

II.

LS. 23. I. 20., A. R. na hÉ.

An tEasbog Deisi cc.

- 1 A dhuine ó ndeachaidh do bhean,
Féach an treabh an ar cuireadh;
Féach a taisi mar tá anois
Na mná caisi do chuiris.
- 2 Sgáthán fallsa an folt buidhe,
Sgáth bréige an bréid tanuidhe;
Ar fholt bhuídh 's ar bhreid gheal
Ná tréig, a dhuine, an Dúileamh.
- 3 Gúais reic nimhe ar niamh fallsa
Na mban sochrach súilmhealsa;
Taoibh throma bhána na mban
Budh cnámha loma ar léaghadh.

I LS. 12. F. 18. i rann la. "ndeachadh", i 2c. "sair".

FOINSÍ AGUS TAGAIRTÍ

I. Beatha Thomáis Dhéis:—

- 1 "De Praesulibus Hiberniae", by Archdeacon John Lynch, edited by Rev. John F. O'Doherty, D.D., D.Ph. Published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1944. Vol. I. pp. 165 seq.
- 2 "An Aphorismical Discovery of Treasonable Faction" ed. by Sir John T. Gilbert in "Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland", Vols. I & II.
- 3 "Commentarius Rinuccinianus", ed. by Rev. Stanislaus Kavanagh, O.F.M. Cap. The Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1932-49.
- 4 "Diocese of Meath", A. Cogan, Dublin 1862-70. Vol. II, pp. 22 seq.
- 5 "The Grand Juries of Westmeath" by J. C. Lyons, printed at the compiler's private press at Ledestown, Mullingar. II. p. 58.

II. Dánta Thomáis Dhéis:—

- 1 "Catalogue of Irish MSS. in the National Library of Ireland", Nessa Ní Shéaghdha, Fasc. II. Dublin 1961. Tá cuntas ar G. 38 agus clár na LS. ar lch. 49-51.
- 2 "Catalogue of the Irish MSS. in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin." T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn, 1921. Tá cuntas ar H. 5. 13. ar lch. 245-248. Féach fosta uimhir 1374 mar a bhfuil cuntas ar H. 5. 2., an LS. in a bhfuil an dán le Séamus Dubh-Nuinnstíonn agus an freagra leis an Déiseach.
- 3 "Catalogue of Irish MSS. in the Royal Irish Academy". Tá cuntas ar 23. I. 20. le fáil sa chlár seo ar lch. 1109 seq. agus ar 12. F. 18. ar lch. 2611.
- 4 "Catalogue of Irish MSS. in the British Museum", Vols. I-III.

THE DOMINICANS OF MULLINGAR, 1237-1610:

Hugh Fenning, O.P.

THE available information on this subject is too slight and too diverse to weave into a straight narrative. This article, accordingly, provides no more than a set of notes in chronological order. It does not even offer fresh evidence from unpublished sources, but draws its value from the co-ordination of scattered references and the correction of some previous writers on points of detail. The only articles known to me which deal expressly with the subject are by T.C. (Thomas Conlon) in the *Westmeath Examiner*, 18/1/1958, and by Ambrose Coleman, O.P., in his *Ancient Dominican Foundations in Ireland*, 1902, p. 34. Each of these studies has its value: neither is exhaustive or reliable.

While our knowledge of the priory's history for this period is rather threadbare, it can be extended by comparison with the history of the priory of Trim (*Ríocht na Midhe*, 1963, pp. 15-19), and other Dominican foundations. Though the fortunes of two priories will never be identical, their history will conform to a common general pattern, particularly when, like Mullingar and Trim, they were founded at much the same time by Norman families within the one diocese and county. If, for instance, the Dominicans of Mullingar collected money for the crusades it is more than likely that their confreres of Trim collected too, even though there is no direct evidence to prove it. The rewards of such a comparative study may help to offset any disappointment caused by the brief notes which follow.

