



Founders of Irish Dominican Friaries: An Unpublished List of c. 1647

Author(s): Hugh Fenning

Source: *Collectanea Hibernica*, 2002/2003, No. 44/45 (2002/2003), pp. 56-62

Published by: Franciscan Province of Ireland

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30004709>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Franciscan Province of Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Collectanea Hibernica*

JSTOR

Founders of Irish Dominican Friaries: an unpublished list of c. 1647

Hugh Fenning O. P.

INTRODUCTION

The list of Dominican friaries and their founders presented here came to light some thirty years ago in what was then a rarely explored part of the general archive of the Order at Santa Sabina in Rome. There it lay amongst historical material from all over the Dominican world, largely gathered in 1656 as though prepared for the general chapter held in that year. This Irish list, unsigned and undated, seems from internal evidence to have been composed by a friar of Munster about 1647. If so, it predates the earliest printed work on Irish monasteries: Sir James WARE's, *De Hibernia et antiquitatibus eius* (London, 1654). While not the earliest list of Irish Dominican friaries – for there is a medieval one – it is the first and seemingly the only one to name their founders. The present archival location of the document at Santa Sabina is AGOP XIV. Liber K, pp 15-18.

Our list cannot have been compiled before 1643, for it mentions the monastery of nuns at Galway founded in that year. The general chapter of the order celebrated at Rome in May 1644, was attended by Bl. Terence O'Brien, provincial, and two Irish definitors: John Nolan and Mark Rochefort, both masters in theology. The section of the acts of the chapter relating only to Ireland states that nothing was certainly known of the antiquity and limits of the various convents; therefore, in line with the decision of the intermediate provincial chapter held at Cork in 1640, the capitulars of 1644 agreed that priors were to hold precedence among themselves according to the antiquity of their convents as set forth 'in a certain old manuscript collected by Sir James Ware'.¹ This was the well known list in TCD, Ms. F. 4. 14, then recently printed by WARE, *De Scriptoribus Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1639), book 1, chapter 9, pp 61-2, and later by T. BURKE, *Hibernia Dominicana* (Cologne, 1762), p. 38. The same

¹ *Monumenta ordinis fratrum praedicatorum historica* [henceforth *MOPH*], xii (Rome, 1902), p. 161.

general chapter accepted in 1644 ‘the convent given by the bishop of Killaloe and the monastery or house commonly called St Peter’s Wall of the city of Limerick which we grant to Catherine Dogan and others who now live in it’.² These details about Killaloe – for which the bishop gave formal written permission on 9 Feb. 1643 (old style) – and the nuns of Limerick, both mentioned in our list, provide a date of compilation in or after 1644 and suggest a compiler familiar with the affairs of Munster. By contrast, the entries for Connacht, where no fewer than six convents are wrongly said to have been ‘founded by the O Conor family’, show no close acquaintance with that province.

The same general chapter of 1644, in paragraph 18, obliged each prior of the order to compile ‘a most exact chronicle of all the memorable affairs of his house’. He was to do so annually, and send the resulting chronicle annually to the prior provincial who would, as opportunity served, communicate such histories to the master of the order. Considering that the beleaguered Irish province was then in no position to observe this order to the letter, our ‘list of convents and their founders’ may have been a token act of obedience to the chapter of 1644.

One internal comment suggests a slightly later date. The convent of Killaloe, ‘founded [in 1644] by the bishop and begun’ had ‘yet to be perfected because of the troubles of the times’. This indicates composition in or after August 1646 when the provincial, Terence A. O’Brien, appealed to Propaganda to confirm the bishop’s grant, only to have the Congregation refer the matter back to Rinuccini in Ireland.³ It also implies, if not very strongly, a date of compilation before 1649 when Cromwell’s arrival made the juridical status of the ‘convent’ of Killaloe an academic question.

In another volume of the same series – AGOP XIV. Liber GGG, pp 15-18 – one finds extracts of Irish material from the general’s registers covering the period 1488-1647. Someone with access to the general’s archives at the Minerva in or after 1647 was clearly interested, as our compiler was, in the history of the province. Probably it was the same person, perhaps Thomas O’Brien, Roman procurator of the province between 1646 and 1647. O’Brien, born in Cloyne diocese, had earlier worked both in Limerick and south Tipperary. One might also suggest Fabian Ryan of Solohead, Co. Tipperary, who visited Rome on business in 1648 and had in fact an interest in matters historical; he is said to have written an untraced account of the Siege of Limerick (1651). The only difficulty in linking the two documents is that the extracts of 1488-1647 are certainly in a

² *Op. cit.*, xii, p. 162.

