

We were first known as “*Clann Alaxandair*” in Ireland, descended from the Clan Donald Chief, **Alaxandair Og** Mhic Angus Mor (de Yle), killed in Ireland 1299 (not his namesake uncle Mor) in the incessant feuding with our Clan’s longstanding rival cousins, the MacDougalls of Lorn. Their doomed marriage alliance failed so early that the Lorns could even renege on handing the arranged dowry of Lismore Island over to Alaxandair! His brother Angus Og of Bannockburn fame was lawfully and wisely selected as Chief. He was no different to Alaxandair or all Clan Donald Chiefs in the habitual and strategic exploitation (mutual) of the more distant English power against anyone threatening their regional independence or expansion. After Bruce killed John Comyn in 1306, confirming the MacDougalls as a common enemy and reinforcing Bruce was no threat, this was a golden opportunity, albeit risky, for Angus Og. In helping to rescue the hapless Bruce, Angus Og could become a major partner in a grand enterprise with his West Coast ally, promising huge rewards for Clan Donald. The younger Angus Og always followed the policies of his mentor brother including at all times after his 1299 death. There was no political difference between the two men; Bruce would have successfully sought refuge with Alaxandair if not already dead. It’s a proven fallacy that Alaxandair fought and lost against The Bruce, the Clan Donald’s part gaelic geopolitically friendly neighbour, and was then *deposed* in 1308. (Bruce’s mother, Countess of Carrick, brought him an ancient Gaelic lineage). This was the usual political propaganda to slur Alaxandair as an ‘unpatriotic’ loser and discredit his eligible sons in later contests for Chiefship¹. A formal Clan remedy of this corrupt historicity is nigh 700yrs overdue. Although (and maybe more relevantly) the sons lost their private inheritance in rewarding the very deserved Angus Og* this obviously could not, and did not, occur under the formal processes of the “*statute of disinheritance on those who had died or lived outside the faith and peace of the king**” at the Nov 1314 Cambuskenneth Parliament after the recent Bruce and Angus’ victory. Being very young in 1299 (under 10) Alaxandair’s sons moved to Ireland in various stages from around 1318 to 1363. The junior *mac Alaxandairs* went c1318 from Islay and the senior ones, eg Ragnhall, went later from Kintyre, (->“MacAllisters” of Loup²) when, after two troublesome Lordship successions (1. minority 2. Stewart remarriage) any chance of them challenging for Chiefship was firmly extinguished. John (in Ulster = *Shane*) Maol Macdonnell, son of Ragnhall, “*Captain of his Nation and Constable of The Irish of Ulster*”, submitted to King Richard II in 1399 having earlier pledged from Armagh that he would do so ‘*whether O’Neill comes to your presence or not*’ and would be Constable for the King “*throughout all your land of Ireland.*”*. First becoming Galloglaigh Constables to The O’Neill (Tyrone and Armagh Macdonnells), then Constables to O’Connor (Mayo Macdonnells) they moved c.1430 to Wicklow, only 15 miles from the isolated English colony of Dublin.



Felim O’Connor’s Tomb - Roscommon, Mayo, Connaught.

“*Clann Donnell galloglass of Mayo, Tíreragh, Magh Uladh & Tuath Truim*”–D. MacFirbus). Showing two of eight Galloglaigh carvings, right one with short axe to chest, left with sword. As descendants of Somerled, they are like small replicas of him standing guard for an Irish Chief, even in death. **Clan (Alaxandair) Macdonnell monumental sculpture in Ireland** of Galloglaigh: MacAllister, Macdonnell, MacConnell, MacDaniell, MacOwen, MacKeever, McKeones, etc.

