

## The Uí Briain, the De Burgos and the Hiberno-Norman settlement of Limerick

CATHERINE SWIFT

Norman dynasts who were awarded lands in Ireland have tended to be examined as the creators of novel aristocratic power blocks whose power derived from their military capabilities. In this paper, it is suggested that the early de Burgo leaders profited greatly from their progenitor's marriage alliance with the daughter of Domnall Mór Ua Briain, king of Munster at the time of the Norman invasion. Careful reading of contemporary sources illustrates how the thirteenth-century De Burgos, like their Uí Briain predecessors, built up local power-bases in Limerick in ecclesiastical as well as secular circles and how such processes impacted on the careers of the wider kin-group of both families and on those they patronised.

The hero of the first Norman attack on Limerick city was a young man named Meiler Fitz Henry, grandson of an adulterous affair between the English king Henry I (son of William the Conqueror) and the beautiful Welsh daughter of the king of Deheubarth in south Wales. He was small and dark, with a stocky chest and sinewy arms and, according to his cousin, he was both impatient and ferociously brave. Raymond the Fat, another cousin, had led a raiding party from Dublin, comprising some 120 knights and 700 archers. Arriving at the banks of the Shannon, at a time when the swirling tide protected the island fortifications, they halted at the river's edge. Norman chroniclers say that Meiler yelled at his companions to attack, and calling (in French so it is reported) on St David of Wales as his patron saint, he drove his white horse into the river and under the city walls, ignoring the stones and spears with which the Viking defenders were bombarding him.<sup>1</sup>

There were a number of reasons for a Norman attack on Limerick. It was a maxim of twelfth-century Irish Brehon lawyers that anyone who wished to rule Ireland needed to control the three estuaries of the Liffey, the Suir and the Shannon or in another words, the important Viking trading settlements: Dublin, Waterford and Limerick.<sup>2</sup> These were viewed by the Irish as bustling, fortified settlements, ruled by warriors who equipped their horses with saddles, dressed in silks and, most importantly, deployed great fleets which were available to Irish and indeed other kings for hire.<sup>3</sup> The continued existence of Viking Limerick as a definable entity into the twelfth century is witnessed by records such as that of the *Annals of Tigernach* for 1130 which states that 'The treasures of Clonmacnois were discovered with the Foreigners of Limerick' or that of 1145 'A great defeat by the fleet of Ó Conchobhair [king of Connacht] on the fleet of the men of Munster and the Foreigners of Limerick at Buinne in Bheithe<sup>4</sup> on the Shannon'.

<sup>1</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Expugnatio Hibernica: the conquest of Ireland* ed. A.B. Scott & F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978) II, 9, pp 154-9, 266; E. Mullally (ed.), *The Deeds of the Normans in Ireland* (Dublin, 2002) pp 139-41.

<sup>2</sup> *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 1779: 28-9; Katharine Simms, 'The contents of later commentaries on the Brehon law tracts', *Ériu*, 49 (1998) pp 32-3.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Gwynn (ed.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas Part III* (reprint, Dublin, 1991) pp 100-1, 270-5.

<sup>4</sup> Identified by Ó Corráin with a Beagh castle in Westmeath in his *E. Onomasticon*, linked to an island south of Athlone but Google maps only reveals a Beagh castle, on the Shannon north of Askeaton.

By the twelfth century, the annalists tell us that such ships could be transported on wheels across land when necessary so use of the waterways was not limited to easily navigable waters.<sup>5</sup> The fleets of Limerick were not, therefore, apparently impeded by the shallows and waterfalls immediately to the north of their walled city and could exploit the open waters of Loch Derg and Loch Ree as well as profiting from goods brought up the estuary from the Atlantic sailing routes.

Apart from the ships and the wealth of Viking Limerick, however, the local king of north Munster (otherwise known as Thomond), Domnall Mór Ua Briain, was an important retainer of the Irish high-king of Connacht, Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, in his role as leader of the native opposition to the Normans. Indeed, Domnall's step-brother was the son of Ruaidrí's mother although such relationships were not unusual in a world where short-lived, sequential marriages between the leading Irish families were commonplace.<sup>6</sup> The men of Munster had been among those receiving gifts from Ruaidrí at Athlone in 1166, and in 1173-4, the two (Ruaidrí and Domnall Mór) had mounted joint attacks on Norman bases at Kilkenny, Waterford and Thurles. This last had been a particularly bloody encounter, leaving Earl Strongbow with no choice but to hole up in Waterford for six months and was viewed by the Normans as being all the more disgraceful in that Domnall had vowed allegiance to Henry II at Waterford on the banks of the Suir in 1171, agreeing to an annual tribute and entering into 'the very strongest bonds of submission'.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that the peace treaty of Windsor, negotiated by the archbishop of Tuam, the abbot of Clonfert, and by Ruaidrí's chancellor 'Master Laurence' (quite possibly Laurence O'Toole of Dublin) in 1175 and issued in the names of Ruaidrí and Henry II, may have led Domnall and Ruaidrí to fall out.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, long-term alliances between Connacht and Thomond kings had never been a characteristic feature of the kingships west of the Shannon.

The tightknit and quarrelsome Irish élite being what it was, Domnall Mór Ua Briain was also the son-in-law of the man who had originally invited the Normans to Ireland, the hoarse-voiced old warrior from Wexford, Diarmait mac Murchada. Whatever had led to that alliance, the pair appear to have terminally parted by the mid-1170s and Diarmait's son, Domnall Caomhánach, was one of the raiding party attacking Limerick in which Meiler had distinguished himself.<sup>9</sup> The Leinster prince followed the attack up by raiding through central Munster into north Cork<sup>10</sup> while the Normans chose instead to focus on Scattery Island, the first important shelter for fleets entering the Shannon estuary. Ruadhri Ua Conchobair then took a hand, bringing a fleet down the Shannon to Killaloe. Eventually, the Norman commander, Raymond the Fat, managed to persuade both the Connacht and the Uí Briain rulers to renew their various pledges of loyalty to the Angevin emperor, Henry II, while he himself departed to fight as a hired mercenary in Cork. He therefore handed over Limerick city to Domnall Mór as the local authority<sup>11</sup> but, as the Norman chronicler recorded, Raymond's troops:

<sup>5</sup> Séamus Ó hInnse (ed.), *Miscellaneous Irish Annals* (Dublin, 1947) 1151.

<sup>6</sup> AFM 1168; AT 1175. Anthony Candon, 'Power, politics and polygamy: women and marriage in late pre-Norman Ireland', in Damian Bracken & Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century: reform and renewal* (Dublin, 2006) pp 106-27.

<sup>7</sup> AI 1171; *Expugnatio* I §31, pp 92-5.

<sup>8</sup> Marie-Therese Flanagan, *Irish society, Anglo-Norman settlers, Angevin kingship: interactions in Ireland in the late twelfth century* (Oxford, 1989) pp 230, 236, 246-53.

<sup>9</sup> AT 1173, 1174, MIA 1176.

<sup>10</sup> MIA 1176; AI 1176.

<sup>11</sup> MIA 1176, AT 1176; *Expugnatio* §II.14, pp 166-7; AI 1176.

had scarcely crossed over the far end of the bridge [when] they suddenly saw that it had been broken down at the other end and this city, so strongly fortified, well furnished with fine buildings and full to overflowing with provisions gathered in from every quarter, had been set on fire in four different places.

That was the end of Norman involvement with Limerick city for the remainder of Domnall's reign.

Domnall Mór Ua Briain was the late twelfth-century successor to the famous tenth-century king Brian Boru, whose dynastic base had been at Killaloe, at the south-western tip of Loch Derg. By the twelfth century, the surviving records are often focussed on the activities of Uí Briain kings outside this core area, in the modern counties of Limerick, Kerry or east of Lough Derg in what is now north Tipperary though identifying precise boundaries of their various kingdoms is almost impossible. If it is reasonable to assume that the entire over-kingdom was more or less that represented by the medieval diocese of Killaloe,<sup>12</sup> it must be acknowledged that, in every reign, the power of an Ua Briain king was modified by that enjoyed by his various siblings with obvious consequences for the amount of land under his personal control.

