why the Gaelic Irish felt comfortable defecting as they could do so and still have their poets find ways to uphold their honour.

¹⁰⁷ Ó Cuív, Brian (ed), 'An elegy on Donnchadh Ó Briain, fourth earl of Thomond,' *Celtica* Vol. 16 (1984), pp. 87–105.

¹⁰⁸ Breatnach, Pádraig, 'An Address to Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill in Captivity, 1590,' *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 98 (1986), p.198-213

¹⁰⁹ *AFM*, p.2017

¹¹⁰ O'Sullivan, Anne, 'Tadhg O'Daly and Sir George Carew,' *Éigse*, Vol.14 (1972), p.32

¹¹¹ *Salisbury Manuscript*, Vol.4, p.195

Chapter Six

As with Niall Garbh, Mountjoy was willing to disregard the assurances made to Donal Ballach O’Cahan and allowed Tyrone to retain his authority over the O’Cahan lordship. Docwra visited Dublin and met with the Lord Deputy before he departed for England in May 1603. He challenged Mountjoy on his behaviour towards O’Cahan but the Lord Deputy dismissed Docwra’s concerns because Donal Ballach was ‘but a drunken fellowe.... besides hee is able neither to doe good nor hurte, & wee must haue a Care to the Publique good, & giue Contentment to my lord of Tyrone, vpon which depends the Peace & securitie of the whole kingdom.’ Docwra continued to argue O’Cahan’s cause and stated that his sobriety and ability was irrelevant and little good could come from so blatantly breaking a promise but his efforts were for nought. Docwra returned to Derry with Tyrone’s eldest son, Hugh, the Baron of Dungannon, and upon his return he summoned O’Cahan. When Docwra told O’Cahan that he must be under Tyrone’s authority, a disappointed and angry Donal Ballach eventually accepted his fate and shook hands with Dungannon. However, he was still furious so before he departed he ‘bade the Devil take all Englishmen and as many as put their trust in them.’¹¹² O’Cahan did not follow his own advice of English duplicity. Donal Ballach continued to pursue his claim for independence from Tyrone and was encouraged by John Davies and George Montgomery because they hoped to use O’Cahan to weaken and discredit Tyrone. Tyrone bitterly disputed Donal Ballach’s claim and this quarrel over the O’Cahan lordship led to the relationship between the two men becoming so toxic that O’Cahan divorced Tyrone’s daughter and the Earl responded by demanding the return of his daughter’s dowry.¹¹³

The Dublin government decided that the two men should go to London to resolve their dispute, but this never happened. Tyrone feared he would be imprisoned in England so he, along with Rory O’Donnell and Cúchonnacht Maguire, decided to leave for the continent in September 1607. Following Tyrone’s departure, O’Cahan was no longer needed and quickly discarded by Davies and Montgomery. He was then falsely accused of being involved in Tyrone’s flight and his possible armed return and detained in Dublin in February 1608. He was implicated in Cahir O’Doherty’s rebellion. O’Cahan was imprisoned in Dublin at the time of the rebellion but the involvement of his brother, Shane Carragh, and incriminating testimony was enough for the government to link Donal Ballach to the rebellion. O’Cahan was to be tried in Dublin but the failure to convict Niall Garbh

¹¹² Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.77-8, 80

¹¹³ Casway, Jerrold. "The Decline and Fate of Dónal Ballagh O’Cahan and His Family.", pp.50-2

led to the government postponing his trial and he was sent to the Tower of London as well.¹¹⁴ O’Cahan unsurprisingly regretted putting faith in the government and this was reflected in a 1610 letter to his government backed brother, Manus. He appealed to his brother for help securing his liberty and warned him not to let a ‘covetous hope of land’ blind him into trusting the government for advancement and gave examples of others being duped by the English. O’Cahan did not mention his own experience but it must have been in his mind when he cautioned his brother about English duplicity. To secure Manus’ help, O’Cahan also tried to appeal to his sense of duty as a brother. Lastly O’Cahan tried to shame his brother into assisting him by vowing that, if ‘villainous’ or ‘dunghill cogitations’ caused Manus to forsake him, then he would call upon ‘God, his holy angels, the whole world and especially that country’ to witness how treacherously Manus had acted. Donal’s pleas for help came to nothing and O’Cahan spent the rest of his life in the Tower where he died sometime after 1616.¹¹⁵ O’Cahan’s letter to his brother and Manus’ response encapsulates the divided nature of Gaelic clans as it plainly demonstrates that a family bond and sense of duty to one’s kin was not enough to prevent a ‘covetous hope of land’ from causing someone to turn on their close relatives and ally with the government, even if they were warned of the risks involved in relying on English promises.

O’Doherty’s rebellion clearly shows that he did not fare well after the war. His alienation with the government began soon after the war ended, when the island of Inch and its valuable fishing rights were taken from him and granted to Ralph Bingley. Then his close ally, Docwra, left Derry in 1606. He was replaced as governor of Derry by the coarse and unpopular George Paulet and relations between him and Cahir were very poor. In the aftermath of Tyrone’s flight there was a lot of paranoia about possible conspiracies against the state and this intensified when the Baron of Delvin confessed, in November 1607, to being party to a plot to seize Dublin castle. O’Doherty was one of the victims of the paranoia as he was falsely accused of planning a revolt upon the landing of a Spanish invasion force in November. When Cahir went to Dublin to clear his name he was detained for two days and bound under a ‘great recognizances’ of £1,000 with two sureties to the value of 500 marks each. O’Doherty’s resented this treatment and his growing disaffection with the government and Paulet reached boiling point in April 1608. O’Doherty went to

¹¹⁴ Ibid, pp.52-4

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp.57-8, Sir Donnel O’Cahan to his brother Manus, 1610, the tower of London (SP 63/229/no.126 a)

Derry to discuss the sale of some land and got into a heated argument with Paulet which ended with the governor striking O'Doherty. Cahir left in a rage and, after he consulted with the MacDavitts he decided to rebel. He gathered his men, seized the fort at Culmore and then attacked Derry where he killed Paulet. His rebellion did not last long and by July he had been killed.¹¹⁶

Conor Rua Maguire was another who benefited little from his association with the government. He had been granted all Fermanagh but to accommodate Cúchonnacht Maguire following his submission, Conor Rua was compelled to agree to a division of the Maguire lordship. Out of the seven baronies in Fermanagh, Conor Rua was given three full baronies and part of another and this was less than what Cúchonnacht received. Letters patent for these lands were promised but never actually granted so during the plantation of Ulster there was little protecting Conor Rua from the loss of further lands.¹¹⁷ Conor was still hopeful that he would retain his three baronies in the plantation, but Chichester was then the Lord Deputy, a post he would hold from 1605 to 1616. His regard for the Irish had not improved and so, he had little intention of granting them large tracts of land in the plantation. Conor Rua was no exception. Chichester did not care about his previous service and viewed him as too 'barbarous' and 'unworthy' to keep three baronies. Instead Chichester only wanted to allot him one, and even then Chichester wished he could have given him less. Conor Rua was 'ill-contented with this allotment' but there was nothing he could do.¹¹⁸ Any leverage he had ended with the war and now he was just another former Gaelic ally who had outlived his usefulness. In the end he received 5,980 acres which was less than a third of the land he held when he possessed three baronies and he even lost his ancestral seat at Lisnaskea¹¹⁹