They occupied land around the N/W base of the Wicklow Mountains, positioning themselves between the weakest O’Toole sept (Imaal) and the mostly ragtag, ineffective and crooked bunch of the gaelicised *English Marchers* (‘*rebel English*’) who were supposed to be S/W defensive buffers for the local palemen. (eg the *Lawlesses!*; “*English Marcher Lineages Sth Dublin*”; Maginn; IHS No 134, 2004). The 5th Earl of Kildare daughtered out and during the earldom’s abeyance (losses/weakness) power passed to the more distant and distracted Butlers, Earl of Ormond. The Macdonnells were in fact the most effective Marchers protecting the weak, almost defenceless and virtually abandoned Pale. Their security insurance premium was far superior in effect than the cost of the unreliable Black Rent paid to the O’Tooles & O’Brynes. The walled city of Dublin was tiny and the beleaguered English outpost had no choice and welcomed, or at least condoned, their close presence. John Carragh, head of the Wicklow Macdonnells earned the reputation as “*The Best Captain of [for] the English*” and they were called “*The Constables of the Pale*”. They were a battle hardy and experienced, professional military outfit; they saw an opportunity as peacekeepers in a no-mans land and prospered. For two centuries their possessions were known as “*Clann Donnell’s Countrie*” with the Ballydonnell Sth & Nth townlands still existing on the OS map. The temptation to drink from Ballydonnell Brook was irresistible – I went to water! They took control of these “*Debatable Lands*” by their own force, ie, by sword, between the “*South Dublin Frontier*” and the Wicklows which was later confirmed to them under patronage of the “*Great Earl*”, Gerard Mor Fitzgerald, 8th Earl of Kildare –in effect, the “*High King*” of Ireland. Either way, they would have had to continuously and vigorously defend their position there. Once established, they spread in late 15th century from the Wicklows to Leix (Laois), in time becoming the “*Three Septs of Clandonnell of Leinster*”. Alexander MacTurlough, the expansionary Chief from Baltiboys, Wicklow who had a *Battle* hired to the O’Byrnes there, was first recorded at the “*Great Grange*” (Monksgrange) in 1541 south of Athy (“*Athee*” on map) over-sighting his Battle of Galloglaigh hired to the O’Mores & was later granted extensive land at “*Castleno*” in South Leix by the Crown. Alexander died 1577; Annals of the Four Masters:- “*There were not many sons of Galloglasses in Ireland at that time who were more wealthy or who were more bountiful or munificent than he*”. Tinnakill was not their first location; it was the last, but the best. So, they first spread to the south of Leix occupying extensive lands in at least two locations which were later granted to them in 1563, as well as Tinnakill which included the existing castle ruin. They did not build Tinnakill Castle; the O’Connors Faly (Offaly) did, and they owned it until attained in 1551. However, the Macdonnells did rebuild it in fine style – “*Its Castellans of old derived from an illustrious and chivalrous race*”. (*Tennekille Castle – Glimpses of The Macdonnells* by Sir E Borrowes; UJA 2/1; 1854).

¹ All above: “*Somerled to John of Islay: Ragnall and Alexander Og*”; WDH Sellar Esq (**Lord Lyon King of Arms - current**); Clan Donald Magazine No. 14, pp. 25-30. All respected authorities incl. Norman McDonald, Historian & Archivist to High Council of Clan Donald; R A McDonald, *Kingdom of Isles**, (1997); Dr. W.D. Lamont, *Alexander of Islay, Son of Angus Mór*, in: SHR 60, (1981), p. 160; Dr Kenneth Nicholls*, GWS Barrow*, M Brown, John Marsden, etc, etc.