In the generation of Domnall Mór's grandfather, at the beginning of the twelfth century, for example, royal authority was divided between Muirchertach Mór, king of Ireland, ally of Norman settlers in north Wales, correspondent of the Archbishop of Canterbury and ruler of Limerick while his brother Diarmait was identified with the subordinate role of king of Munster.<sup>13</sup> After a period of exile amongst the Ulaid, Diarmait submitted to his brother in Cashel and Lismore in 1093. He was married to Sadhbh, daughter of the southern Munster king, Tadhg Mac Carthaig, and died at the church settlement of Cork in 1118.<sup>14</sup> His son, Conchobor na Cathrach,<sup>15</sup> apparently had descendants in north Cork in the later barony of Clangibbon and fought against Leinster forces with Waterford and Kilkenny allies during his career.<sup>16</sup> However, when he became king of Munster in 1114, Diarmait is said to have banished Muirchertach from Limerick, sending him north to the original dynastic base at Killaloe. It didn't last; Muirchertach returned the following year and banished him in turn – a fact which underlines the importance of having control over the Viking city for twelfth-century Uí Brian rulers.<sup>17</sup>

Domnall Mór's father, Toirdelbach, in contrast to the south Munster focus of his father and brother, seems to have spent large periods of his career in the west where he had allies in north Kerry and the Dingle peninsula.<sup>18</sup> He also spent time in Limerick, apparently in refuge,<sup>19</sup> while, in a major battle at Móin Mór (south-west of Mallow)<sup>20</sup> in 1151, his followers included both his two nephews, the lord of Uí Chaisin in central Clare and important members of what appear to have been local Clare families such as the Ó Dedaig (O'Dea), Uí Seancháin (Shanahans), Uí Grada (O'Gradys), Uí Chuinn (Quinns),

<sup>12</sup> D. Gleeson, 'The diocese of Killaloe in the thirteenth century', *NMAJ*, 1 (1936-9) pp 142-3.

<sup>13</sup> AFM 1118; Walter Fröhlich (ed.), *The letters of St Anselm of Canterbury*, vol. 3 (Kalamazoo, 1994) §426-9, pp 201-6; Anthony Candon, 'Muirchertach Ua Briain, Politics and Naval Activity in the Irish Sea, 1075 to 1119', in Gearoid Mac Niocaill (ed.), *Keimelia: Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in memory of Tom Delaney* (Galway, 1979) pp 397-415.

<sup>14</sup> AI 1092, 1093, 1118; T. Ó Donnchadha (ed.), *An Leabhar Muimneach* (Dublin, 1940) p. 338.

<sup>15</sup> Died AT 1142.

<sup>16</sup> AT 1134.

<sup>17</sup> AI 1114, 1115; see also AI 1125 when Cormac mac Carthaig took control of Limerick for a brief period.

<sup>18</sup> AI 1125; (AT 1138, 1143). AFM 1151; MIA 1152.

<sup>19</sup> AFM 1151, AT 1151.

<sup>20</sup> D. Ó Corráin, *E-Onomasticon*, 21631.

Uí Ócáin (Hogans), the Ó Loingsigh (Lynches) and the Uí Eichthighirn (Aherns).<sup>21</sup> Toirdelbach also founded the Cistercian settlement at Monasternenagh outside Croom in central Limerick c. 1148 with substantial lands around Fedamore and Lough Gur amongst others and this foundation subsequently established a daughter house at Abbeydorney, in Kerry by 1154.<sup>22</sup> In short, Toirdelbach's arena of operations seems to have been rather different though overlapping with that of his father Diarmait.

Domnall Mór's own siblings included a Brian of Sliabh Bladhma<sup>23</sup> or Slieve Bloom and such an eastern location may be connected to the fact that Domnall's mother was Raghnailt daughter of the Uí Fhógarta of southern Éile (or Ely) in Tipperary. Another sibling was Muirchertach Dúin na Sgiath or Donaskeigh in the parish of Rathlynin, north-west of Cashel.<sup>24</sup> In the previous generation, the leader of an alternative dynastic line, Conchobhar, grandson of Muirchertach Mór through his son Domnall, was identified as lord of *Ur-Mhumhan* or Ormond (in north Tipperary) in 1151.<sup>25</sup> In the course of his long career, Domnall Mór himself fought campaigns in the region of modern Kerry<sup>26</sup> but for most of his life he appears to have been active in and around the great central plain of Munster.<sup>27</sup>

A particular interest in eastern Munster, rather than Clare or Kerry, is also indicated by Domnall Mór's own church foundations of Fermoy in 1170; Kilcooly in 1184 (3 miles east of Urlingford), Holy Cross in 1185/6 and the re-foundation of Inishlounaght in 1187 – 2 miles west of Clonmel. Given the history of his military exploits, it appears that this pattern may represent a tendency to establish such monasteries on lands newly acquired from his enemies or only under marginal control – a habit which was shared by his contemporary, Diarmait mac Murchada of Leinster.<sup>28</sup>

While it is thus difficult to establish clear dynastic foci for individual Uí Briain rulers (which, indeed, may not even have existed at this period), it is clear that leading members of the family could have more specific regional interests as well as, on occasion, ranging widely over the entirety of Munster during the twelfth century. Caitríona Devane has recently drawn attention to the seventeenth-century genealogical tradition that Domnall Mór built castles at Adare and Croom, the latter being the area in which his father, Tairdelbach, had founded Monasternenagh. Devane also refers to the work of Laurence Dunne who has pointed to the identically sized and styled two-light windows at both Adare castle and Monasternenagh, suggesting that this central Limerick location was of high importance in the Uí Briain kingdom during the reigns of both Domnall and his father.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, a late eleventh-century coin hoard from Adare, as well as another from near Limerick, may also imply a royal Uí Briain presence in the area from that date.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>21</sup> AT 1151, AFM 1151, MIA 1151, A.Clon 1141.

<sup>22</sup> CDH I 136 Roger Stalley, *The Cistercian monasteries of Ireland* (Yale, 1987) pp 240, 248.

<sup>23</sup> AFM 1169; *Leabhar Muimneach*, p. 338.

<sup>24</sup> AI 1168.

<sup>25</sup> AFM 1151.

<sup>26</sup> MIA 1176; AI 1175, 1177.

<sup>27</sup> AT 1170-71, 1173, 1174, AFM 1175, 1177, 1192.

<sup>28</sup> Stalley, *Cistercian monasteries*, pp 244-8; C. Swift, 'Follow the money: the financial resources of Diarmait Mac Murchada' in Emer Purcell *et al.*(eds), *Clerics, kings and Vikings: essays on medieval Ireland in honour of Donnchadh Ó Corráin* (Dublin, 2015) pp 96-7; Harold Mytum, 'The location of early churches in northern County Clare' in S.M. Pearce (ed.), *The early church in western Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1982) pp 351-61.

<sup>29</sup> Caitríona Devane, 'The Black Castle of Adare – the history of a medieval castle', *NMAJ*, 56 (2016) p. 61 Laurence Dunne, 'Adare Castle: raising bridges and raising questions', in Conleth Manning (ed.), *From Ringforts to Fortified Houses: studies on castles and other monuments in honour of David Sweetman* (Bray, 2007) p. 159.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Dolley, 'The medieval coin hoards of Thomond', *NMAJ*, 12 (1969) pp 25-6.

Another and better attested concern of Domnall Mór's was the cathedral at Limerick and he gifted Bishop Briccius with lands for St Mary's at some date between 1178 to 1185. The surviving charter refers to a donation entitled Ivannacham (Uí Mhannacháin?) from the weir of Mungret to the land of Imailin (=Ballyclogh?)<sup>31</sup> and from the ford of Ceim to the river Shannon. The grant was witnessed by the Cistercian archbishop of Cashel, Muirgheas Ua hEnna, and by Ruaidrí Ua Gráda – both families closely affiliated with the Uí Briain. The precise extent of Uí Briain control around Mungret and Limerick in this era is not entirely clear but the Uí Enna, the dynasty to which the archbishop belonged, may well be linked to the parish of Cluonona (*Cluain Enna*), immediately north-west of Mungret on the seventeenth-century Down Survey maps.<sup>32</sup> If Devane's argument that Domnall Mór had built a castle at Adare (south-west of Mungret) is valid, the implication would seem to be that Mungret was land that, at the end of the twelfth century, is likely to have been a long-term Ua Briain possession. It is also worth noting that the related family of Ua Conaing, who fought in Domnall Mór's army in 1185, gave their name to Carrigunnell castle in the parish of Kilkeedy,<sup>33</sup> immediately to the north of Mungret and Domnall Mór's son Donnchad was in possession of this castle in 1210. It is probably not unreasonable to presume that the entire barony of Popalbrien (the people of the Uí Briain), stretching from Limerick city to Croom at the time of the Down Survey, was under Uí Briain control in this era and that Domnall Mór's gift of land in the vicinity of Mungret and Ballyclogh to St Mary's Cathedral was a donation of what was, at the time, well-established Uí Briain land.