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The surviving extracts from the register of the Dominican convent of Trim (*l.c.*, p. 15) record the foundation of a convent at Mullingar in 1237. The register provides no extra detail beyond the date and place, but it does imply a certain hesitancy on the part of the Order before the foundation was made. The Dominicans had entered the country in 1224 and in the same year settled at Dublin and Drogheda. In 1225 they came to Kilkenny; in 1226 to Waterford; in 1227 to Limerick; and in 1229 to Cork. Then, after an interval of eight years, Mullingar comes next in line of the early foundations. So long a pause after so brisk a start has naturally led to some conjecture.

Fr. Ambrose Coleman (*Dominicans in Ireland*, C.T.S., 1926, p. 3) suggested the need of a fallow period in order to train fresh recruits, while Fr. Benedict O'Sullivan (*Irish Rosary*, Nov./Dec. 1948), put forward a hypothetical dilemma by which the friars may have been faced—whether, having settled in every Irish town worth the name, they should extend their work to the open country, or remain as they were within the walled towns. Fr. O'Sullivan considers the dangers of either course of action but his suggestions belong to general rather than to local history. It is enough to note that, in the main, friaries are more likely to flourish in heavily populated centres than in the open country. The views of both writers are worth consideration, but a mere difference of dates does not offer Fr. O'Sullivan any reliable basis for

a reconstruction of high policy. Nonetheless his subsequent paragraphs on Mullingar well deserve quotation.

"The foundations they [the Dominicans] had acquired were all situated on or near the coast and therefore badly disposed strategically. They needed means of access to the interior of the country if they were to occupy it effectively.

"They gave good earnest of their intention in choosing for the first foundation of what we may style the new departure—Mullingar—significantly located in the very heart of Ireland. The convent was founded in 1237, probably by the lord of the vill, William Petit, whose brother Ralph, bishop of Meath, had established there a monastery of Canons Regular ten years previously. One notes, by the way, the frequency with which Dominican foundations were located in the same centres as those occupied by Regular Canons and it is proper to surmise that the Canons exercised their good offices in favour of the friars who were also in origin Canons Regular, and as opportunity offered, secured for them foundations in contiguity to their own. We have seen this already in the case of the Dominicans of St. Saviour's in Dublin, and now in Mullingar. Later we shall encounter a like situation in Lorrha, in Rathfran [Co. Mayo], where the parochial living was vested in the Canons of Mullingar, and in Derry, to mention only a few instances".

The problem of the identity of the founder is rather more difficult than this account suggests, but one is forced to agree with its conclusion:—"probably by the lord of the vill. William Petit". No formal charter of foundation is known to exist. Allemande (*Monasticon Hibernicum*, Paris, 1960), states simply that the Nugents were the founders; and he was first writer to broach the question at all. The Dominican O'Heyne (*Epilogus Chronologicus* etc., Louvan, 1706), asserted a popular tradition in favour of the family of Petit, while his confrere Thomas Burke, fifty years later, took up the question once more and found in favour of the Nugents (*Hibernia Dominicana*, 1762, pp. 217-8). This is the view which has been followed since (except by Fr. O'Sullivan) not because of any intrinsic argument in its favour, but out of respect for Burke's reputation.

When, in 1783, a dispute arose concerning the right of the Dominicans of Mullingar to quest for alms, an historical account of the convent was sent by the then Provincial to the bishop, Dr. Plunkett. Naturally the history was drawn almost entirely from the recent book by Dr. Burke. The secular priests to whose judgment the bishop submitted the dispute took issue with the statement that the Nugents had been founders of the convent, insinuating that had he Petits in 1762 been as rich and numerous as the Nugents Dr. Burke would, no doubt, have been of a different opinion. Dr. Burke's foot-note on the Nugent family lends, one must admit, a certain colour to their suggestion. But Dean Cogan, when printing the documents of this controversy in his history of the diocese (Vol. II : 465), added a disapproving foot-note to the effect that this was an unfair slur on the impartiality of the great historian. Probably it was Thomas Burke's opinion which influenced Archdall (*Monasticon Hibernicum*, 1786, p. 725), to accept the Nugents as founders, and Dean Cogan's foot-note which drew the late Fr. John Brady to the same conclusion in his booklet on the parish

of Mullingar (1962, p. 6).