² “*MS ‘1467’ which must always be the sheet anchor of our genealogical faith*”- “*The Clan Donald*”, VOL 2; p84. But the Revs. Angus disregarded their strict rule & faith here; Alasdair Mor has no son Ragnhall in the MS. “*McDonald & McRuari Pedigrees MS 1467*”; W. Highland Notes & Queries; 1st (28), 1986; WDH Sellar Esq, Lord Lyon. “*Celtic Scotland- A history of Ancient Alban*”; Skene, 1890, VOL 3, p468 - “*The Clan Alaster of Erin and Alban [from Alex. Og] and the Clan Sheehy of Munster [from Alex. Mor]*”. “*Ragnall mac Alaxandair, oigri (heir) Clainni Alaxandair*” (Ulster Annals) who came from Kintyre 1363 to Tyrone is the MS recorded heir of Alexander Og. (ie, Tyrone Macdonnell Galloglaigh Constables to O’Neill.) Nicholls-“*Scottish Mercenary Kindreds in Ireland*”; p98 -“*Galloglass World*”, Ed Duffy. Dr J Lydon*; “*The Scottish Soldier in Medieval Ireland*”. ‘*Gaelic Warfare in Middle Ages*’, K Simms*, in *Military History of Ireland*; Ed. Bartlett; 1996; p110. **Clan Ranald historian MacVurich, the Slate Historian Hugh, Burke’s Peerage all support the Nicholls/Sellar view: “the McAllisters of Loup in Kintyre also descended from Alexander the younger rather than, as has been previously assumed, from his uncle is certainly correct”.**

A rare early 1563 map below shows the lands of the ex-Wicklow Maelmurry MacEdmund Macdonnell (castle & lands of Raheen & Derry) near Ballylynan, under the much earlier old Irish appellation of **“Feran-Clan-Di-Donnell”** = land of Clan Mac Donnell (ie, was Alexander MacTurlough’s) including the Parishes of Tankardstown, Monksgrange and the northern portion of Killabban.) *Feranclandidonnell* matches what was Maelmurry’s land as per his 1563 patent (Fiant 507), the 1665 W. Petty Civil Survey after the Cromwellian conquest to map 2.5 million acres for the English “Adventures” and the 1680 Books of Survey & Distribution showing what Irish land was rewarded to whom. The old map shows the churches of *Tankerston*, *Grangiomanagh* (Monksgrange) and *Kiliban* as lying within.



(close above) FERANCLANDIDONIL - 1563. Sept of Maelmurry MacEdmund Macdonnell (held 20th part of a Knight’s fee).

The Macdonnells ruled as a ‘lord’ of their own territory, in effect as a *ri tuathe* or petty king. On the other hand, they held an official position as “supreme military commander” (*consabal* meaning) of a professional army to, eg, the Earls of Kildare. They were listed among the **“Principall Gentlemen”** of the County (Hogan, 1878*) with high Irish culture, eg, bard, harpist and produced the prized ‘Tinnakill Dunaire’, religious bardic verse. “*Alexander filius Terenti [Turlough] Generosus*” actually granted 5 townlands to Gerard Mor Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, before 1524 at an annual rent of 3 marks forever. (JCKAS VOL IV No 3 Jan 1904; ‘*Macdonnells of Tinnakill Castle*’; Lord Walter Fitzgerald). Although the Galloglaigh constables and families naturally became “Irish” over 300 years they were still regarded as “Scots” as late as 1600 (as were the Antrim McDonnells of course). Lord Walter Fitzgerald describes the Constables as **“each a member of the Highland Scottish clan of MacDonnell, whose Chiefs were styled “Lords of the Isles.”** This is why they’re not particularly well remembered (until recently). They were neither regarded as “Old Irish, “Old English” (Anglo Irish/Norman), nor “New English” (Tudor re-conquest period), and were in “Queens County” for less than three centuries as a major land holding family, to c.1700. This is why they are not in the two common old lists, *Seven Septs of Leix* or the seven families of “new” English settlers. And in fact they weren’t either!