³ See footnote on Killaloe below.

mid-eighteenth-century hand (though perhaps a copy of a 1647 original), while the 'list of founders' itself would be hard to date from the hand alone. The fact that it was roughly written in a quick cursive hand, with marginal additions and a few corrections, indicate that it is an original text rather than a copy. The paper has no watermark, nor is any other associated document in the same hand. Curiously, it has its own original foliation, for the three pages of the text (now pp 15-18) were formerly ff 8-9; the final page of the fascicule is blank. The volume, repaired in 1980, has various old paginations corresponding to those of its miscellaneous contents.

Despite these difficulties of authorship and date of composition, the text deserves publication if only to preserve it and bring it to the notice of scholars. The various 'founders' named are partly the correct medieval ones and partly those of the powerful families best able and willing to support particular convents as they struggled to recover in the early 1600s. For details on each particular foundation, the reader should turn to the best modern survey of the subject: A. GWYNN and N. HADCOCK, *Medieval religious houses: Ireland, with an appendix to early sites* (London, 1970).

TEXT

Nomina Conventuum Ordinis Praedicatorum in Provincia Hiberniae

In Conacia

in territorio familiae Cornelianae vulgo O Conor,
ab ipsis fundati et multis terris dotati.

Conventus Sanctae Crucis Sligoensis.

Conventus Balendunensis [Ballindoon].

Conventus Clunmihanensis [Cloonameehan].

Conventus Roscomanensis.

Conventus Tulskensis [Tulsk].

Conventus Clunseanmolensis [Cloonshanville].

Omnes sex isti con[ventus] sunt erecti et opifice dotati ab eadem
Corneliana familia.⁴

⁴ Only two of these six convents – Roscommon and Tulsk – were certainly founded by the O Conor family. Sligo was founded by Fitzgerald; Ballindoon by O'Farrell; Cloonameehan by MacDonogh and Cloonshanville almost certainly by MacDermott Roe. The O Conors may have played a significant role in the revival of all six in the early 1600s.

In eadem Conacia

Conventus Athenriensis fundatus partim a Barone de Athenrii [de Bermingham], partim a familia Corneliana [O Conor], partim a Comite de Clanrickard [Burke], et multis terris dotatus.

Conventus Galviensis a civibus fundatus.

Conventus Portumnensis fundatus a Domino Ó Madin et partim a Comite de Clanrickard [Burke] et dotatus.

Conventus Tumbeolensis [Toombeola], a familia Ó Flaherty fundatus et dotatus.

Conventus Rathbranensis [Rathfran] a familia Petit inceptus et a familia Baronis de Tireragh vulgo Ó Douda [O'Dowd] dotatus.⁵

Conventus Buresulensis [Burrishoole] erectus et dotatus a familia de Burgo.

Conventus Stradensis a Barone de Galenga [Gallen] vulgo MacJordan erectus et dotatus.⁶

Conventus Urlariensis, a Barone de Gustolage [= Costello] erectus et dotatus.⁷

Isti quatuordecem conventus sunt provinciae Conatiae.

Conventus monialium Galviensis etiam.⁸

In Momonia

Conventus Limbricensis [Limerick] fundatus et dotatus a nobilissima familia de O'Brien, nunc Comites de Tuomoina [Thomond].

Conventus Kilacensis [Kilmallock] a civibus fundatus et dotatus.

Conventus Traliensis a familia Geraldinorum [Fitzgerald] erectus et dotatus.

Conventus Castelli Leonis [Castlelyons].⁹

Conventus Gleanurensis [Glanore, Glanworth] a Vicecomite Rupis et Fearmoy, vulgo Roch[e] ex[s]tructus et dotatus.¹⁰

⁵ GWYNN/HADCOCK, p. 228, summarising all authorities on the foundation of Rathfran, Co. Mayo, diocese of Killala, mention neither Petit nor O'Dowd. Yet B. O'SULLIVAN, in his 'Medieval Irish Dominican Studies' in *The Irish Rosary* (May-June, 1949), 154-5, conjectured that the Petits of Mullingar or 'some members of the Meath baronial families' were the founders.