The opportunities to donate such lands, however, changed with the arrival of John, the youngest son of Henry II, in 1185 with a fleet of 60 ships.<sup>34</sup> The chronicler of the first Norman arrival, which had taken place some fifteen years earlier, was scathing about John's visit as a spoilt teenager's escapade. He reported that the new arrivals treated the Irish with derision and contempt despite the fact that those of the better class 'having been hitherto loyal to the English and disposed to be peaceable' went to meet him at Waterford to receive him with a kiss of peace. As a result, the Irish kings are said to have left, going to Domnall Mór and saying John was 'a stripling who listened only to youthful advice' who offered no hope of long-term, stable government.<sup>35</sup>

John's 1185 visit seems, however, to have changed the dynamics of the Irish conquest. Instead of marcher lords whose parents had intermarried with Welsh locals and who were prepared to settle in Ireland and make alliances with Irish kings on equal terms, there was now a number of speculative grants to Angevin court favourites, many of whom had extensive interests outside the island. Accompanying John in 1185 were Philip of Worcester and Theobald Walter. The latter was the brother of Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury as well as being one of the king's justices and by the end of a mere eight months in Ireland, Theobald had been awarded the district known as Ormond, as well as the borough of Killaloe and five and a half cantreds of Limerick while Philip had been offer-

<sup>31</sup> Brian Hodkinson, *The Black Book of Limerick: Placename Index* (<http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/Media.10341.en.pdf>) fns 15, 103.

<sup>32</sup> See TCD Down survey under Limerick barony of Pobalbrien: <http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Poblebryan&c=Limerick>.

<sup>33</sup> MIA 1210; Hodkinson, *Black Book placenames*, fn. 58. The area of Kilkeedy is also in the area known as the cantred of Esclun and the Uí Enna are identified with the Aes Cluana in genealogical texts. See D. Ó Corráin, 'Dál Cais Church and State', *Ériu*, 24 (1973) pp 53, 58. For detailed discussion of much of the evidence, see Paul MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland: territorial, political and economic divisions* (Dublin, 2008) pp 187-8 and also *ibid.*, 'The church lands of the diocese of Limerick: reconstruction and history', *NMAJ*, 53 (2013) pp 102-4.

<sup>34</sup> AFM 1185; CDI I §74.

<sup>35</sup> *Expugnatio Hiberniae*, §II 36 pp 237-45.

ed much of southern Tipperary.<sup>36</sup> The nature of their settlements, if any, in the immediate aftermath of these grants is not known but the annalists did link to John's visit the building of castles at Ardfinnan and Tiobraid Fhachtna (Tibberaghny) on either side of the River Suir in south Tipperary.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the *Black Book of Limerick* states that while at Ardfinnan, John also issued a charter confirming the ownership, by St Mary's Cathedral, of four ploughlands to the north of the city, around the Groody river.<sup>38</sup> The south Tipperary lands may have been border territories between the Uí Briain and the Mac Carthaigh of Desmond and this may, perhaps, explain why the Normans considered it suitable ground for potential take-over. It is not clear, however, why John considered he had authority over church land in the Limerick region, except, perhaps, by virtue of Domnall Mór's original submission to his father, Henry II in 1172 or the acceptance by Irish bishops of Henry II's authority over them all at the Council of Cashel in the same year.<sup>39</sup>

Domnall Mór seems to have fought to stop the Tipperary settlements. He was defeated at Tibberaghny in 1185 but *MacCarthy's Book* refers to his slaughter of many Foreigners at Thurles in 1192. However, an attack by the original Leinster colonists got as far as the west bank of the Shannon at Killaloe and despite being defeated there, they did erect castles at Kilfeacle and at Knockgraffon.<sup>40</sup> Domnall Mór seems to have made a counter-push as far as Offaly but his main concern seems to have been to restrain the Meic Carthaigh rather than the Normans and he is said to have agreed to the Norman building of a castle, at Brí Uis (Bruis, north of the Glen of Aherlow) in 1193 for that purpose.

The Kilfeacle castle came under the control of yet another Angevin court personality: William de Burgo, brother of Hubert de Burgo, a key figure in John's administration. This was only one part of William's lands; he may have been in Ireland as early as 1185<sup>41</sup> and an undated charter states that he was granted half a cantred at Tibberaghny apparently before John gained the Angevin kingship in 1199.<sup>42</sup> By 1200, William de Burgo was also being granted lands in Ardpatrick and Tullabracky, he had gained control of the territory in central Tipperary once called Eoghanacht Chaisil and he possessed a cantred in west Limerick at Kileedy.<sup>43</sup> De Burgo thus seems to have acquired lands over which the Uí Briain had fought during the previous three generations and these lands were located on either side of what appears to have been the Uí Briain Limerick heartlands between the Viking city and Croom.

One reason for de Burgo's success in acquiring some of the border lands of the Uí Briain lordship may have been a marriage to Domnall Mór's daughter. This is only recorded in the early fifteenth-century *Book of Lecan*<sup>44</sup> but it may be confirmed by an annal

<sup>36</sup> G.H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1333 with an introduction by Sean Duffy* (Dublin, 2005) pp 188-91. The lands granted by John in Limerick have been mapped by Marie Taylor, 'Early Anglo-Norman settlement patterns in Co. Limerick', *NMAJ*, 53 (2013) p. 124 – fig. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Expugnatio Hiberniae* §II 35 pp 232-5; J.T. Gilbert (ed.), *Chartularies of St Mary's Abbey* (Dublin, 1884) II pp 166-8; AFM 1185. For further discussion of thirteenth century settlements in Tipperary, see C.A. Empey, 'The cantreds of medieval Tipperary', *NMAJ*, xiii (1970) pp 23-9.

<sup>38</sup> J. MacCaffrey (ed.), *Black Book of Limerick* (Dublin, 1907) p. 103 §cxxxv.

<sup>39</sup> Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *The Irish church, its reform and the English invasion* (Dublin, 2017) p. 109.

<sup>40</sup> MIA 1192.

<sup>41</sup> Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*, p. 209.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Blake, 'William de Burgh: progenitor of the Burkes in Ireland', *JGHAS*, 7 (1911) p. 94-5; CDI I §95, §122.

<sup>43</sup> MIA 1192; C.A. Empey, 'The settlement of the kingdom of Limerick' in *England and Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (Dublin, 1981) pp 4-9.

<sup>44</sup> B. Cunningham & Siobhán Fitzpatrick (eds), *Treasures of the Royal Irish Academy Library* (Dublin, 2009) pp 27-8; J. O'Donovan, *The tribes and customs of Hy Many, commonly called O'Kelly's Country* (Dublin, 1843) pp 44-5.

entry for 1201 which indicates that William de Burgo was fighting in conjunction with Domnall Mór's three sons and mounting joint raids into south-west Cork. The enemies they were fighting on that occasion were the Meic Carthaigh rulers of Desmond as well as the Uí Donnabháin dynasty from central Limerick who had been expelled from the area around Bruree at some unknown point and settled in southern Cork.<sup>45</sup>

*Mac Carthy's Book* suggests that William de Burgo was very much the leader of this expedition and certainly after Domnall Mór's death in 1194, power appears to have once again been divided between three Ua Briain siblings. One, Muirchertach, is said to have inherited Domnall's throne but to have been blinded by the Foreigners almost immediately; remarkably, he apparently continued to represent an important faction within the Uí Briain until his death fifty years later.<sup>46</sup> Another Uí Briain sibling was Conchobor Ruad and a third was Donnchad Cairprech. As with many other Uí Briain dynasts, it is impossible to determine whether these men had distinct regional bases or whether, in fact, the sphere of their respective authorities was constantly in flux throughout northern Munster during the entirety of their careers.