Others fared better. The government supported Turlough MacHenry O'Neill and Henry Óg MacShane O'Neill's independence from Tyrone and both were granted letters patent for their countries.¹²⁰ Henry Óg MacShane remained loyal and was killed fighting for the government during O'Doherty's short lived rebellion. Upon his death even Chichester expressed regret over his killing as he thought Henry Óg was a loyal subject

¹¹⁶ McCavitt, John. *Sir Arthur Chichester*, pp.140-6, Kelly, William, *Docwra's Derry*, pp.75, 80-1

¹¹⁷ Sir Arthur Chichester's Instructions to Sir James Ley and Sir John Davys, 18th October 1608 (SP 63/225/no.225), Davies, Sir John, *Historical tracts*, p.221

¹¹⁸ CSPI 1608-10, p.364 Bardon, Jonathan, *The Plantation of Ulster: the British Colonisation of the North of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century*. Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 2012, pp.163,193

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ *A repertory*, pp.12, 171, 204

who kept ‘his contrie in good order.’¹²¹ Turlough MacHenry managed to retain the Fews during the plantation and by 1632 he was in a good enough position that he was referred to as still being ‘powerful in Armagh and Tyrone.’¹²² Art Rua Magennis was another who did relatively well after the war and plantation and was elevated to the peerage as Lord Iveagh in 1623. Although little regard was given to Glasney even though he submitted before Art.¹²³ The most successful post-war was Randall MacSorley MacDonnell. Randal was supported by Mountjoy because he was ‘rich, powerful and at present, loyal’ and the Lord Deputy did not want to do anything that would alienate a potentially dangerous enemy. Mountjoy therefore granted MacDonnell both the Glens and the Route in Antrim. Upon the accession of James I and VI to the English throne, this grant was confirmed and Randal acquired an estate consisting of more than 330,000 acres. By the time of his death, Randal had navigated the many new developments in Ulster so well that he left his heir with no debts.¹²⁴

Randal’s success came at the expense of Rory Óg MacQuillan, a long-time ally of the crown who had hoped to regain his ancestral lands in the Route from the MacDonnells. The government previously planned to maintain MacQuillan in the Route and when Essex arrived in Ireland in 1599, he was instructed to do so because Rory Óg was a good subject and the MacDonnells were wrongly detaining his lands by force.¹²⁵ During Chichester’s time at Carrickfergus, MacQuillan was one of the few Gaelic Irish that he championed and praised. He stated that MacQuillan had served honestly during the war and had a better claim to the Route so when the fate of the territory was to be decided, Chichester advised that MacQuillan be thought of.¹²⁶ MacQuillan was loyal but he was not powerful or rich like Randal so Mountjoy did not care that his grant to Randal resulted in Rory Óg being completely disinherited from his family’s traditional lands. Rory Óg was given a small portion of land in North Clondeboye as compensation but this hardly made up for losing the entire Route. MacQuillan’s position deteriorated further as he was forced to sell his meagre lands because of debt in 1619 and he lived the rest of his life on a modest pension and relying on loans.¹²⁷ MacQuillan was another in a long line of Gaelic Irish who had

¹²¹ Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir James Perrot, 15th June 1608, Dublin (SP 63/224/no.125)

¹²² Ó Fiaich, Tomás, ‘The O’Neills of the Fews’, pp.58,62

¹²³ Bardon, Jonathan. *The Plantation of Ulster*, pp.262-3

¹²⁴ McDonnell, Hector. “Surviving Kinsale Scottish Style-The McDonnells of Antrim,” in Hiram Morgan (ed), *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Wordwell, 2004, pp. 273–275

¹²⁵ Notes touching the furtherance of Her Majesty’s service in Ireland, April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.49),

¹²⁶ Sir Arthur Chichester to the Privy Council, 8th July 1601, Carrickfergus (SP 63/208 pt.3/no59)

¹²⁷ Bardon, Jonathan. *The Plantation of Ulster*, pp.266-7

hoped to find advancement through allying with the crown, only to be disregarded when they had served their purpose.

In conclusion, before Kinsale the Gaelic confederates in Ulster were in a dismal situation and the war was in reality all but over. Only a resounding victory at Kinsale could have given the confederates hope of turning things around but this was not to be and instead all that remained was a protracted winding up of the war. Tyrone tried to keep his Gaelic confederacy together by downplaying his losses and spreading misinformation, but this only had limited and temporary success. When Tyrone's reluctant allies saw the reality of his weakened position they left. Tyrone's more committed allies saw little reason to fight for a lost cause either and they decided to defect as well. These defections hurt Tyrone especially O'Cahan. He was Tyrone's most important *uirríthe* but he, like so many *uirríthe*, wished to be independent of his overlord. Without O'Cahan, Tyrone's already diminishing power was reduced to the extent that he fled to Fermanagh, largely gave up on Ulster and hoped to find succour from Connacht instead, succour that was not forthcoming and this ended what little chance Tyrone had to effectively continue the war. The military help the government received from defectors like Henry Óg MacShane did contribute to the finishing off Tyrone and the Gaelic confederacy. Assistance from longer term allies like the O'Doherty and the MacDavitts continued to be valuable and also played a part in ending the war. Niall Garbh remained one of the most important and invaluable Gaelic allies as Mountjoy and Docwra's refusal to dismiss him despite their irritation at his behaviour and the questions over his loyalty shows. Once the war concluded Niall Garbh and many of the government's prominent allies found out that they were now redundant and had become a nuisance for the government. The government were quick to abandon and even oppose some of their former allies so several of them ended their lives in prison, poverty or killed after a failed rebellion.

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Shortly after the 1641 rebellion began, a Franciscan friar was in Sligo promoting insurrection. One William Browne tried to dissuade the friar by pointing to previous rebellions and reminding him of the ‘bad Success....in those rebellions of Tyrone, O’Doherty, and McGuire.’ The friar dismissed Browne’s argument and insisted that this war would be different because previously ‘the Irish of the kingdom were divided’ but now ‘there should not be scarce an Irish man in all Ireland that was a Catholique, that should take part with the Protestant.’¹ Forty years later it was still believed that the divisions within the Gaelic confederacy had been a major contributing factor to its defeat. When O’Sullivan Beare and Hadsor blamed disunity for the failure of Gaelic resistance they were not just rehashing a trope but expressing what they and others firmly believed. More importantly when examining the Nine Years’ War it was evident that this belief reflected a real and a fundamental flaw of the Gaelic confederacy.