In the absence of fresh evidence we can do no more than reduce the see-saw of assertion and conjecture outlined above to three positive elements. The first in Allemande's bald statement that the Nugents were founders. The second is O'Heyne's testimony to a tradition in favour of the Petits. And the third is Burke's proposal that that tradition referred to the priory of the Canons Regular and not to the Dominican convent.

The answer to the problem may lie in a distinction between the first foundation of the convent in 1237 and the second about 1618. It can be shown that the Nugents played a large part in the 17th century re-establishment of the priory; and that alone would provide sufficient explanation of Allemande's statement. Had he asked any Irish Dominicans living in France in 1690 who the founders of the priory of Mullingar had been, they would have been able with difficulty to tell him of the early years of the century, but quite uninformed of their history before 1600. Even O'Heyne, who had exceptional opportunities, is sufficient evidence for that. When the first foundation was made in 1237 Mullingar was owned and dominated by the family of Petit. The town consisted of the Petit castle, the church of the Canons Regular (founded by Ralph Petit), the parish of All Saints (endowed by the Petit family and presented by them to the English abbey of Llanthony), with a few small houses grouped about the stronger buildings. In such circumstances the founding of another convent by the Nugents on ground which was not theirs would be unlikely.

In the fifteenth century the formal title of the Dominican priory was "The Holy Trinity". Yet from its re-establishment about 1618 its title is invariably "Our Lady of the Assumption". Perhaps the friars of 1618 were unaware of the true dedication and chose another, either through error or through devotion. On the other hand the church of the Canons Regular, which was never occupied by its original owners after 1540, was in medieval times dedicated to the Assumption — the very title which the Dominicans assumed on their return. This fact greatly weakens the force of O'Heyne's "tradition", but his conclusion stands since both the Dominican priory and that of the Canons Regular were in all likelihood founded by the one family.

The reader may feel that the question of founder and of title has been laboured, but fundamental misconceptions play a large part in the confusion which surrounds the later history of the priory buildings, and it is best to clear the ground at the outset.

One more point should first be made. There were only two religious communities in the town of Mullingar between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries — the priory of Our Lady of the Assumption (also called the priory of the House of God) belonging to the Canons Regular, and the Dominican priory of the Holy Trinity. The Dominicans were, then, the only friars to have a residence in the town before the Reformation. The Trinitarians supposedly martyred there after the Suppression of the monasteries, did not exist (Edwards, *Church and State in Tudor Ireland*, 1935, p. 65). Other Orders which have been mentioned in connection with the town (Franciscans, Augustinians, Capuchins) settled there in the early 17th century, if at all.

The absence of early maps makes it difficult to determine the

exact site occupied by the first Dominican priory, but a grant of the site to James Hope by James I in 1610 (described later) indicates a position in the south-west corner of the town. Mr. Thomas Conlon of London, a native of Mullingar, and author of many good newspaper articles on its history, considers the present Coliseum cinema to stand on the actual site of the priory (*Westmeath Examiner*, July 5th, 1947). Beyond fixing the site in this general way we will leave aside for the moment both the site itself and the history of the priory buildings after the suppression.

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1266 : 5 July. Thomas, bishop of Lismore, issued a receipt at Mullingar to the Dominican friars of that town for the sum of 30 marks and 10 shillings collected by them, within the "limits" of their convent, for the crusades.

cf. A. Theiner : *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum*, 1864, p. 109, and *Archivum Hibernicum*, XIX (1956), p. 137.

This money was given by the people to the friars as voluntary contributions, payment of papal taxes, or to redeem vows made in a moment of enthusiasm to go personally to the Holy Land. The mendicant friars did most of the work of collection.

1274 : The Dominicans settled in Rathfran, Co. Mayo, perhaps through the good offices of the Canons Regular of Mullingar in whom the parochial living of Rathfran was vested.

