

## A LINK THAT TRANSCENDS TIME AND PLACE:

BETWEEN (1) *ANGUS OG*, AND (2) HIS BROTHER ALAXANDAIR OG'S DESCENDANT, *JOHN CARRAGH MACDONNELL*.

1314 : *"LORD OF THE ISLES, MY TRUST IN THEE; .....* *NOW FOWARD TO THE SHOCK."*

(Bannockburn – poem. Bruce to Angus Og MacDonald.)

1504 : *"HE AND HIS SHALL BEGIN THIS GAME, FOR IT IS LESS FORCE FOR THEIR LUSTIES."*

(Knockdoe, Ireland. Gerard The Great to John Carragh Macdonnell. Contemporary MS.)

When it came to a stand-up battle, pride of place went to the Galloglaigh. At the famous Battle of Knockdoe, 1504, the Great Earl, Gearoid Mór Fitzgerald (Lord Deputy of Ireland) used the Battles of Galloglaigh in his own personal service who were none other than the Clan Donald, **Leinster Macdonnells**, directly descended from Alaxandair Og MacDonald, Lord of Islay, 1296-1299, the elder brother of Angus Og. This was "largest battle ever fought between Irishmen"<sup>1</sup> and "the greatest battle fought by professional axemen"<sup>2</sup>.

The Great Earl had many clients over all of Ireland, including The O'Neill with the **Tyrone & Armagh Macdonnells** plus O'Connor Roe and MacWilliam Burke both with the **Connaught (Mayo) Macdonnells**. Thus all the three branches of *Clann Alaxandair OG of Erin* fought side by side at Knockdoe and they formed the majority of the Galloglaigh under Gearoid Mor, the "strongest man in Ireland" (virtual king).



*"Queen's Scottici Macdonnell Galloglaigh of Leinster". (Elizabeth I's Charter to Dublin 1582. By kind permission of Dublin City Archives)*

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Companion to Irish History*; Ed SJ Connolly; 1998; p291. 10,000 men took part. 2000 fatalities.

<sup>2</sup> *Irish Battles*; Hayes-McCoy, 1969; p53

**"CLANN DOMNAILL a nEIRINN agus a nALBAIN."**

As described in the 15<sup>th</sup> c. *MS H3., 18 (No. 1337), Trinity College, Dublin*, and was so for many years before.

The perception has to be overcome that ....*"The MacDonald clan, was spread over northwestern Scotland and (only) northeastern Ireland."*

**Clan Donald covered the whole of Ireland. It covered every Province.**

With his battles in perfect order, Gearoid Mor called up his personal Constable of Galloglass, John Carragh (II) Macdonnell, grandson to his namesake *"The Best Captain of the English"* :- *"Call to me the Captain of Galloglaigh, for he and his shall begin this game for it is less force for their lusties than it is of our men (the Anglo-Irish)". "I am glad", said the Captain, "you can do me no more honour, by God's blood", and he took the axe in his hand and began to flourish"*.<sup>3</sup>

This is stirring stuff. It passionately evokes the memory of the occasion, if not the poetry, of the battle of Bannockburn 200 years before; (Scott, W; 1828) *"And loud King Robert's voice was known"* to Angus Og - *"Lord of the Isles, my trust in thee is firm as Ailsa rock; Press on, brave sons of Innsigall; Now forward to the shock!"* [Clanranald motto :- *"My hope is constant in thee."*]

**This is a link that transcends time and place.**

The Great Earl, virtual King of Ireland, triumphed and he "bestowed 30 tuns of wine on his men".

Only the Galloglaigh axemen swung the battle his way.<sup>4</sup> Gerald Fitzgerald was made a Knight of The Garter.

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<sup>3</sup> *Book of Howth: Miscellaneous*; v. 6 (623); p181-183 *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts* : Archbishopal Library at Lambeth; 1871. Reliably detailed and reasonably contemporary description of the battle in the chronicle of the **St Lawrence family of Howth (Lord)**.

<sup>4</sup> - no Anglo soldiers of Lord Howth's even entered the "hand stripe" despite his prior mealy mouthed protestations and lame bravado to Kildare, slandering the worth and loyalty of the "Irish blood" – but Kildare put him right in his place!

Howth suggested to Kildare that they kill his Irish Galloglaigh **after** the battle was won, when they were considerable weakened while they were still fresh– typical! (or: has been suggested this may be a "gloss", an interpolation by later Howths – ie, witness to an inveterate hatred of the Irish?)