The Gaelic confederacy was riven with dissension because of several forces of disunity present within the socio-politics of Gaelic society. The most prominent divisive forces were generated by the succession arrangements. When framing Gaelic succession within the larger discussion surrounding succession it is understandable why it caused divisions. Succession was a perennial problem for any ruler. Regularly achieving a smooth transition from one leader to the next was difficult as civil wars over succession were a real danger following the death of an incumbent. Not all approaches to succession were equally likely to cause instability or conflict. Agnatic primogeniture had its flaws, the most apparent was the trouble that could ensue when a ruler died without an adult male heir. However, as it mitigated two problems with succession, the crown prince and coordination problem, agnatic primogeniture was the most likely to produce political stability and avoid bloodshed. Such stability better allowed these societies to resist outside forces and survive, whereas those who were blighted by contentious successions and divisions were more likely to perish. O’Sullivan Beare was aware of this likelihood as he complained that those societies which struggled with succession and divisions inevitably expired, pointing to how the bible warned that ‘Every Kingdom divided against itself shall be destroyed.’²

¹ Quoted in Canny, Nicholas, *Making Ireland British 1580-1650*. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2001, p.497,

² O’Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.58

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Gaelic succession did not use agnatic primogeniture and instead it incorporated an election, designated successor and agnatic seniority, neither of which were conducive to peaceful transitions of power and political stability thereafter. The *tánaiste* was often described as the designated successor and he was supposed to be elected while the current chieftain was alive, preferable at his inauguration, and this should have resulted in a smooth transition from one chieftain to the next as *tánaiste* would replace the incumbent and another *tánaiste* chosen. However, there is little indication that this occurred during the sixteenth century. Turlough Luineach O'Neill and Owney O'More appointing their own successor would suggest that the *tánaiste* was no longer elected but picked by the incumbent. Alternatively, the *tánaiste* might have obtained his office by virtue of his seniority as Eoghan O'Sullivan Beare and his witnesses claimed. This preference for agnatic seniority meant the position of *tánaiste* exacerbated the crown prince problem because the a *tánaiste* was often a contemporary of the chieftain. Therefore, the risk of dying before the incumbent and missing out on the chieftainship was a distinct possibility for a *tánaiste*. It was thus in his interest to depose the incumbent if he was determined to become chieftain. Moreover, the right of the *tánaiste* to succeed was not certain as elections to the position of chieftain occurred after an incumbent's death even if there was *tánaiste*. Therefore, even if there was a large age gap between chieftain and *tánaiste* there was little reason for him to be patient and wait for the incumbent to die because in an election there was always the risk another could be chosen. Instead a coup might appear a more attractive prospect. These circumstances meant conflict between *tánaiste* and chieftain was not uncommon, Niall Connallach O'Neill's feud with Con O'Neill or Brian O'Rourke hanging his *tánaiste* are just two examples.

As elections took place following the chieftain's death, Gaelic succession suffered from the coordination problem especially as there was confusion over the criteria used to elect a chieftain. Some argued that succession strictly followed agnatic seniority so the eldest candidate must be chosen while others claimed the most capable should be elected. The use of agnatic seniority and elections individually could cause problems and lead to divisions but together they made for the worst of both worlds and this unhappy mix represented a fundamental flaw with Gaelic succession. The two together were incompatible as agnatic seniority rendered null and void the elective component as the most senior should succeed and there was no room to elect another. The uncertainty over the contradictory nature of using both allowed for clan members to choose which suited them

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best. The most senior candidate would obviously champion agnatic seniority while others promoted the elective element of Gaelic succession and the idea that the worthiest of the clan should be picked to lead. This often resulted in a dispute between the eldest claimant using agnatic seniority and one or more younger clan members who thought they were worthy enough to be chieftain. This happened during the succession dispute among the O'Reillys. Edmund O'Reilly argued he should be chieftain because he was the oldest while Philip O'Reilly maintained that he should be chieftain because he was more capable.

Another aspect of Gaelic succession that encouraged civil wars and depositions was the extension of eligibility to the *derbfine*. This resulted in a large pool of candidates, most of whom would never become chieftain and those who waited patiently stood almost no chance. Therefore, the surest way to acquire the chieftainship was through force. Being the 'worthiest' meant the strongest and most capable to defend the clan's land. Anyone with some semblance of power could, and often did, consider themselves worthy and seek the chieftainship, increasing the likelihood of multiple claimants which in turn raised the prospects of conflict. Given the large number of candidates and uncertainty over the election criteria, the death of a chieftain could be a precarious time as disputes and civil wars, as was the case with the O'Cahans in 1523 and O'Dohertys in 1582, were a real possibility. The starkest illustration of increasingly violent succession disputes is that fact that, decade on decade, fewer chieftains died in their beds. By the latter decades of the century three-quarters of them died violent deaths, most often in the course of succession wars.³ The elective component of Gaelic succession clearly did not bring the benefits that Gillingham claimed. It did not stop long-term feuds that transcended generations as the killings committed during internal clan wars were not quickly forgotten even by descendants decades later. How rivalries could be inherited was exemplified by Shane and Matthew O'Neill's bitter feud being passed onto not only their sons but their grandsons. Phelim MacHenry O'Neill was a grandson of Shane O'Neill and in 1622 he went to the Low Countries to serve in the Spanish army. He would have to serve under Tyrone's son, Sean, who was in command of the Irish regiment there. The two men retained their ancestors' antagonism as there was still resentment about killings done before they born. Phelim complained that Sean 'carried a spleen towards' him because his grandfather, Shane, had killed Sean's grandfather, Matthew, 64 years ago.⁴ Admittedly, Phelim made

³ Edwards, David. "Escalation of Violence in the Sixteenth-Century Ireland", pp.47-9

⁴ Petition to Lord Conway of Phelim O' Neale, 1627 (SP 63/268/no.63), Phelim O'Neill to Lord Falkland, 14th November 1630, Marshalsea (SP 63/251/no.104)

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this statement to English authorities and may have exaggerated the hostility. The elective component did not, as Gillingham's claimed, prevent inept chieftains as corruption or self-interest was on occasions more important than ability. When O'Donnell was deciding who to pick as the next O'Doherty chieftain in 1601, it was not worthiness which decided the matter but a bribe from Phelim O'Doherty. The only real benefit of Gaelic succession was that it at the very least avoided a child becoming chieftain. The succession issue was further complicated by the attempts of the Tudor government to introduce primogeniture into Ireland through the policy of surrender and regrant. This resulted in two competing forms of succession laws, which was reflected in succession disputes as there could be one claimant for a clan's lordship using Gaelic succession against another using primogeniture. The succession dispute among the O'Sullivans was a case in point as Donal Cam's claim to his clan's lordship was through primogeniture while his rival Eoghan relied on Gaelic succession.