1278, 1292, 1308, 1314 : In these years annual meetings of the chapter of the Irish Dominican vicariate were held in the convent. See *Ríocht na Midhe*, 1963, p. 16, where chapters of this type are described. The Irish Augustinians of the time had a similar arrangement according to documents published in *Archivum Hibernicum*, XIX (1956), p. 77, foot-note v).

1297 : January 8 : John le Whyte, prior of the friars preachers of Mullingar, holds for Hugh de Tuberville a bond which John le Mare, knight, had made to him (Hugh) for a debt. Plea of Plaints at Mullingar : *Justiciary Rolls*, 25 Edward I, ed. Mason, 1905, p. 78.

1318 : January 1. An order was issued by John XXII at Avignon to the prior of Tristernach, the archdeacon, and the precentor of Meath to judge a dispute between the Franciscans of Trim and the Dominicans of Mullingar concerning the body of Rosina Verdon which she left to be buried at Trim but which the Dominicans refuse to give up. The final result is unknown.

Calendar of Papal Letters . . . England and Ireland, Vol. II, 171, and Wadding : *Annales Fratrum Minorum*. Little suggests that Rosina was a daughter of Theobald de Verdon (d. 1309) : *Materials for the History of the Franciscan Province of Ireland*, p. 104-5.

1367 : July 27. Archbishop Sweetman of Armagh wrote from Dromeskyn to the prior of the Dominicans of Mullingar. He had received the prior's letter from the bearer Kypatrick but does not know whether he can absolve Kypatrick from the excommunication he has incurred by his action against the Order. Since he is protector of the privileges of the Order in Ireland he does not wish to absolve its enemies too easily. If the prior finds, on examination of the bull granting special powers to the protector of privileges, that they cover the present case, he is to absolve the offender himself. The offence

Kypatrick committed against the Order is not stated.

Calendar of the Register of Archbishop Sweteman : P.R.I.A., Vol. XXIX, section C, no. 8 (1911).

1425 : Sir Henry Dalton died and was buried in the convent. Archdall records that in his *Monasticon Hibernicum*, 1786, p. 725, with a reference to *Kings' Mss.*, p. 96. The present reference to this transcript is *T.C.D. Mss. F 1:16, f. 377*. The original source is noted in the 17th century transcript as "An Ins. O. SS." but I have been unable to trace the Annals from which the excerpt was made. The only clue is that the Annals were written in Latin.

1432 : July 25. Eugene IV issued an indulgence from Rome to all who would contribute to the repair of the church and convent.

"Relaxation, during twenty years, of four years and four quarantines of enjoined penance to penitents who on the principal feasts of the year and that of Holy Trinity, the usual octaves and days, and of a hundred days to those who during the said octaves and days visit and give alms for the repair . . . of the church of Holy Trinity of Friars Preachers' house of Molynekear in the diocese of Meath, in which forty professed friars used to be maintained by alms, but which has suffered so much from long wars and other calamities that hardly eight in priests' orders reside therein, and that the buildings of the church and house themselves are threatened with ruin".

Calendar of Papal Registers, VIII : 446.

Many other Irish Dominican priories received indulgences of this type during the 15th century. It was a century which witnessed the growth of the "reformed congregations" and the forging of closer links between the friars and the native Irish. At the same time most of the priories were burned either by accident or in the constant minor wars of the period. This was the case with the Dominican priories of Athenry, Roscommon, Sligo, Strade, Longford, Arklow, etc. The indulgence accorded to Mullingar is of great interest for the correct title of the foundation (Holy Trinity) and for the evidence it supplies on the strength of the community there (eight in 1432; forty at some earlier period). These figures may be compared with those for Sligo in 1415 (20) and for Athenry in 1445 (30). It is an open question as to when Mullingar could boast of a community of forty friars, but it may have been before the Black Death (1347) and the decline which followed it. cf. O'Sullivan in the *Irish Rosary*, 1950, p. 170.