De Burgo, in contrast, can be clearly located in both south east and west Limerick. His regional importance is also indicated by the fact that he was also the only man to survive as an independent tenant in chief in King John's bestowal of what is termed the 'honour of Limerick' or the entire kingdom of Thomond to William de Briouze in January 1201. This overrode all previous Angevin grants in north Munster in return for 5000 marks to be paid in annual instalments of 500 marks per year. In addition, King John kept the city of Limerick, the gift of all bishoprics and abbeys, the cantred of the Ostmen and the 'Holy Isle' (Scattery Island?) in his own hands and he later added the district of Tradere (modern Bunratty) to his domain as well as claiming, apparently, the northern banks of the Shannon estuary amongst the Corca Baiscinn.<sup>47</sup> Theobald Walter, as a previous recipient of one of John's speculative grants, was forced to obtain a charter from de Briouze, making him a mere sub-tenant while Philip of Worcester (another early grantee) initially went to war with de Briouze before eventually submitting to the king's authority.<sup>48</sup> However De Briouze was only briefly in Ireland before being called to join the Angevin king in France in 1202 and so had little time to establish any long-lasting lordship.<sup>49</sup>

In the *Annals of Inisfallen* no mention is made of de Briouze's role as ruler of 'the honour of Limerick'. In contrast, William de Burgo is clearly described as the local leader of the Normans in Munster. In 1201 de Burgo was raiding again southwards, taking the taxes and prisoners thus gained to the city of Limerick which appears to have acted as his military base in this period. He then headed north to Connacht to instal Cathal Crobderg as Connacht king. Cathal had raided Munster in 1195 and 1196<sup>50</sup> and de Burgo's relations with him must have been complicated by the fact that King John, in another of those

<sup>45</sup> AI 1201; MIA 1201; K.W. Nicholls, 'The development of lordship in county Cork', in C. Buttimer (ed.), *County Cork: History and Society*, x (Dublin, 1993) p. 164 for view that the O'Donovans had moved due to Norman colonists; in contrast, Devane, 'Black Castle', p. 55 suggests that an enforced exodus had possibly occurred by the beginning of the twelfth century.

<sup>46</sup> AFM 1194, MIA 1194, 1142. It is possible that subsequent references are to another Muirchertach as it was not unknown for Irish lords to have multiple sons with the same name and in any event, CDI occasionally spells the name as Mariadec and sometimes as Muriad Obren e.g. CDI §404, §669 although the Irish records only refer to a Muirchertach. For his later activities in Tipperary, especially in Ormond and Ely O'Carroll, see Gleeson, 'the diocese of Killaloe', p. 145, A. Clon., 1220; CDI I 2760.

<sup>47</sup> CDI I §106 §626.

<sup>48</sup> CDI I §146 §147 §148, §165, §169, §170; Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*, pp 220-1; AI 1201. Colin Veach, *Lordship in Four Realms: The Lacy Family 1166-1241* (Manchester, 2014) p. 111.

<sup>49</sup> W.L. Warren, *King John* (2nd edition, London, 1978) p. 194.

<sup>50</sup> ALoch Cé, MIA 1195.

generous gestures involving lands he did not actually control, had granted de Burgo rights over the whole of Connacht.<sup>51</sup> Trouble arose between de Burgo and Cathal after they, along with the two Uí Briain brothers, Donnchad Cairprech and Muirchertach, had mounted a joint campaign to Connacht, during which rumours of William's death led to an attack on his locally billeted men and massive losses. In an alternative version of events, William is said to have tried to double-cross Cathal with the aid of the local O'Flahertys, lords of the Galway seas and previous allies of the Uí Briain.<sup>52</sup> Peace was patched up by the local clerics, aided no doubt by family relationships, for Cathal Crobderg, like de Burgo himself, was also married to a daughter of Domnall Mór.<sup>53</sup> Just as he had done and continued to do with his Uí Briain brothers-in-law,<sup>54</sup> de Burgo mounted joint raids with Cathal, this time through the Ua Conchobair heartlands in Roscommon to the northern borderlands around Boyle.

It is at this stage that Meiler Fitz Henry reappeared in the story of Limerick, returning to the scene of his youthful triumph as King John's justiciar or Irish governor, a role he had held since 1199. In 1200, in yet another of King John's speculative grants, he had been granted lands in central Kerry.<sup>55</sup> In 1203, he besieged Limerick, defeating William de Burgo as well as William's allies, Cathal Crobderg and the Uí Briain.<sup>56</sup> This reversal helps to explain the existence of two inquisitions of church lands in the diocese of Limerick, one held under the authority of William de Burgo as 'Vicar of Munster' acting under royal instruction; the other, an almost identical text, authorised by Meiler Fitz Henry 'under the eyes of William de Burgo'.<sup>57</sup> The Uí Briain leadership (in whose lands many of these churches were located) are represented in both texts only by Conchobor Ruad, son of Domnall Mór, who was one of the witnesses. In De Burgo's list, Conchobor is listed alongside Thomas son of Maurice (with lands in south-west Limerick and Clare),<sup>58</sup> Galfridus de Camull and four churchmen; in Meiler Fitz Henry's ratification, the witness list has grown to include 21 names, though Conchobor remains the only diagnostically secular Irishman amongst them.

Whatever status Conchobor may have had as a Norman protégé did him little good for shortly afterwards, following a period in which the annalist describes him as a De Burgo prisoner, he was killed by his brother Muirchertach.<sup>59</sup> He was not the only member of the family to have opted to work with the Normans rather than against them for it was around this time that King John issued a prohibition that the lands of Donatus Ua Briain, bishop of Limerick, were to have no castles erected on them in honour of the bishop's past services in John's 'negotiations'.<sup>60</sup> Given that the new Angevin castle of Limerick was being

<sup>51</sup> These rights may have been granted as early as 1194 but had been retracted by 1204, CDI I 230; Helen Perros, 'Connacht and the Anglo-Normans 1170-1224' in T.B. Barry, R. Frame & K. Simms (eds), *Colony and frontier in medieval Ireland: essays presented to J.F. Lydon* (London, 1995) pp 126-34. This scholar concentrates on Cathal's raids on Limerick, the Uí Briain and the Normans in the earlier part of his career rather than, as here, looking at his later alliances with them.

<sup>52</sup> ALoch Cé 1196, 1202, AFM 1201.

<sup>53</sup> ACIon 1217.

<sup>54</sup> AI 1206.

<sup>55</sup> CDI I §124.

<sup>56</sup> AI 1202, 1203, 1204. A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland* (London, 1968) p. 76 suggests that his actions against De Burgo were undertaken independently by Meiler; an alternative explanation is that he was acting on the orders of King John who did not want de Burgo to have Connacht until he had built royal castles at both Athlone and Limerick; Perros, 'Connacht and the Anglo-Normans', p. 131.

<sup>57</sup> *Black Book of Limerick*, §XXIII, §XXIV pp 25-9.

<sup>58</sup> CDI I §93; Brian Hodkinson, *Who was who in Medieval Limerick*: <http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/Who%20was%20who%20in%20medieval%20Limerick.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> AFM 1202, MIA 1202; AI 1203.

<sup>60</sup> *Black Book of Limerick*, §XXIX p. 38.



fortified in 1212,<sup>61</sup> this was clearly a live issue for the church authorities at St Mary's, located only a few hundred yards away. Given the pre-existing ringwork and the proximity to a Shannon crossing point, it seems likely that the site of King John's castle was always intended to be located in the area of rather lower terrain (but with firm rock for carrying heavy foundations) to the north of the higher ground on which St Mary's itself stands but there may have been some ongoing debates about the location of ancillary buildings.<sup>62</sup> It is also possible that the loss of lands to castle-building may have been a contemporary issue for the wider Uí Briain leadership and their putative base around St Munchin's, immediately to the north of the Angevin castle site. In the absence of excavated data, we can only speculate.<sup>63</sup>

In 1204-5, Bishop Donatus Ua Briain created a cathedral chapter for St Mary's – a common feature of the English bishoprics but one which only begins to appear in Ireland in the second half of the twelfth century beginning with the Dublin foundations of Christchurch and St Patrick's. That of Christchurch was a monastic chapter of Augustinian canons; St Patrick's, in contrast, was very much a diocesan creation of the archbishop of Dublin and intermittent royal justiciar, Henry of London, and a number of his family members held offices there.<sup>64</sup> At Limerick, the earliest canons appear to have been, if not family members, than certainly, long established members of the Uí Briain entourage while the prebends which paid for their upkeep represented both rural churches with a long ancestry in the diocese and rather newer, urban foundations in and around the Viking city.<sup>65</sup>

The most important landed resource for the new chapter appears to be Mungret and its immediate vicinity. T. Macreanachain, a canon paid from common funds, may well be a member of the Meic Rebacháin, a family who were active in Mungret in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and they may, perhaps, also have given their name to the townlands of Ballyanrahan in Kilkeedy.<sup>66</sup> Donnucan Ó Lonnergan, canon of Mungret as well Ó Lonnergan, canon of St Michael's (and possible controller of lands at Croom) share their surname with Domnall h-Úa Lonngargan, bishop of the Dal Cais, in 1158 and his brother Tadg, bishop of Thomond, in 1161. (In the eleventh century, the Ua Longargáin were leaders of the Uí Briain church of Terryglass at the northern end of Lough Derg).<sup>67</sup> M. Ó Conyng, with lands in Crecora, Ardcanny and Kilpeacon was one of the Uí Conaing who gave their name to Carrickogunnell, and Castleconnell. The witnesses endorsing the foundation of the new chapter, all of whom were churchmen, included Muirgheas Ua Enna, the Cashel archbishop who had been a guarantor for Domnall's charter to St Mary's twenty years earlier, as well as the bishop of Killaloe and the abbot of the Uí Briain Cistercian foundation of Monasternenagh or Maigue.