There was a second major force of disunity in Gaelic Ireland and that was the poor relationship between stronger and weaker clans. Stronger clans would try to impose their overlordship on weaker clans and turn them into their *uirríthe*. Weaker clans tried to fend off these attempts as they often resented the burdensome exactions that overlords would demand of them. Both internal and external clan conflict in Gaelic Ireland gave the crown ample opportunity to manipulate divisions for their own ends when necessary. During the Nine Years' War the Gaelic confederacy reflected Gaelic society and so it was plagued by internal rifts. None more so than the two most powerful clans in Ulster and cornerstone of the Gaelic confederacy, the O'Neills and O'Donnells. Gaelic succession and the attempts to introduce primogeniture had left both clans riven and so Tyrone and Hugh Rua O'Donnell were faced with a challenge to emerge as chieftains. Among the O'Neills, Tyrone had to contend with Turlough Luineach O'Neill, Turlough Breasalach O'Neill and the multi-headed MacShanes. Turlough Luineach was the incumbent, Turlough Breasalach was the eldest candidate and nominally *tánaiste*, so theoretically should have succeeded, and the MacShanes felt they were deserving of the chieftainship, as the sons a chieftain, and were popular in the O'Neill lordship. Tyrone himself could and had little option but to use primogeniture to further his claims for the English earldom of Tyrone which he eventually received in the 1580s. Tyrone was not content with just the earldom as he knew that without the title of O'Neill and strong opposition factions remaining, his authority would be undermined. Tyrone therefore still had to overcome the other factions and ensure

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his accession to the chieftainship. He did so ruthlessly. He hanged Hugh Geimhleach O'Neill and imprisoned the rest of the prominent MacShanes. Turlough Breasalach was too weak to compete and Tyrone used his alliance with Hugh Rua O'Donnell to ground Turlough Luineach into submission. This meant when Turlough died in 1595, Tyrone was free to take the title of O'Neill. Yet, Tyrone could not fully eradicate *tnúth* and unite the O'Neills. Turlough Luineach's son, Art, resented Tyrone as there was lingering ill will from the times when Art fought with his father against Tyrone. Moreover, Art harboured aspirations to emulate his father and attain the O'Neill lordship so Tyrone was an obstacle to his ambitions. Art could not oppose his rival at the beginning of the Nine Years' War though, as he was too weak but he would if supported by the crown, making him a potential ally of the government.

Hugh Rua had his own rivals to contend with. There were the descendants of Calvach O'Donnell, who were bitter over losing the chieftainship in 1566 and were determined to regain what they had lost. Furthermore, as Calvach had availed of a surrender and regrant agreement his descendants were able to use primogeniture to further their claims for Tyrconnell. There was also Hugh Dubh O'Donnell, whose claim was through seniority, and Donal O'Donnell, who sought to gain Tyrconnell through force. O'Donnell's mother orchestrated the killings of Hugh MacCalvach O'Donnell and Donnell O'Donnell which enabled Hugh Rua, once he escaped Dublin Castle, to take the chieftainship but he still faced opposition from Niall Garbh and Hugh Dubh. Hugh Rua strong armed the two men into acknowledging him as chieftain but Niall Garbh was pertinacious in his pursuit of Tyrconnell and would defect to possess it if given the chance. Internal clan rivals were not the only thing Tyrone and O'Donnell had to worry about as some of their *uirríthe* desired to be independent. O'Donnell and Tyrone had to compel these unenthusiastic *uirríthe* into recognising their overlordship and to do so they raided their lands, imprisoned them or threatened to replace them with another member of the clan who was more amenable. If all else failed, then an obstinate *uirrí* could be killed as was the fate of Ever MacRory Magennis. Nevertheless, the independent spirit of the *uirríthe* remained and some were willing to defect to free themselves from their overlord. Additionally, the smaller clans could also be plagued by successions disputes. Among the Maguires there was a dispute over Fermanagh between Hugh and Conor Rua. Art Rua Magennis and Glasney MacAughley Magennis both laid claim to Iveagh and the O'Reillys were spilt into three camps, Sean, Philip, and Edmund.

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O'Sullivan Beare was mystified that such a factious and riven confederacy could have had the success it had, pondering 'how it should have so long withstood so many divisions, so many wars, such incendiaryism.'⁵ The only explanation O'Sullivan could offer for the confederacy temporarily overcoming all its shortcomings was divine intervention. Given the numerous divisions, it certainly was quite remarkable that the confederacy was able to remain intact for seven years, a period when the confederacy was quite successful, most notably when they defeated Bagenal at the Battle of the Yellow Ford in 1598 and at the beginning of 1600 when Tyrone was able to march to Munster and return unimpeded. Yet it was not divine intervention but rather the efforts of Tyrone and O'Donnell and a number of unifying forces that upheld the brittle cohesion of the Gaelic confederacy. They took pledges, detained cattle, watched or imprisoned potential defectors. An alliance with Spain, mistrust of the English and a faith and fatherland ideology were also employed to maintain unity. Mediation was used to settle succession disputes among differing factions. Tyrone and O'Donnell's connections, familial, affinal or through fosterage, could also act as a unifying force. Tyrone and O'Donnell's military success and strength intimidated potential defectors into remaining in the Gaelic confederacy. The failure and incompetence of the government's army also discouraged Gaelic confederates from changing sides as it looked like by joining the government one was joining a losing side that could not defend them. This concern was about being left defenceless was heightened or lessened depending on proximity to crown garrisons as those further away had little expectation of any military assistance from the government.

These circumstances and the tactics used by Tyrone and O'Donnell had differing levels of effectiveness and impact. The taking of pledges often did little to restrained potential defectors although the detaining of cattle does seem to have caused would-be crown allies to think twice about defecting. Surveillance or imprisonment clearly stopped defections in the immediate although this was only a short-term solution as most of the detainees were released, and continued to pose a threat, or escaped. Perhaps Tyrone and O'Donnell should have been more ruthless and executed those they suspected and imprisoned but given that there were so many prospective defectors that would have required executing most of the prominent Gaelic confederates in Ulster which was not practical. The Spanish alliance provided a great morale boost that did encourage Gaelic confederates to stay with Tyrone and O'Donnell. Spreading mistrust did have some impact

⁵ O'Sullivan Beare, Philip. *Ireland Under Elizabeth*, p.58

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as the rumour that the English planned to betray and kill the Gaelic Irish was said to have been believed by many throughout Ireland although evidently it was not enough to stop some defections. Shane MacBrian for example had been warned by Tyrone not to trust the English and had the example of his father as proof of the consequences of being betrayed by them yet it did not avert his defecting on a number of occasions. The faith and fatherland ideology hoped to overcome petty local squabbles by shifting the focus onto the need to defend their shared Catholic religion and native land but its efficacy in Ulster was questionable. The defectors there were concerned enough about religion to ask for liberty of conscience when negotiating their submission, but they did not forcefully pursue the issue and were easily placated by reassurances that they would not be interfered with because of their religion. This suggests that that the idea of fighting for one's faith was somewhat present but had limited impact in holding the confederacy together in Ulster. Tyrone's arbitrating between differing factions among his *uirríthe* was a struggle and ultimately produced no positive results in the long term as there could only be one chieftain and those who lost out were not content with whatever consolation prize they were offered and thus susceptible to defect.