1450 : July 19. Richard, Duke of York, earl of Ulster and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, granted to the prior of the convent thirty acres of arable land in Kilbride near Mullingar for the term of twenty-one years. *King's Mss.* p. 96, now *T.C.D. Mss. F 1 : 16, f. 377*. This grant was made at Trim and registered two years later in Dublin. But both Archdall and Coleman seem in error in dating the grant in 1459. Both the date in the transcript (the 28th year of Henry VI) and the date of Richard's visit to Ireland (Summer 1449 — summer 1450) rule out 1459 in place of 1450. It was in summer 1450 that Richard made a peace treaty at Mullingar with MacGeoghegan and his followers. According to the Constitutions of the Dominican Order (before 1478) the friars were forbidden to own land outside the precinct of their convent. In this case they may have availed of a legal quibble termed "extrinsic title" to draw revenue from the land without claiming true ownership.

See O'Sullivan in *Irish Rosary*, 1951, p. 221.

1488 : December 16. Innocent VIII granted permission to the Irish Dominicans to erect three new convents. One of them was to be at "Fons Cormaci" in the diocese of Meath under the patronage of Edmund de Lantu, a layman.

Thomas Burke, *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 75, published the bull from the *Bullarium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, IV : 42. Fr. O'Sullivan discusses the background to these foundations in the *Irish Rosary*, 1950, p. 86.

Earlier in this century a movement had begun among the Irish Dominicans to reform conventual life as it was being reformed on the continent. "When", writes Fr. O'Sullivan, "the majority of brethren in a particular house refused to reform it often happened that a new convent for observant friars was set up in the locality. This was a practice common to the whole Order during times of reformation". "Fons Cormaci" probably stood in this relation to the convent of Mullingar. It appears to have been Tober or Tobercormac a few miles north-east of Ballimore. Whether or not the papal permission was ever implemented must remain an open question, but Archdall (p. 728) records an inquisition into the former possessions of the priory (May 2, 1589), from which it appeared that the site of the priory and a water-mill were then in the possession of St. Thomas Lestrangle, and that 60 acres in the same townland, belonging to the priory, were held by Francis Shane. On the whole it is possible that there was a Dominican community in Tober from 1489 to 1540 or even later. There is no reference to the priory in the *Extents of Monastic Possessions*, 1540-41 edited by Newport White. But it may be as well to note that Tobercormac is listed as a priory of Canons Regular by Thomas Burke, *Hib. Dom.*, p. 730.

When, in 1822, a community of Dominican tertiaries was founded near Ballymore, it owned about 20 acres, part of it in a townland called "Cluainemanach or the cells of the monks".

1538 : October. A bishop and a friar of Mullingar, who had previously been lodged in Dublin Castle ("for their high and notorious offences against the king's majesty") were indicted for a breach of the statutes of *Praemunire* at the court of Trim, but were acquitted by sympathetic lawyers. The crown officials in Dublin were very annoyed at their escape and at the neglect of the lawyers to bring a charge of high treason.

Dudley Edwards, *Church and State in Tudor Ireland*, p. 62, from the *State Papers*.

Since the Dominicans were the only friars resident in Mullingar this incident probably refers to one of their community. If so it is the only known instance of a public objection, to the acts of supremacy and dissolution, made by an Irish Dominican.

1540 : October 10. The official "extent" of the convent property was drawn up by the king's officials. Newport White : *Extents of Irish Monastic Possessions*, 1540-41, Dublin, 1943, pp. 290-92.

"Jurors:—Sir Gerald Fytzgerald, John Skeney clerk, late subprior of the house, and other true and lawful men of the neighbourhood.

The roof of the church, which is thatched with straw, is very ruinous; the stone walls and window (sic, *fenestra*) of the same are in

sufficient repair. Within the precinct, a stone tower and other buildings lately inhabited by the friars; these are now in decay and unoccupied. The church and buildings aforesaid are surrounded by a stone wall. There is a garden and an orchard, now waste and of no present value. South of the site there are two small closes containing one and a half acres full of ash trees and other trees reserved for repair of the buildings and for burning as firewood and of no value otherwise unless the trees should be sold. Another close of pasture containing 2 acres : 2.s. 2 cottages : (4.s.) 8.s. Molingare villata.

I mess. farmed p.t.a. by Thomas Casey of Athboy merchant for 5.s.