<sup>61</sup> Oliver Davies and David B. Quinn (eds), 'The Irish Pipe Roll of 14 John 1210-1212', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 4 (1941) pp 67-8.

<sup>62</sup> I am grateful to Liam Irwin for discussion of this issue.

<sup>63</sup> It has been suggested that the castle may have been built on an Uí Briain settlement immediately to the north of the walled Viking city, by the church of St Munchin's which is one of the churches mentioned in the diocesan list of 1201: Brian Hodkinson, 'St Munchin's and the Bishop's Palace', *NMAJ*, 53 (2013) pp 283-4.

<sup>64</sup> Eric de St John Brooks, 'Archbishop Henry of London and his Irish connections', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 20 (1930) pp 5, 7. An episcopal chapter was created for diocese of Ross in 1199, at Waterford by 1210 and at Killaloe before, apparently 1215; D. Gleeson, 'The diocese of Killaloe in the thirteenth century', *NMAJ*, 1 (1936-9), p. 143; W.F. Bliss (ed.), *Calendar of entries in the Papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1893) p. 36.

<sup>65</sup> *Black Book of Limerick*, §CXLII, pp 115-17. Placenames identified by Brian Hodkinson: <http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/Media,10341,en.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Paul MacCotter, 'Church lands, of the diocese of Limerick', p. 114; Ballianraghan on the Down Survey.

<sup>67</sup> Ó Corráin, 'Dál Cais – church and dynasty', *Ériu* 24 (1973) pp 56, 59.

This concentration of church lands and ecclesiastical interests in and around Mungret was added to in 1215-1216 when the then bishop of Limerick, Edmund of Aldgate (in London) was ordered to give up the weir, the fisheries and the mill on the Shannon which had apparently originally been part of the parish of St Nicholas to King John. In return, he was granted ten ploughlands of land in the 'cantred of Limerick' – from the lands of OMayl which the citizens of Limerick used to hold with its natives and all its possessions.<sup>68</sup> These probably included the townland of Rathmale (in Mungret parish) as well as the neighbouring lands around the Ballyclogh river.<sup>69</sup> By the period of the next bishop, Herbert de Burgo, Mungret would appear to have become as an episcopal manor, run as a unified estate for the benefit of the cathedral church of St Mary's and apparently linked to the new office of treasurer of the cathedral chapter. This post was originally held by John de St John, prior of the Augustinian foundation at Athassel (said to have been founded by William de Burgo, to the south-east of his manor of Kilfeakle).<sup>70</sup> John de St John had an illustrious career, being later promoted by King John to the rank of Bishop of Ossory and subsequently becoming the treasurer of Ireland. On departing St Mary's, his role as treasurer of the Limerick chapter was passed at Angevin royal command to that of his relative, Geoffrey de St John.<sup>71</sup>

Angevin patronage also impacted on the Uí Briain rulers during this period. On his second visit to Ireland, in 1210, *Mac Carthy's Book* tells how the Thomond and Connacht leadership submitted to King John:

John, king of England, lord of the Galls of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Earl of Anjou came with a great fleet to Waterford. Donnchadh Cairbreach Ó Briain came to him, and he knighted him and gave him Carraig Ó gCoinneall [Carrickogunnell] with its lordship, stipulating an annual rent of three score marks, and the liberation of Muirheartach son of Domhnall Mór Ó Briain. Cathal Croibhdhearg Ó Conchobhair, king of Connacht, came to him with large forces to do him honour.

Having John as a patron in 1210 put the western Irish lords in a very different position from that of the Norman colonists in Ireland, at least initially. John had come to Ireland to exert his authority over such prominent members of the latter as the De Lacys and William Marshal, partly because of their support for De Briouze who had now fallen from favour. In such a context, John was prepared to honour Cathal, offering him a powerful steed with rich accoutrements and riding alongside him, even while he poked fun at the Irishman's dress and habits. William De Burgo, however, who had briefly lost his lands in 1204 before being granted his Munster holdings back, had died in 1205/1206. In 1210 his son was still a minor whose lands were under John's control so the De Burgos were not an important force at the time of the royal visit.<sup>72</sup>

By the time King John was sending John de St John from Limerick to take up his new post as Bishop of Ossory, some five years later, his relationship with his English barons had deteriorated and the lead up to the civil war and the Magna Carta had begun. Part of

<sup>68</sup> CDI I 589; *Black Book of Limerick*, §CXXV pp 103-4.

<sup>69</sup> Brian Hodkinson, *Black Book placenames*: fn. 15, p. 103; MacCotter, 'churchlands', p. 102.

<sup>70</sup> Blake, 'William de Burgh', p. 96.

<sup>71</sup> CDI I §987-8, §998.

<sup>72</sup> Colin Veach, 'King John and Royal Control in Ireland: why William de Briouze had to be destroyed', *English Historical Review*, 129 (2014) pp 1051-78; Sean Duffy, 'King John's expedition to Ireland 1210: the evidence reconsidered', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (1996) pp 1-24.

that deterioration was undoubtedly due to the king's chronic lack of cash after his loss of Normandy in 1204 and his constant campaigning in France. During the Christmas of 1215/1216, money was extracted from many of the Norman settlers in Ireland as well as the citizens of Dublin and in this extensive list, we also find Donnchad Cairprech Ua Briain who paid £400 to have custody of the land of Thomas fitz Maurice<sup>73</sup> as well as engaging in competitive bidding with his brother Muiredach to gain rights over lands in Thomond.<sup>74</sup> Again in July 1221, after King John had died and government was under the control of Herbert de Burgo as regent of the young Henry III, letters were sent to the Irish kings, including Donnchad and Muirchertach and Cathal Crobderg and to Norman colonists such as Richard de Burgo, Patrick de Courcy, and Odo de Barry. This was in an attempt to extract further monies as well as authority from a recently demoted justiciar, Geoffrey de Marisco, who had been the king's representative in Ireland from 1215 to 1221.<sup>75</sup>

De Marisco was also a Limerick land-owner with a manor at Any (in vicinity of Knockainey).<sup>76</sup> It is clear that the Angevin regent, whether because of his de Burgo family interests or not, was very concerned that de Marisco had salted away much of the profits of Ireland during the period of his justiciarship instead of forwarding them to the English court and he transferred the justiciarship to what he clearly felt were the safer hands of the archbishop of Dublin, Henry of London. He demanded that de Marisco give up the king's castles including that of Limerick castle and subsequently added that he must also give up control of the castle of Killaloe.<sup>77</sup> It seems that Geoffrey, like the other Norman landowners of John's reign, had profited from the divisions between the Uí Briain after the death of Domnall Mór and taken over many of the individual estates which had once been within their earlier heartlands.

The period of Hubert de Burgo's regency in England, then, clearly had consequences for the status of the De Burgos in Ireland as well as for their long-term allies, the Uí Briain and Cathal Crobderg of Connacht. Cathal died in 1224 as a loyal follower of the Angevins.<sup>78</sup> There are fifteenth-century claims that Richard de Burgo, William's successor, may have been William's son through an early marriage with an illegitimate daughter of the Angevins rather than with the daughter of Domnall Mór Ua Briain. On the other hand, his father had apparently been active in Ireland since at least the 1190s and as Richard was a minor until 1214, it seems more likely that this is part of the same late and self-glorifying tradition that claimed Baldwin, king of Jerusalem, as an equally important de Burgo ancestor.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup> These lands included five knights' fees in Eleuri in the cantred of Fontymell (in the south-west of Limerick; five knights' fees in Huamerith in Thomond north of the Shannon and a burgage plot within the walled city of Limerick. CDI I §93.