Familial, affinal and foster connections were a mixed bag. Tyrone's most loyal allies were his brother Cormac MacBaron and nephew Brian MacArt yet his half-brothers Turlough MacHenry and Art MacBaron both defected. O'Donnell too experience problems with close relatives as his brother Rory attempted to switch sides. The effect of marriage alliance was limited. Tyrone's marriage alliance with the O'Donnells produced a lifelong bond yet he had problems with some of his sons-in-law, most notably Henry Óg MacShane and Donal Ballach O'Cahan. Fosterage could result in a strong connection and Tyrone did enjoy support from his foster families, the O'Hagans and O'Quinns. O'Donnell appeared to have a good relationship with one of his foster fathers, Rory O'Cahan. Yet fosterage did not guarantee loyalty. Tyrone gave a son to Art O'Neill to foster and Niall Garbh was Hugh Rua's foster brother yet that did not stop either of them from defecting. The good fortunes of the Gaelic confederacy and the danger and fear of opposing them without a realistic chance of help from the government was a leading factor in upholding the fragile unity of the confederacy. This was especially the case for those in mid and west Ulster as their distance from crown garrisons meant there was no chance of help and so opposing the two confederate leaders was not feasible. Shane MacManus Óg and Maolmordha MacSweeny Doe learned this the hard way when they turned against Hugh Rua and were quickly dealt

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with. It was also no coincidence that those who did defect before Docwra landed tended to be in the east, where they might expect succour from Carrickfergus, or in the southeast, where they might hope for help from Newry or the Pale.

The landing of Docwra at Lough Foyle in May 1600 meant that distance from crown forces was no longer a problem for those in the northwest. Initially the Lough Foyle expedition was unable to make any kind of meaningful progress and was paralysed by disease and desertion. Their prospects changed after Docwra exploited succession disputes and the disgruntlement of *uirríthe* to secure the defections of Art O'Neill, Niall Garbh O'Donnell, Cahir O'Doherty and the MacDavitts. Before Docwra arrived, there were signs of how dangerous the fissures within Gaelic confederacy could be for Tyrone and O'Donnell and how the assistance the Gaelic allies gave the government could be used against the confederates to great effect. The most notable example was in East Breifne, where Tyrone and his ally Edmund O'Reilly temporarily lost control of the region to the government backed Maolmordha. Yet it was Docwra's Gaelic allies that truly displayed how beneficial defectors could be as they transformed the prospects of the Lough Foyle expedition. Their guides and spies were vital because otherwise crown forces were blind and could do little. The cows they gave helped save lives at the poorly provisioned Lough Foyle garrisons and the troops they supplied were greatly needed by the understrength crown forces. Lastly there was the personal conduct of Docwra's allies, particularly Niall Garbh who frequently skirmished with Gaelic confederates and raided their lands. He also took and defended strategically important positions at Lifford and Donegal Abbey. Docwra and other crown forces did experience the negative aspects of Gaelic allies. Their loyalty to the crown was often tenuous and conditional. Once it was no longer profitable to remain on the side of the government they could revolt. For example, if their lands were under threat from the Gaelic confederacy, then they could join or re-join the confederacy to preserve their holdings. Turlough MacHenry did this twice, in 1597 and before Kinsale. Patrick MacArt Maol MacMahon abandoned the government not only because he was under pressure from confederates but also because he was offered by Tyrone, a gift of 'land and living.' Moalmordha MacSweeney Doe secretly assisted O'Donnell against Docwra because of promises made to him which most likely included Doe castle and half his clan's lordship. Such tentative and uncertain loyalty could have deadly consequences as George Bingham at Sligo and the soldiers at Newtown experienced. The argument from the author of the *Supplication* and Barnaby Rich that Gaelic allies were a risk did have some validity.

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Yet incidents like those at Sligo and Newtown were not enough to negate the invaluable contributions of Niall Garbh, Art O'Neill, O'Doherty and the MacDavitts. Moreover, their calls to completely shun employing Gaelic allies were impractical as shown by Essex's realisation that it was not possible to go without them or Chichester, despite his scorn for the Gaelic Irish, still employing them. Therefore, Fenton and others who believed it was necessary and overall beneficial to exploit divisions and utilise Gaelic allies were correct.

Outside Docwra's area of influence the delicate cohesion of the Gaelic confederacy in Ulster began to disintegrate. On the border with the Pale and in east Ulster, increasing pressure from crown forces either gave reluctant confederates the confidence to abandon Tyrone or forced more committed confederates to submit to preserve themselves. The success of the crown forces in Ulster, especially that of Docwra and his Gaelic allies, meant that the Gaelic confederacy there were already on the verge of collapse by the time the Spanish arrived, and Hugh Rua was practically expelled from his own lordship. As a result, the importance of Kinsale was heightened as the weak position of the Gaelic confederacy meant the confederates could not afford a defeat because they could not retreat to Ulster and regroup. Therefore, McGurk was correct to give Docwra and his indispensable Gaelic allies in the northwest such prominence in ending the war. This does raise an interesting counterfactual. What if Docwra's vital allies, Art O'Neill, Niall Garbh O'Donnell, the MacDavitts and Cahir O'Doherty, had not defected? There was a good chance that without their assistance Docwra's expedition would have mirrored Randolph's Derry garrison of 1566-7 and ended in failure. Without a strong and successful Docwra, Tyrone and O'Donnell could have remained strong and mostly untouched in their Ulster heartland. Maybe then a defeat at Kinsale would not have gone down in the annals of Irish history as the battle that marked the failure of the Gaelic confederacy and the beginning of the end of Gaelic Ireland. Rather it could have a setback that was surmountable as the two confederate leaders had the option to retreat to Ulster and recoup their losses. As a result, the war may have gone on much longer. This could have allowed for the Spanish to send another expeditionary force at some point or maybe the confederates could have gotten even better terms when they surrendered as they were in a much stronger position.