I mess. farmed likewise by Mathew Mage for 4.s.

In a field near Molyngare called Spyttefield an old hospital now thrown down and 20 acres arable : (12d) 20.s.

There is a water-mill which some say was pledged by the friars to one Gerald Petyt of Irysshton gent. for 12 marks : value 20.s. This mill has been occupied for a year and more and is still occupied by the said Gerald who asserts that it is his own right and inheritance and was formerly leased by himself to the friars who have no other right in it. In a field lying between Molingare and Irysshton 20 acres arable occupied by the said Gerald Petyt, and in a field between Molingare and Colyn 20 acres arable now occupied by Thomas Tyrell gent. From these 40 acres in the two fields some say that the friars used to receive 6/8d. as an alms settled by the ancestors of the said G.P. and T.T. And some say that the friars were seized of these lands in their demesne as of fee in right of their house, value (8d.)

Memorandum : Sir Gerald Fytzgerald of Croyboy holds the house etc to farm for 21 years by l.p. dated 24 April 1540 paying 40s".

Before beginning their report the commissioners noted the voluntary surrender of the priory by the friars. The buildings were already in decay and there was no point in remaining. The last subprior, John Skeney, who acted on the jury for the occasion, may have been granted a dispensation to serve as a secular priest, but it is unlikely that he got a pension drawn from the convent property. Pensions were reserved for the monks. As in the case of the priory of Trim (*Ríocht na Midhe*, 1963, p. 19), the friars seem to have anticipated the suppression by setting leases of their property. Here it is the water-mill (a valuable asset in a feudal society) which had been leased "for a year and more" to Gerald Petit of Irishtown. It has been claimed that this mill stood on the site of St. Colman's "Muilleann Cearr". The statement in the extent about alms given to the Dominicans by the ancestors of Gerald Petit and Thomas Tyrell lends a little extra force to the view that the Petits were founders of the priory.

Apart from these miscellaneous details the *Extent* concerns only the convent building and its lands. We may note that the church was thatched with straw (stone tiles or wooden shingles were more common). There was a stone tower (probably built after 1432); and a stone wall (or precinct) surrounding the whole complex. If the clerk knew Latin well there was but one window in the church. The friars owned in all about 60 acres of land. The old hospital in Spittlefield (now Springfield) seems to have been distinct from another hospital run

by the Canons Regular. The patients were supported by the revenue of the lands attached to the hospital. Fr. Ambrose Coleman (*Ancient Irish Dominican Foundations*, p. 34) gives the impression that the rectories of Vastina, Churchtown, Dunboyne, and a chapel at Kilbride belonged to the Dominicans of Mullingar. They were part of the property of the Canons Regular of the town according to the *Extents*. Those who wish to investigate the later history of the land owned by the friars outside the town itself may consult Fr. P. Walsh, *The Place-Names of Westmeath*, 1957, p. 223, or the notebook (Z 3, 59) left by Fr. McNerney in the Dominican provincial archives, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, in which an *Exchequer Inquisition* of May 1632 is transcribed. The inquisition includes local place-names such as Farrentaggard (Priestland), Farrenemraher (Friarsland) and Farrencreen *alias* Staffordland *iuxta* Robinson.

1541 : An act of parliament was passed "for the appointing of a gaol in the late house of friars in Mullingar":—*Heads of Acts to be passed in Ireland*. This was later put into effect and a few Dominicans of the 17th century spent some time as prisoners in their former priory. See *Commentarius Rinuccinianus*, 1 : 95. The Dominican priories of Kilkenny and Newtownards were put to the same use.

1564 : Thomas Gorie was granted possession by the Lords Justices and Council:—*Fiants*, Elizabeth.

1565 : August 31. The priory, with its church, cemetery, and apurtenances, was granted to Walter Hope of Dublin, merchant, at the annual rent of £10 Irish:—*Fiants*, Elizabeth.