<sup>74</sup> These are said to have been held by John bishop of Norwich whose career was essentially located in England but who was Irish justiciar between 1209 to 1213 while England was under Papal interdict. Warren, *King John*, pp 195-6. Royal Norman claims to perhaps the entire northern shores of the Shannon is indicated by grant of Cratloe in CDI I §633 and two islands of Inismatall and Iniskereth (Inishkeragh or Mutton Island – *inis caoirigh*) off the coast of Miltown Malbay which Archbishop Henry had been given by Donchad Cairprech CDI I §649. Norman raids in Thomond are recorded in MIA 1192.

<sup>75</sup> CDI I §608; §1001, §1015, §1018, §1020, §1037, §1045.

<sup>76</sup> CDI I §139.

<sup>77</sup> First ref to castle of Killaloe = AFM 1207 & A. Clon (latter says castle was not built). A huge hoard of coins was found in the nineteenth century at Corofin, deposited in 1220s including 1041 Anglo-Irish half pence of Prince John pre-1199 and an English penny of Henry III c.1218; Dolley 'medieval coin hoards', pp 26-8.

<sup>78</sup> CDI I §928, §980, §1001, §1155, §1164, §1174, §1402.

<sup>79</sup> T. Ó Raghallaigh, 'Senchas na mBúrcach', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, (1926-7) pp 120-1; Standish Hayes O'Grady (ed.), *Caithréim Thoirdelbhaigh* (London, 1929) I, pp 153-4.

In 1223, Richard de Burgo was given the role of keeper of Limerick castle under the authority of the then justiciar, the eastern-based William Marshal and at that point he was given control over his father's lands and a ship to travel to Ireland.<sup>80</sup> However Richard's interest in Ireland preceded his arrival for in 1219, he had arranged to pay the Angevin crown £1000 for the land of Connacht as well as being prepared to give up three cantreds of land in exchange and these arrangements eventually bore fruit in 1226, after Cathal's son, Aed had proven to be less loyal to the Angevin throne than his father had been.<sup>81</sup> It is clear that, despite his estates in Tipperary and Limerick, control of southern Connacht remained a key objective for Richard de Burgo throughout his career and already by 1232, he had founded the castle of Bungalvy which developed into the city of Galway.<sup>82</sup>

Relationships within Limerick between the De Burgos and the original rulers, the Uí Briain, in the later 1220s is dramatically illustrated in the remarkable letter book of Stephen of Lexington. Stephen was a Cistercian monk from Stanley in Wiltshire, who was sent by the General Council of Clairvaux in 1227/8 to examine long-standing claims that the Irish Cistercian houses which were daughter houses of Mellifont had fallen away from strict observance. Prominent amongst these were the Uí Briain house of Monaster-nenagh or Maigue. The standpoint of the modern historian of Stephen's activities, Barry O'Dwyer, is very much that of church historian but it seems clear that there were specific local and political aspects to the events which took place. Not least of these was the fact that the constable of King John's castle at Limerick, certainly by 1234, was John of Lexington and since we know that Stephen had a brother John in the royal service,<sup>83</sup> there seems to be a strong likelihood of a family connection. Overall control of the castle from 1232 onwards was under Peter de Rivall, appointed treasurer of Ireland for life but while Stephen was carrying out his investigations in Ireland, it had been under the control of Richard de Burgo who had held it since 1223.<sup>84</sup>

In this context, it is worth noting Stephen's letter to the abbot of Furness, asking them to send a new abbot for the monastery of Suir (outside Clonmel) to replace an Irish leadership:

We beg you, if you wish to retain your aforesaid daughter-house in your possession, send quickly one of your monks to us, a humble, calm, kindly wise and discreet man whom we can make abbot in the aforesaid house, and who knows how to conform to the customs of so fierce a people and to seek the support of Lord Richard de Burgo, the justiciar of Ireland.<sup>85</sup>

Another letter, to the community of Suir, is a reply to a plea that Stephen delay his visit to the house until the arrival of the justiciar. He refused the request on the ground that he had already issued an invitation for many abbots to assemble there and he didn't know when the justiciar would be available. He then went to say that Brother D. the prior of Suir, was thinking of flying for refuge to unnamed secular powers. A third letter, addressed to the abbot of Suir, asks that he not leave the foundation but:

<sup>80</sup> CDII §506, §1114, §1117, §1119.

<sup>81</sup> CDII §900; §1402, §1403.

<sup>82</sup> Jacinta Prunty and Paul Walsh, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas No.28: Galway/Gaillimh* (Dublin, 2016) p.1.

<sup>83</sup> Stephen of Lexington, *Letters from Ireland 1228-1229* trans. B.W. O'Dwyer (Kalamazoo, 1982) p. 4; B. Griesser, 'Registrum epistolarum Stephani de Lexington', *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis*, 2 (1946) p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> CDII §1969, §1443, §1216.

<sup>85</sup> *Letters*, §15, pp 34-6.

decide everything with the counsel and the careful consideration of prudent and God-fearing men and to follow the counsel of Lord P. of Clonmel, seeking support and peace in gentleness and modesty in so far as you can from the bailiffs of the lord justiciar and also of the other English and the Irish.<sup>86</sup>

Clonmel was a De Burgo foundation under the over-arching authority of Richard de Burgo in the 1220s.<sup>87</sup> The Cistercian foundation of Suir or Inislounaght had, however, been re-endowed as a daughter house of Monasternenagh by Domnall Mór in 1187 and when Abbot Stephen sent a lay-brother ahead of him to announce his arrival, the prior and his men (who were hidden within the nunnery buildings), jumped over a hedge and ambushed him. One of the servant boys escaped into Clonmel to spread the alarm and when other monks arrived, they were met by the sight of the prior who:

had thrown off his cowl and stood in his scapular, with a lance in one hand, a sword in the other and the scabbard hung around his neck. All the monks and lay-brothers, apart from the old and the ill, were his accomplices and were armed in a similar manner. The aforesaid prior swore under oath that he would first stab with his lance any of the monks and lay-brothers who sided with the visitor.

Stephen, however, despite being held back by others who felt they were not prepared to die, writes that he marched to the monastery 'with a good number of nobles and others'. He then spoke to the prior asking him to remember that he was a priest and a monk but received only a reply 'choked with pride and abuse'. His words had more effect on the others; a new abbot was appointed, the prior was deposed and an official account of the whole affair was subsequently signed by the abbots of Mellifont, Bective, Grey Abbey (all within Norman territories in the east of Ireland) and Tracton.<sup>88</sup> Stephen wrote immediately to Marianus Ua Briain, archbishop of Cashel and a previous Cistercian monk of Suir, requesting (or demanding?) that he give attention to the matter, given that Suir was in his diocese and jurisdiction, close to his city and cathedral seat. Given that the rebellious prior had been seeking secular help in the lead up to this affair and that Suir was a re-foundation by Domnall Mór ua Briain it seems a fair inference that it was to the Uí Briain leadership that he had been planning to flee.

Worse was to come. Hearing that Stephen was at three days journey distance and about to sail away, the monks of Monasternenagh (which was also an Uí Briain foundation) expelled their new abbot, together with English monks and lay brothers who had been sent to teach the Rule. The rebels then turned the entire monastery, cloister and church into a fortress with great stones as well as wooden palings, stored thirty head of salted cattle under the dormitory, placed grain and flour in the church and brought thirty head of cattle on the hoof into the cloister to graze. Finally, they allied themselves with 'two hundred house-servants and lay-about of the district, partly by money, partly by other means'. This rebellion against Stephen's authority was apparently led by Thomas of Maigne, the nephew of Donnchad Cairprech Ua Briain.<sup>89</sup> The expelled abbot sought Stephen's help and having taken the advice of the abbot of Owey and the cantor of Duiske (both houses in districts under Norman control), Stephen eventually, after admonishment and even threats of excommunication had failed:

<sup>86</sup> *Letters* §62 pp124-6, §66 pp 130-1.

<sup>87</sup> CDI I §1014, §1054; §2607.