Alas for O'Donnell and Tyrone the reality after Kinsale was much different. O'Donnell, with only a toehold in his own lordship, decided against returning home and went to Spain. Tyrone did return but could do little to recover and rebuild, whereas Docwra and the government made more gains as defections continued. The most damaging

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defection during the post Kinsale period was that of Donal Ballach O’Cahan. It reflected, after Gaelic succession, the second weakness identified in the Gaelic system, namely the relationship between overlord and *uirrí* which was marked by suspicion, mistrust and exploitation. It was not strong enough to weather adversity, even when, as in this case, O’Cahan was Tyrone’s son-in-law. After losing his most important *uirrí*, Tyrone’s days were numbered. He left for Fermanagh and tried to rally support among the Connacht confederates but failed. Then he fled to the safety of the woods of Glenconkeye and shortly after he surrendered at Mellifont. This was the beginning of the end of Gaelic Ireland. It could not contradict the tendency of non-agnatic primogeniture societies to be unstable, instability made worse in Gaelic Ireland by the overlord-*uirríthe* relationship, and incapable of resisting an outside force.

Seán O’Faolain’s biography of Tyrone, *The Great O’Neill*, makes for better literature than history. He makes the point that his subject was a singularity in Ireland, an educated man of the modern world. The Gaelic Irish were heroic, individualistic and wedded to an archaic world. Archaic and doomed because, and here lies the tragedy, Tyrone could not drag his compatriots into the sixteenth century.⁶ For O’Faolain then Kinsale was not a tragedy but Darwinian inevitability in which the unfit succumbed to the stronger. In reality this was a tragedy of arrested development in which Gaelic Ireland proved resourceful and determined in fighting a mortal enemy, but there was a fatal weakness embedded in Gaelic society. ‘This is the way they fought for Ireland [leis do chosnadar críoch nÉireann]’ complained a fifteenth century Gaelic poet, the Gael quarrelling with each other [Gaoidhil a gaíl re ceile] but the English acting as one man [rún aonfhir].⁷ However overblown O’Faolain’s rhetorical flourishes, it is hard to resist the conclusion that he may have had a point, Gaelic Ireland preserved an utterly dysfunctional mechanism for succession and it tumbled into the netherworld reserved for such failed polities as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

⁶ O’Faolain, Seán, *The Great O’Neill: a Biography of Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, 1550-1616*. Cork, Mercier Press, 1997, pp.265, 276-80

⁷ McKenna, Lambert (ed and trans), *Aithdioghluim Dána*. Vol.2, Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1939, p.57

Appendix

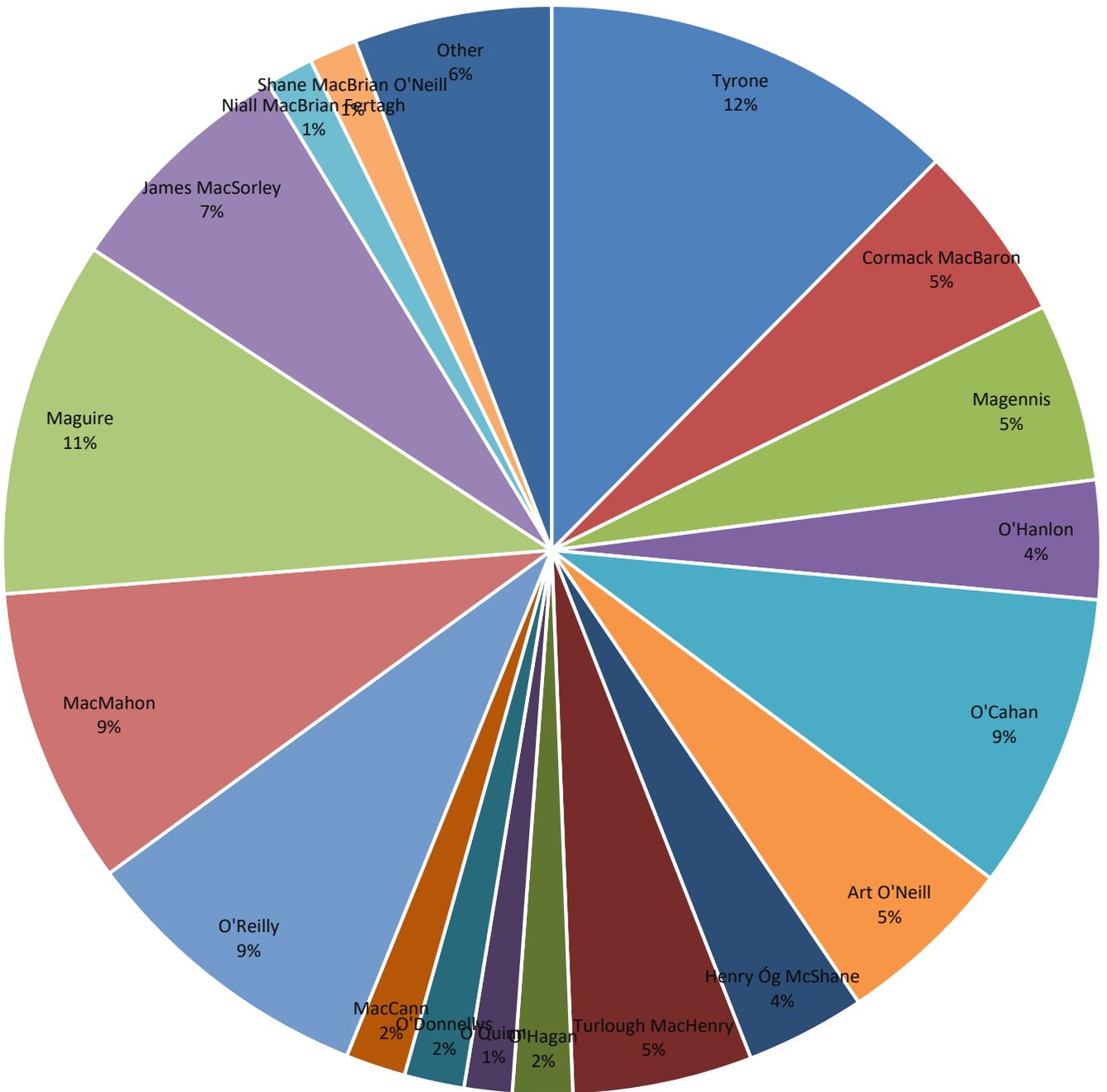
Tyrone's Forces

| Commander | No. of Foot | No. of Horse |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Tyrone | 700 | 200 |
| Cormack MacBaron | 300 | 60 |
| Maguire | 600 | 100 |
| MacMahon | 500 | 160 |
| O'Reilly | 500 | 200 |
| Magennis | 200 | 40 |
| James MacSorley MacDonnell | 400 | 100 |
| O'Cahan | 500 | 200 |
| Art O'Neill | 300 | 60 |
| Turlough MacHenry | 300 | 60 |
| Henry Óg MacShane | 200 | 40 |
| Niall MacBrian Fertagh O'Neill | 80 | 30 |
| Shane MacBrian O'Neill | 80 | 50 |
| O'Donnellys | 100 | 60 |
| O'Hagans | 100 | 30 |
| O'Quinns | 80 | 20 |
| MacCanns | 100 | 12 |
| Others | 270 | 50 |
| Total | 5310 | 1472 |