Walter Hope was made constable of the jail he undertook to build, and later became constable of the castle of Mullingar. He acted as host to the government officials passing through the town, and organised the holding of fairs there. According to J. P. Dalton, writing in the *Journal of the Galway Arch. Society*, Vol. VI (1909-10) on the abbey of Kilnalahan, Walter Hope was a former Knight Hospitaller of Kilmalmainham priory who survived both the suppression of his monastery and the reign of Mary Tudor by the exercise of the greatest ingenuity. Hope's application for the Dominican friary, with the queen's answer, may be read in the *Acts of the Privy Council in Ireland*, 1556-71, published by the *Historical Mss. Commission*, 15th Report, Appendix, part III, pp. 189-90.

1610 : James I granted the priory to James Hope, Esq

"Grant of the late house of Friars Preachers of Mullingar, with a garden and orchard and two small parks containing one acre and a half; another close containing two acres and two cottages with the site; which site lies from the High Street and West Gate of the town, north, to the river and common, south, and from Blinde Street and the lane leading to that street, east, to the common, west . . . also a late hospital in a field called Spittlefield, and twenty acres of arable land there:—*Patent Rolls*, James I.

Despite the absence of early maps of Mullingar this grant clearly locates the priory in the south-west outskirts of the town as it then was, in the area of the present Dominick St. and Dominick Place (T[homas]. C[onlon]. in the *Westmeath Examiner*, 18/1/1958).

1632 : May 20. An *Exchequer Inquisition* into the property was held. No. 166 Charles I (transcript in McNerney note-book Z3 : 59 in

provincial archives, Tallaght). Alexander Hope used the site owned by Christopher Nugent. But of the priory itself the inquisition states that a great building (*castrum*) and two smaller ones (*messuagia*) had been built on it. This implies for me that the priory was demolished by 1632 or so greatly changed as to be unrecognisable. In 1682 Sir Henry Piers wrote a *Chorographical Description . . . of Westmeath* (publ. at Dublin, 1774) in which he said of the Dominican priory that its ruins were "this day scarcely visible" (p. 77). He also referred to the building of a new jail on a different site; so it is more than probable that the tower sketched in the *Dublin Penny Journal* (Vol. IV, Feb. 1836) and reproduced in the *Annals of Westmeath* by James Woods (1907, facing p. 50) is wrongly described as the "ruins of the Dominican priory of Mullingar". I am disposed to say (following Piers) that the tower and buildings of the priory had been pulled down before 1700, standing subject to the correction of any reader who can prove the contrary. The possibility remains that the Dominicans gained possession of the church of the Canons Regular c. 1618 (they did take over its dedication to the Assumption) and that tradition later associated the ruins of the abbey of the Canons Regular with the Dominicans.

KEARNEY

My story relates to one Lieut. General Kearney of the Austrian Army who, I presume, found himself in Austria as one of the "Wild Geese".

As a boy I spent my summer holidays at my grand-mother's at Monilea, Mullingar. I was twelve years old on the occasion of which I am now writing and that was in 1895. In those days there was no postal delivery and letters had to be collected at the local post office which in this case was well over one mile away. It was customary for me to be sent to collect any letters lying at the P.O. as well as bring back messages of bread, sugar, etc., as required. I was bringing back a few loaves of bread on this occasion and I sat down to do what all boys will do: that is pick the outside of the loaves. The bread was wrapped up in a newspaper and as I read some of the contents I saw an advertisement for the heirs of one Miss Angela Kearney, daughter of the above mentioned Lieut. General. When I got home I quizzed my grand-mother as to her maiden name which somehow I thought was Kearney. I told her what I saw in the paper and she asked me to read it for her. Next day we were in Mullingar to interview Mr. Edward Shaw, Solicitor, which to me meant that she was claiming relationship. Eventually she received a large sum of money. She died in 1899 and I unthinkingly never queried her relationship with the Kearneys of Austria. Some years back I wrote to Mr. E. Shaw's office at Mullingar to try and get the information of how close was the relationship with the Lieut. General. I got a letter back from Messrs. Shaw's office stating that all records of the transaction had been destroyed.

John J. Keegan, Member.

(The history of Lieut. Gen. Kearney is being investigated by another member of the Society—Hon. Editor.)