<sup>88</sup> *Letters*, §88, pp186-8.

<sup>89</sup> *Letters* §92, p. 194.

wrote to the lord bishop of Limerick, at that time in attendance on the lord archbishop of Cashel, asking him to bring the before-mentioned excommunicates to a spirit of saner council...to seize them and bind them with chains... The aforesaid bishop kindly consented to do this out of zeal for justice and the honour of the church and through men of religion and also his own official and various secular persons of authority but in vain...the bishop himself and his company were barred by force of arms from entering the monastery...he called together an assembly of clergy and noble laity; all that was left now to do was to seize the aforesaid rebels ...the before-mentioned bishop prohibited everyone on pain of excommunication from plundering the possessions of the house or killing or maiming anyone and he decreed that the aforesaid rebels were to be seized and brought to him and the tower they had built in the western part of the church was to be pulled down. He then took a position with his clerics outside the monastery and awaited the outcome.

Therefore, a large number of people broke in and others from the opposing side battled fiercely...the aforesaid excommunicates were brought before the bishop but they were not prepared to give their consent to the judgement of the Order on any condition and they were sent away as fugitives on the decision of the bishop.

Subsequent pleas by the king and queen of Thomond (Donnchad Cairprech Ua Briain and his wife) for clemency for the monks and lay-brothers who rebelled and for Brother Thomas to be allowed to return to the monastery were dismissed out of hand. Instead, so Stephen informed the king, it was his Christian duty to help in taking Thomas captive and in keeping the land about Monasternenagh peaceful. If not, the Cistercian Order would give the monastery with all its possessions to the Angevin king. Meanwhile the abbot of Monasternenagh was told not to spare the payment of money or anything else to the Lord Justiciar for it was better that the possessions of the house be entirely expended than 'that be consumed by schismatics and excommunicates'.<sup>90</sup> Thomas, however, apparently escaped both his uncle and the bishop and subsequently travelled to Rome with Malachy, the former Cistercian abbot of Baltinglass, to put a case for the Irish position to the Pope. Hope for the support of the Curia was presumably based on the fact that Rome had, in 1223, ignored the persistent demands of the Angevin justiciar and archbishop of Dublin, Henry of London, and had appointed the local Irishman, Marianus Ua Briain and a Cistercian monk of Suir to the archbishopric of Cashel.<sup>91</sup> This had been in clear contradiction to statements by the Angevin kings as far back as 1216 that they did not want Irishmen to be appointed to episcopal sees within Ireland.<sup>92</sup>

In his letter book, Stephen's presentation of the conspiracy is that of a conflict between orthodox Cistercian practice and a failure to live up to those ideals. On a local level, however, the secular political context is very apparent. In 1227, before the visit had taken place, the foundations of Mellifont, Graiguenamanagh, Suir and Maigne had requested the king to intervene because their rights were being attacked with loss of tenants, chattels and possessions.<sup>93</sup> In a letter to the abbot of Clairvaux, Stephen complained that Marianus Ua Briain, as archbishop of Cashel, was lingering in Clairvaux during the

<sup>90</sup> *Letters* §90-93, pp 192-6.

<sup>91</sup> B.W. O'Dwyer, *The conspiracy of Mellifont 1216-31* Medieval Irish History series 2 (Dublin, 1970) pp 27, 30-2 quoting Greisser, *Registrum*, p. 112. CDH I 291; c (Dublin, 1962) I §167-69, pp 253-5. Marianus Ua Briain, before his elevation, had also been bishop of Cork.

<sup>92</sup> CDH I §736.

<sup>93</sup> CDH I §1533.

visitation and accused him of being 'a respecter of the nation and not of strict religious life, an acceptor of his people rather than [having] the well-ordered mind of a stranger'. This should be viewed in the context of Stephen's expressed view in the same letter that the Irish were 'a bestial people, I do not say wholly but to a great extent' and his further description of Irish kings as living in little huts made of wattle of the type used by birds when they were moulting.<sup>94</sup> We also have a later letter, written by Marianus and defending himself against Stephen's accusations.<sup>95</sup>

If the archbishop of Cashel in this period was an Ua Briain, the bishop of Limerick who had dispersed the Monasternenagh rebels was one Hubert de Burgo, brother of Richard de Burgo the justiciar and lord of Clonmel on whom Stephen placed so much reliance. Hubert had been bishop of Limerick since at least April, 1225.<sup>96</sup> The bishop's enemies claimed subsequently that he was illegitimate;<sup>97</sup> given the Norman (and Papal) attitudes to Irish marriage practices,<sup>98</sup> it is impossible to tell whether this means that his mother was not Domnall Mór Ua Briain's daughter. Since his career as bishop began in the mid-1220s, it seems more likely, on balance, that his mother was at the very least someone whom William had met in Ireland where he had been active for some thirty years.<sup>99</sup> This means that this second generation of De Burgos, the consolidators of their father's conquests, are both more than likely to have been half-Irish and are both plausible candidates for being cousins of Donnchad Cairprech Ua Briain. This puts the conflict at Monasternenagh into a far more stark and internecine perspective. Instead of seeing it solely as a conflict between more modern European and more primitive Irish cultures,<sup>100</sup> it is probably as accurate to see it rather as a continuation of the savage fights to surpass their relatives and peers which had characterised the aristocratic Irish dynasties, including the Uí Briain, for generations. The De Burgo *caput* of Clonmel was the nearest source of support for Stephen when facing the rioters at Suir, but equally, Tullabracky, granted to Hubert's father, William, in 1200, bordered the lands originally donated to Monasternenagh by the Uí Briain.<sup>101</sup>

Hubert's position, before his elevation, was prior of the monastery of Athassel, which had been founded by his father. In 1223, before Hubert's elevation, Henry III (or his De Burgo justiciar, uncle of Richard and Hubert) had decreed that Athassel was to be put in charge of the temporalities of the Limerick see. This may explain why complaints were subsequently heard in Rome that Hubert was a candidate who could be characterised, in the words of John's Gospel 10:1, as one who had not entered the sheepfold through the gate but had climbed in some other way. He was said not to have the requisite knowledge to hold his office and even more pointedly, the pope's letter in reply made reference to Acts 8, 18-20:

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles hands, he offered them money, with the words 'Give me the same power so that

<sup>94</sup> *Letters* §24, pp 59-60.

<sup>95</sup> Greisser, §CXII pp 114-5.

<sup>96</sup> CDI I §1262, §1277.

<sup>97</sup> *Pontificia Hibernica*, II §182 p.15; §287, p. 128.

<sup>98</sup> Giraldus, *Expugnatio*, §1 35 pp 98-9; *Pontificia Hibernica* I §6 p. 21, §16, p. 52.

<sup>99</sup> The same point is made above about his brother Richard who was still a minor in 1214.

<sup>100</sup> See J.A. Watt, *The church and the two nations in medieval Ireland* (Cambridge, 1970) pp 85-107; for a more sympathetic view, Fr Columcille, *The story of Mellifont* (Dublin, 1958) pp 61-75.

<sup>101</sup> CDI I §122, §136.

anyone I lay my hands on will receive the Holy Spirit'. Peter answered: 'May your silver be lost for ever and you with it for thinking that money could buy what God has given for nothing.'<sup>102</sup>

Other complaints included the statement that Hubert de Burgo had refused to make his obedience to the archbishop of Cashel, the aforementioned Marianus Ua Briain. Furthermore, he felt powerful enough to ignore his Connacht peers from Annaghdown and Clonfert who were instructed by the pope to investigate these charges and even to ignore a subsequent papal demand that he should resign his Limerick bishopric. It is clear that Stephen of Lexington, whether he was aware of it or not, was very much operating in a world where there were two sides to every story and where the loyalties owed by church foundations to their founding families had been considerably sharpened by the growth in power of the marcher lordships at the expense of the earlier Uí Briain kings. Indeed, the fact that two of Stephen's letters were written to the bishop of Durham, Richard Poore, who just happened to have been a strong supporter of the English de Burgo regent at Henry III's court, strongly suggests that Stephen was very well aware of the political factions at work.<sup>103</sup>

If we consider the De Burgos as a faction operating within the local Limerick aristocracy, rather than simply as representatives of an English colonising power, it is clear that in the early thirteenth century, political power was moving from the male descendants of Domnall Mór to a family descended through his daughter. At the time of his death in 1194, Domnall Mór was not only ruler of the Uí Briain with a military base at Limerick; in the years immediately succeeding that death, his relatives were in charge both of the archbishopric of Cashel and the local bishopric of Limerick. Not only did William, Richard and Hubert De Burgo largely replace that nexus, they had in the process, also acquired many of the lands which had once been under Uí Briain control.