Figures based on, An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)

Tyrone's Foot

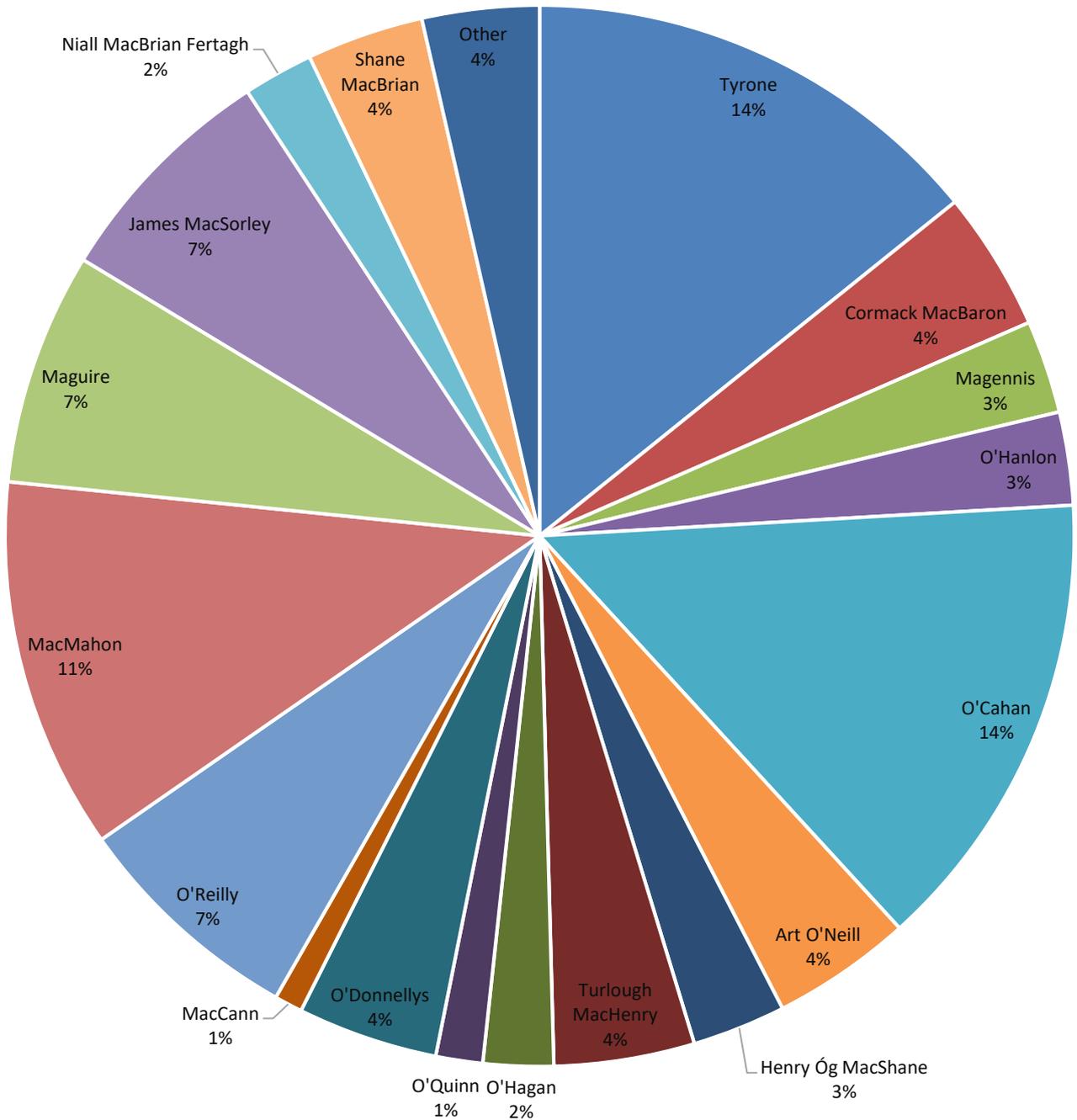
- Tyrone
- O'Cahan
- O'Hagan
- O'Reilly
- Niall MacBrian Fertagh
- Cormack MacBaron
- Art O'Neill
- O'Quinn
- MacMahon
- Shane MacBrian O'Neill
- Magennis
- Henry Óg McShane
- O'Donnellys
- Maguire
- Other
- O'Hanlon
- Turlough MacHenry
- MacCann
- James MacSorley