The Macdonnell galloglaigh supported the Earl of Kildare (*Silken Thomas*) in his rebellion against King Henry VIII in the attempt to win Ireland independence in 1534 and lost 100’s of men. So did Brian O’Connor, last King in Irish law in Offaly. When the Geraldines were defeated, the remaining Macdonnells later ostensibly became the “King’s Galloglass” but they were not given land as reward for helping the English clear Leix and Offaly for plantation. They did not assist the Tudors to war against Leinster clans and clear the lands for plantation – no mention of that in the relevant accounts anywhere. New English garrisons were imported and the protestant Earl of Ormond used his many MacSweeny Galloglaigh (our opposing Galloglaigh faction). Our *Battles* were in the other Provinces, mainly Connaught (against the Burkes) and Munster. They were already principle landed proprietors and were either confirmed in it under Henry VIII’s scheme called “Surrender & Regrant” for significant Irish Chiefs, giving English titles and pensions in lieu of “coyne & livery”, or, in Tinnakill’s case, they were given it in exchange of land they already had south of ‘Maryborough’ (now Portlaoise) just NE of Abbeyleix (Fiant 725). It’s highly likely that one *Battle* (>100) of Macdonnell galloglaigh warriors were billeted on Tinnakill land on direct hire by O’Connor Faly, or by under Earl of Kildare direction. The very same Macdonnell Chief, *Cawlaghe McTyrrelagh* of Killeany, moved from *Raheendonnell* (a small rath fort in “*Lordship of Touayou*”) 3 miles NW of Abbeyleix, to Tinnakill, 1563 (Fiant 498). Macdonnells married into the O’More, O’Dunne, and O’Dempsey clans. They had been appointed several times for rebellion with these clans, being pardoned many times and sometimes losing their land; later regained. State Papers report **“the Macdonnells are a naughty race and prone to rebellion”** - “*Description of Ireland 1598**”; Hogan; 1878.



Painting © Osprey Publishing by Seán ÓBrógáin for **“GALLOGLASS 1250-1600”**; author, Fergus Cannan; 2010.

The factionally aligned Clan Donald MacSheehy Galloglaigh (descended from Alexander Mor) were no less naughty and their large contingent of 8 *Battles* was fiercely loyal to the Fitzgerald Earls of Desmond who revolted against Queen Elizabeth I in 1579. Here is a powerful and stirring painting depicting Chief Maurice MacSheehy fig. 2, Constable of the Desmond Galloglaigh and his men rescuing the gaelicised Earl, but losing 40 soldiers. (historic event—were ambushed). Maurice is wearing a good quality burgonet helmet from Germany and has his high status gold foil decorated axe. (viz: see my Part 1). Wounded fig. 4 has only his scion left. Note saffroned *leine croichs*. Desmond lost & his estates were planted with English.

A famous Tinnakill Macdonnell, Calvagh MacWalter, from Wicklow "*Galloglass of The Mountain*" (nephew to Hugh Boy, head of Tinnakill) was the man to pull the Earl of Ormond from his horse at a parley and the Earl was then held to ransom by the O'More Chief, Onwy MacRory in 1600. Calvagh then fought to the death protecting Onwy who was wounded and also died later. The clan decapitated Onwy at his own request so the English could not spike his head on Dublin Castle! However, Calvagh MacWalter's head was taken to the English Lord Deputy, then spiked no doubt as the woodcut engraving here shows:



"Image of Ireland", by J. Derrick; 1586... "Sir Henry Sidney leaves Dublin Castle...." *"These trunkless heads do plainly show, each rebels fatal end / And what a heinous crime it is, the Queen for to offend!"*

In the 1600 English State Papers, Calvagh is recorded as "*the most stirring and bloody rebel in Leinster*"...and, after Onwy MacRory O'More, ... "*the second best leader in the country*". Family heads often maintained false allegiance with authorities to save being attainted and losing property and....their heads. They directed the rebelling and fighting to be done by less important and junior members. Macdonnells from the Wicklows and Queens County formed the main "heavy infantry" for Onwy (300; '*best furnished for war ever seen*' – Cal. Carew MSS) when he defeated the Earl of Essex in the famous 1598 battle, at "*The Pass of The Plumes*" at Cashel (slew >500). At this battle, Calvagh killed Capt Boswell and Lieut. Gardiner. It should be obvious now that the so-called "*Kings/Queens Scottici Royal Galloglass*" Macdonnells were definitely not on the English side! Maelmurry MacEdmund of Raheen lost his lands in 1600 for rebelling with the O'Mores, as did the Wicklow Macdonnells. This reduced Sept probably then moved to Tinnakill. Because Tinnakill was the most significant Macdonnell stronghold surviving it was assumed it was their first and this was perpetuated. (common mistake).