This is dramatically illustrated in the case of Mungret and the surrounding estates. In the 1180s, Domnall Mór was able to give lands at Mungret to the bishopric of Limerick; the earliest reference to Hubert's episcopacy in 1225 was to his acquisition of a fair for Mungret, which is described as his manor. (Interestingly, his brother acquired a week-long annual fair for Clonmel a mere three months later).<sup>104</sup> In addition, while Carrickogunnell, immediately to the north were granted to Donnchad Cairprech in 1210; by 1242/3, both Carrickogunnell and the surrounding lands of Esclun were in the hands of Richard De Burgo.<sup>105</sup> Within the walled city of Limerick, the two brothers were also working in close conjunction, with some evidence that both were involved in major building projects; Richard at the castle which was in a severe disrepair when he was put in charge and Hubert at the church of St Mary's where excavation has shown that the western end of the nave was extended sometime after the earlier thirteenth century.<sup>106</sup>

In the 1230s, while his brother was actively building a new lordship in south Connacht, Hubert was involved in a bitter dispute with the family of the de Mariscos who had

<sup>102</sup> CDH I §1090, *Pontifica Hibernica*, II §182 p.16; §387, p. 128. See also *Calendar of Papal Entries*, p. 117.

<sup>103</sup> *Letters* §83, pp 176-7, §106, pp 223-4; David Carpenter, 'The fall of Hubert de Burgh', *Journal of British Studies*, 19 (1980) p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> CDH I §1310.

<sup>105</sup> CDH I §2607.

<sup>106</sup> Ken Wiggins, *A place of great consequence: archaeological excavations at King John's Castle, Limerick, 1990-8* (Dublin, 2016) pp 162-80; Brian Hodkinson, 'Summary report on the excavations at St Mary's Cathedral, Limerick 1992', *NMAJ*, 37 (1992) pp 44-7; CDI I §1227.



been the previous holders of the Irish justiciarship and who by this stage held lands in Knockainy, Adare and Bruree.<sup>107</sup> In 1235, the pope asked the bishop of Lismore to explore Hubert's decision to excommunicate Geoffrey de Marisco and his son William. The results of that enquiry are attested in the *Black Book of Limerick* which states that the Lismore bishop determined that Geoffrey had stolen 3300 head of cattle from the precentor, one of the senior canons of the Limerick episcopal chapter. He had also besieged Bishop Hubert within the church of Shanagolden (the precentor's personal prebend or estate) and had ejected both men and plough-teams from the sanctuary. Furthermore, de Marisco had occupied Kilmallock for twenty years before returning it to the authority of the bishopric (whose manor it was) and had imprisoned both clerics and laity in Mungret and Donaghmore, doing damage worth 100 silver pounds.<sup>108</sup> These findings were subsequently confirmed by the bishop of Cloyne and de Marisco was ordered to pay a fine of 1500 marks to Hubert de Burgo.

Hubert's importance in the affairs of Ireland as a whole is indicated by the fact that he was put in charge of the temporalities of the archbishopric of Armagh in 1227, with his name being put forward by the Angevin officials as their candidate to hold that office. Nothing appears to have resulted from this but his subsequent standing amongst his fellow Irish bishops is shown by their decision in 1231 that he should be an emissary to travel to Rome to seek support for the proposition that bishops should be elected by their peers rather than the king.<sup>109</sup> It would seem that with the increasing isolation and eventual fall of his uncle from power,<sup>110</sup> Hubert may no longer have been as favoured by the Angevin court and was instead creating new alliances within Ireland. His half-Irish background may explain why his supporters seem to have included both Norman bishops of Lismore and Cloyne and Irish bishops in Killala and Achonry while the tempestuous nature of the marcher lordships is perhaps revealed by his excommunication, not just of the de Mariscos but also of Gerald de Rupe and the prior and community of Inistiogue.<sup>111</sup> Whether because of his travels, his building projects, his losses to rival families or even just the payments due to the Papacy to cover crusades and other expenses, we also know that despite the fair at Mungret and the fines demanded of Geoffrey de Marisco, Hubert had debts which had to be paid for by loans from Italian bankers and which took a considerable part of his career to clear.<sup>112</sup>

The circumstances of Hubert's burial imply that at the time of his death, the bishop may have moved away from the wholehearted defence of the de Burgo interests which characterised his actions in the later 1220s. At the time of his death in 1250, the decision was taken that he would be buried in the new (and for Ireland still novel) Dominican friary which had been established by Donnchad Cairprech before his death in 1242. The friary was located to the north of the castle, on the part of King's Island where the earlier Uí Briain royal settlement is thought to have been situated. For whatever reason, then, Hubert de Burgo, bishop of St Mary's and champion of the rights of St Mary's chapter was not buried in his own cathedral but instead in the foundation of a new Continental order, brought to Limerick by his putative cousin, through his mother, who seems, as

<sup>107</sup> CDI I §139, §1415, §2386, §2514.

<sup>108</sup> *Black Book of Limerick* §XXVI p. 30; §CLVII p. 128, §CLXI p. 132; CDI I §2267-8; see CDI I §2367, §2386.

<sup>109</sup> CDI I §1531, §1310.

<sup>110</sup> Carpenter, 'The fall of Hubert de Burgh', pp 1-17.

<sup>111</sup> *Pontificia Hibernica* §312 pp 150-1, §268 pp 108-110; *Black Book of Limerick* §CLV p. 127.

<sup>112</sup> *Black Book of Limerick*, §XCVII-C; M.D. O'Sullivan, *Italian merchant bankers in Ireland in the thirteenth century* (Dublin, 1962) pp 37-8.

discussed above, quite likely to have been the daughter of Domnall Mór Ua Briain.<sup>113</sup> It is worth remembering, perhaps, that his uncle, Hubert de Burgh, earl of Kent, who had been such an important patron of his two Irish nephews, had left 180 marks to the Dominican house of London so the family had an interest in patronage of the friars.<sup>114</sup> However clear dynastic loyalties may appear in our records, both the Uí Briain and the De Burgos belonged to an environment where native Irish and Continental influences, both secular and Christian, were constantly swirling in a kaleidoscope of ever-changing patterns and it is important to try and avoid simplistic equations of ethnicity and cultural perspective.

It is customary to see the establishment of the Norman colony as a key transition point in Irish history and the old cliché of ‘eight hundred years of English domination’ often leads, almost inexorably, to a foreshortening of what was, as the historian Howard Clarke has noted, a long-drawn out and fragmentary process.<sup>115</sup> The archaeologists of this period have been to the forefront in examining the regional impact of new settlers with new ideas but the historians, as has recently been pointed out, have traditionally tended to focus on the history of centralized government and the perspective of Dublin castle at the expense of studies of local power structures.<sup>116</sup> The men and women of north Munster who lived at the turn of the thirteenth century knew their world was being turned upside down and that their own fortunes depended ultimately on their shrewdness in picking the right patrons in a period of rapid change. That the star of the Uí Briain was setting and was being replaced by that of another family dynasty which would ultimately achieve at least the same level of authority within Ireland and the Irish Sea as the eleventh-century Uí Briain had done was probably not inconceivable to them but charting the precise journey was always going to be more difficult.

<sup>113</sup> C. Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland 1224-1540* (Dublin, 2012) pp 1, 147; B. O’Sullivan, *Medieval Irish Dominican Studies* ed., H. Fenning (Dublin, 2009) p. 33; J. Begley, *The diocese of Limerick ancient and medieval* (Dublin, 1906) pp 346-52.

<sup>114</sup> CDI I §3012.

<sup>115</sup> H.B. Clarke, ‘1066, 1169 and all that: the tyranny of historical turning points’, in J. Devlin & H.B. Clarke (eds), *European Encounters: Essays in Memory of Albert Lovett* (Dublin, 2003) pp 11-32.

<sup>116</sup> For the latest volume in such archaeological studies, see Vicky McAllister & Terry Barry (eds), *Space and settlement in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2015); for a recent attempt to redress the historical balance in favour of dynastic history, see Peter Crooks and Sean Duffy (eds), *The Geraldines and medieval Ireland: the making of a myth* (Dublin, 2017).