⁶ Strade was founded by Stephen de Exeter, son of Jordan, whence derived MacJordan, a Gaelic patronymic adopted by the de Exeter family.

⁷ Urlar, Co. Mayo, diocese of Achonry, founded by de Angulo or Nangle who took the name MacCostello as lords of the barony of Costello.

⁸ The Dominican nuns of Galway, first approved as a community by the provincial chapter at Kilkenny, 1643. ROSE O'NEILL, *A rich inheritance: Galway Dominican nuns, 1644-1994* (Galway, 1994).

⁹ This claim to a foundation at Castelyons, Co. Cork, is earlier by forty years than any of those noted by GWYNN/HADCOCK, p. 232.

¹⁰ Strictly speaking, the founder of Glanworth, Co. Cork, diocese of Cloyne, was John Fitzgerald the Knight of Kerry; for practical reasons the honour devolved on David Mór Roche, first viscount Fermoy, whose castle lay beside the abbey. H. FENNING, 'The Dominicans of Glanworth, 1475-1814' in M. MACNAMARA and M. O'NEILL (eds.), *Glanworth Millennium 2000* (Glanworth, 2000), p. 73.

Conventus Corcagiensis partim a civibus partim a vicinis nobilibus fundatus et dotatus.

Conventus Yocheliensis [Youghal].

Conventus Waterfordensis a civibus fundatus.

Conventus Clunmelensis [Clonmel] a civibus fundatus.¹¹

Conventus Casseliensis a civibus fundatus.¹²

Conventus Killaloensis ab Illmo. Dno. Joanne [O'Moloney] Killaloen. episcopo fundatus et inceptus sed temporum injuriis imperfectus.¹³

Conventus monialium Limbricensis [Limerick].

Conventus Lorrhensis [Lorrha] a nobili Kinediorum [Kennedy] familia fundatus et dotatus.¹⁴

In provincia Lageniae

Conventus Dubliniensis a civibus fundatus.

Conventus Nasensis [Naas] a Geraldina familia [Fitzgerald] fundatus.¹⁵

Conventus Trimensis.

Conventus Mulengarensis a familia de Petit et aliis.

¹¹ Clonmel, not a medieval foundation, is thought to have been a cell of Cashel which became a convent before 1643. T. DE BURGO, *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 329. L. TAHENEY, 'The Dominicans in Clonmel' in P. O'CONNELL and W. C. DARMODY (eds), *Siege of Clonmel commemoration. Tercentenary souvenir record* (Clonmel, 1950), pp 60-3.

¹² Cashel, founded in 1243 under the patronage of a Dominican archbishop of Cashel.

¹³ Killaloe, not within the remit of GWYNN/HADCOCK. The idea of a Dominican house in Thomond, to be founded by the bishop, was already spoken of in 1631. B. JENNINGS, *Wadding Papers*, p. 607. But there was considerable delay. The original grant by John O'Moloney, bishop of Killaloe, conveying to the Dominicans the 'house of the late John White on the southern side of the church of Killaloe', was dated Tuamgraney, 9 Feb. 1643 (probably old style). APF, SOCG 411, f. 301rv. The late Ignatius Murphy believed that the actual site was not in the town of Killaloe but at Inishlana in the parish of Clondegad, west of the Fergus estuary, about ten miles south of Ennis. For this view he cited a grant made in 1623 by the earl of Thomond to Michael White and his wife Anastasia, 'of the lands of Inishlana with its water-mill', as given by J. FROST, *The history and topography of the County of Clare* (Limerick, 1906), pp 294-5. In Aug. 1646, [Terence] Albert O'Brien, the Dominican provincial, asked Propaganda to confirm the grant of a house, garden, water-mill etc. made to the order by the bishop of Killaloe with a view to establishing a convent there. The Congregation referred the matter to Rinuccini, nuncio in Ireland. B. JENNINGS, 'Acta sacrae congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1622-50' in *Archiv. Hib.*, xxii (1959), 128.