THE LAST LORD OF TENNEKILLY

James Macdonnell, "Lord of The Manor and Castle of Tennekilly" (Letters Patent from King Charles 1, 1637 – therefore James was a *Tenant-in-Chief* directly to the King). 'Manor' is a feudal entitlement to legal and administrative powers, etc. He was also elected Burgess of both "*Marriborough*", capital of Queens' County and of Ballinekill as well as a Member of the Kilkenny Parliament. He was a very prominent member of the counties "landed gentry" before the 17th century English Civil Wars (Three Kingdoms). The patent was sought because Lord deputy of Ireland, Wentworth & his "New English" adventurers were using the so called (concocted) "Defective Titles" legislation to steal land away from the Irish and Old English (Anglo-Irish), both Catholic – one of the main reasons for the Irish Civil war. Finally, in 1638, the Patent received 'a remedy against Defective Titles' (for a huge fee of course). Civil broke out in 1641 in Ulster and James was a Colonel in the Confederate Catholics at age 24. There was a £400 reward on his head, an astronomical amount then. (King Charles II – £1000 reward). After Cromwell savaged and devastated the country and people, James was on transplantation orders to the barren "*Connaught - or hell*" in 1653 but possibly he avoided this as he is shown at Tinnakill by the *Petty Survey* 1659. He died in London in Aug 1661, ie, at Restoration time, most likely trying to see King Charles II to get his lands restored, as did the distantly related and highly influential Marquis of Antrim (Randall Macdonnell³) who was eventually successful because the King personally wrote and leant on the Court of Claims ("*Royal interference*"⁴). James' Patent was either taken for safekeeping from Tinnakill by the Marquis when it is recorded that in 1641 that he stayed in this vicinity for three months, and some say visited Tinnakill Castle, or James' wife, Margaret, took it to Glenarm. Rev. George Hill ("*MacDonnells of Antrim*"; 1895; pps 257-8, 327-8) wrote that she went to Glenarm with her family for protection and stayed there until c.1690. In 1854, J Huband-Smith, MA-MRIA, was given access to the Letters Patent which were in the Earl of Antrim's Deeds & Muniments, Glenarm. He translated the Latin and published it in the *Ulster Journal Of Archaeology (UJA)*, No 6, Apr 1954. The Patent cannot be found now unfortunately but I do hold out hope for its eventual discovery because it is the only known historic legal document of land ownership for all the propertied Clan Donald Galloglaigh dynasties.

As a relevant & interesting aside:- In the same year as James died in London (cause unknown; plague, murdered?) and the Earl of Antrim was in the Tower, 1661, Oliver Cromwell's body was exhumed from Westminster Abbey and was subjected to the ritual of a posthumous execution. His body was hanged in chains at Tyburn and finally, his disinterred body was thrown into a pit, while his severed head was displayed on a pole outside Westminster Hall until 1685. The Covenanter, Archibald Campbell, 1st Marquess of Argyll, 8th Earl of Argyll, chief of Clan Campbell, was also executed by beheading on the Scottish Maiden, taking place on 27 May 1661. His head was placed on the same spike upon the west end of the Tollbooth as that of Montrose had previously been exposed.

These trunkless heads do plainly show, each Regicide's fatal end / and what a heinous crime it is, the King for to offend!

...continued PART III.

³ On the Restoration, in 1660, he went to England to pay his respects at court; but the king refused to see him, and he was sent to the Tower, where he remained until March, 1661, when he was liberated on bail, and sent to Ireland, to undergo such punishment as the government might think fit. After a long inquiry into the charges made against him, he was dismissed by the Lords Justices, with leave to go to England; when Lord Massarene, to whom his estates had been granted, continuing to persecute him, he was compelled to produce, in the English House of Commons, the letter of Charles I which gave him orders for taking up arms.

⁴ "*Court of Claims - Submissions and Evidence*", 1663; Ed. G. Tallon; Irish Manuscripts Commission; 2006; pps. (Intro) xiv-xv.