Appendix

Tyrone Horse

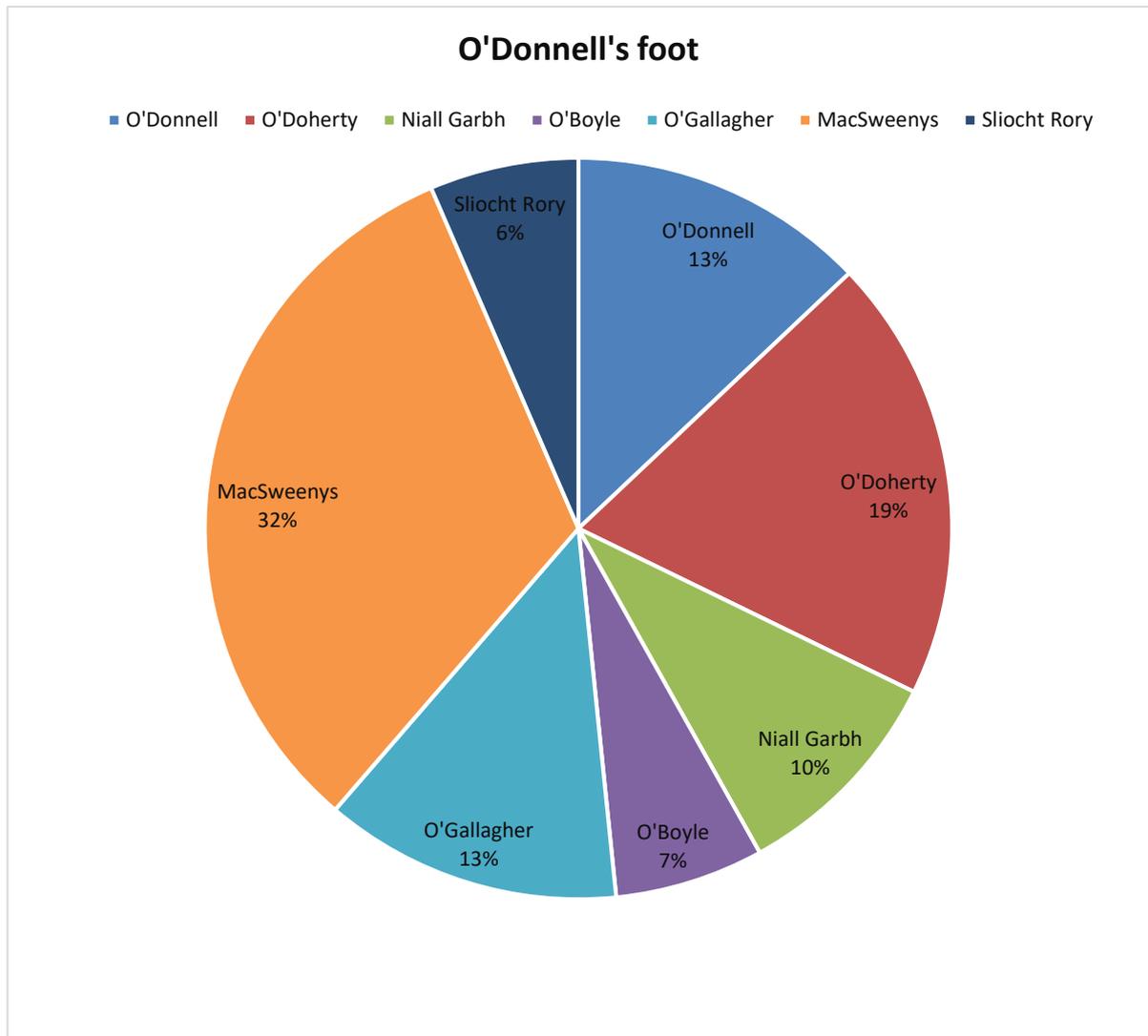
- Tyrone
- O'Cahan
- O'Hagan
- O'Reilly
- Niall MacBrian Fertagh
- Cormack MacBaron
- Art O'Neill
- O'Quinn
- MacMahon
- Shane MacBrian
- Magennis
- Henry Óg MacShane
- O'Donnellys
- Maguire
- Other
- O'Hanlon
- Turlough MacHenry
- MacCann
- James MacSorley



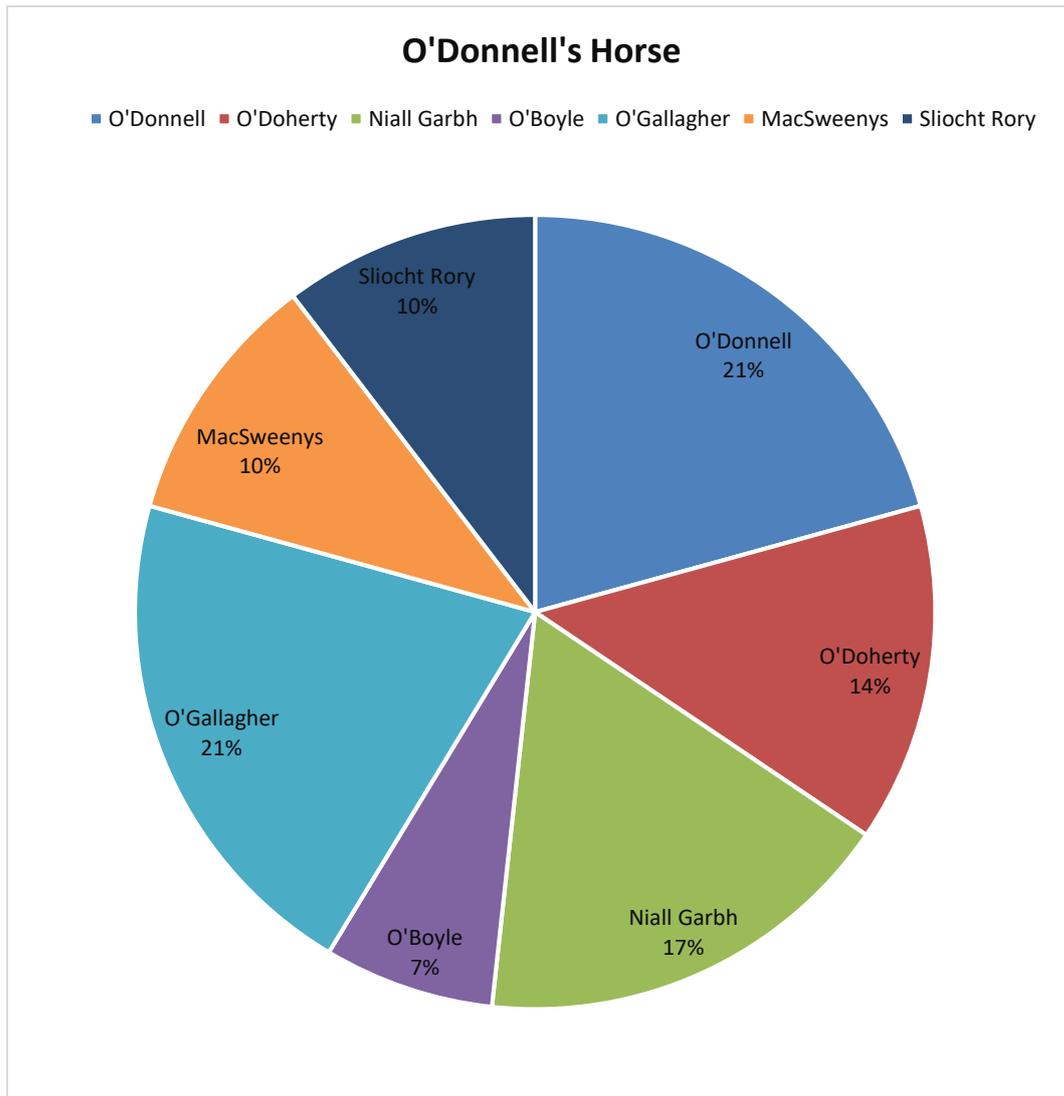
Appendix

| Commander | No. of Foot | No. of Horse |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Hugh Rua O'Donnell | 200 | 60 |
| O'Doherty | 300 | 40 |
| Niall Garbh O'Donnell | 150 | 50 |
| O'Boyle | 100 | 20 |
| O'Gallagher | 200 | 60 |
| Sliocht Rory | 100 | 50 |
| MacSweenys | 500 | 30 |
| Total | 1550 | 260 |

Figures based on, An estimate of the estate of Ireland, 17th April 1599 (SP 63/205/no.31)



Appendix



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Yelverton MS, 16

Hatfield House Archives

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