¹⁴ The original founder of Lorrha, Co. Tipperary, Walter de Burgo in 1269, is here displaced by a later benefactor named Kennedy.

¹⁵ Naas, Co. Kildare, founded in 1356, is usually attributed to the Eustace family, originally de Poer. The attribution here to Fitzgerald is highly interesting.

Conventus Athiensis [Athy] a familia Domini Dempsey nunc Vicecomites de Clanmalier.¹⁶

Conventus Arcloensis a familia Butlerorum, nunc Marquiones [sic] de Ormonia [Ormond], fundatus et dotatus.

Conventus Longfordensis fundatus et dotatus a familia O Fearail.

Conventus Rossensis [Rosbercon].

Conventus Kilkeniensis a Comite Pembroke¹⁷ Anglo quando Hiberniae prorege fundatus et dotatus, in quo et ipse cum 18 equitibus auratis (uno die in praelio apud Kildara occisus) sepultus est.

Conventus Achaboensis [Aghaboe] fundatus a familia Patricia vulgò [Fitzpatrick, omitted] Domini Ossorienses.

In provincia Ultoniae

Conventus Derensis fundatus tempore Sancti Dominici a familia O Donelli postea Comites de Tirconel.¹⁸

Conventus Culrahensis [Coleraine] fundatus et amplissimè dotatus a familia O Cahani.¹⁹

Conventus Dunensis [Newtownards] fundatus a familia Magneua [Magennis] nunc Barones de Iveach [Iveagh].²⁰

Conventus Carlingfortt a familia O Nelli [O'Neill] nunc Comites de Tirone.²¹

¹⁶ The original founder of Athy in 1257 was surely Norman, but there is no agreement about his name. GWYNN/HADCOCK, p. 222. Dempsey of Clanmalier probably helped its re-establishment in the 1620s. Edmund Dempsey O. P., provincial (1634-8) and bishop of Leighlin (1642-58), was the son of Terence Dempsey, viscount Clanmalier.

¹⁷ William Marshal the Younger, justiciar, 1224-6; founder of Kilkenny convent, 1225; killed on the Curragh, 1231. The compiler's reference to the 'eighteen knights' suggests his reliance on a printed source, perhaps Meredith HANMER's *Chronicle of Ireland*, as given by Sir James WARE, *The historie of Ireland* (Dublin, 1633), p. 174. Hanmer, who lived in the south-east, refers to these 'eighteen knights'.

¹⁸ Convent of Derry, founded in 1274, more than fifty years after the death of St Dominic.

¹⁹ Convent of Coleraine, founded in 1244, almost certainly by the family of Mandeville who came to style themselves MacQuillan. The O'Cahans probably patronised the friars in the early 1600s.

²⁰ Newtownards, Co. Down, founded in 1244, presumably by a Norman family; but the name of the original founder, perhaps Savage (as O'HEYNE suggested in 1706), is not certainly known. Only our text claims that title for Magennis.

²¹ Carlingford, Co. Louth, founded in 1305 by Richard de Burgo, earl of Ulster. The O'Neills probably helped the restoration of the friary in the 1600s.

Conventus Inis-mac-Manus [Gola] fundatus partim a familia Manua [MacManus] vulgò Clanmanus, et partim a familia Maguir[e] fundatus.²²

Conventus villae Pontanae [Drogheda], a civibus fundatus et partim a vicinis nobilibus.²³

²² Gola, also Givola, Co. Fermanagh, a 17th-century foundation. Our list underpins and is corroborated by O'HEYNE, whose account was first published in 1706. 'The convent called Gola was founded by Fr John MacManus, son of 'The MacManus', who was a connection of the Maguire family. Returning from his studies in Spain, he went to Lord Enniskillen [Maguire], and with the help of his cousin, The MacManus, he obtained the site. This Father having died [1643ca], and wars taking place in the meantime, no member of our Order remained permanently in Fermanagh until 1660.' A. COLEMAN, *The Irish Dominicans of the seventeenth century by Father John O'Heyne, O. P., first published at Louvain in 1706* (Dundalk, 1902), pp 13, 15.

²³ The usual attribution is to Archbishop Luke Netterville of Armagh in 1224.