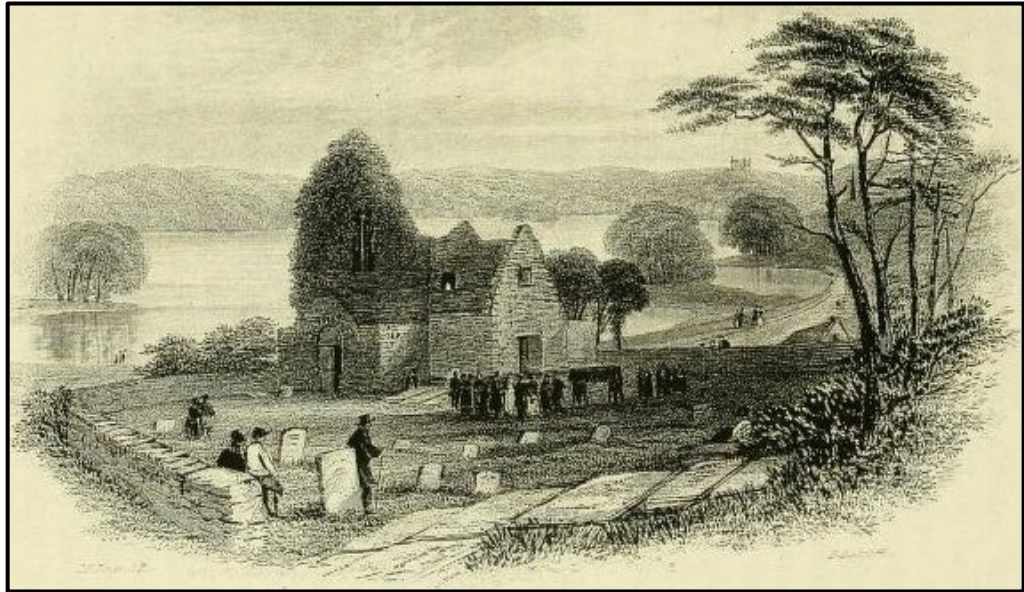


Chapter 2 1689-1798

Myles of Tir Thuathail



Kilronan Abbey and surrounding cemetery circa 1845.¹

In the late 1600s, the fire for rebellion again flared across the parishes as many of its people fought the Jacobite cause in the Williamite War. Life through the 1700s is then discussed, mainly through the eyes of *Myles of Tir Thuathail*, our Kilronan patriarch. The chapter closes a century later with the Irish readying for another fight against the English.

David G Cullen

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Following Cromwell's campaign of terror in Ireland, he returned to England, promptly dissolved the Rump Parliament, and declared himself Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Today he would be called a dictator. As a leading Puritan², Cromwell's Protectorate was deeply unpopular, especially amongst Royalists and leaders of the Church of England. When he died in 1658, his inept brother Richard took the helm, and the Protectorate failed in 1659.

The people of Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes may have sensed a glimmer of hope when the seemingly Catholic-friendly Charles II, son of Charles I, was returned to the throne in 1660, beginning a period known as the Restoration. In 1672 Charles II sought religious freedoms for Catholics. Opponents quickly labelled the privileges a *Popish Plot* devised to support his Catholic brother James, his heir to the throne. James II succeeded his brother upon Charles' death in 1685. When he had a son and another Catholic heir to the throne, it presented leading Protestant English nobles with a religious dilemma. They convinced his Protestant son-in-law William III of Orange, to invade with a Dutch army, which he did in 1688. James II fled England leaving the throne to his Protestant daughter Mary II and her husband, William III, also known as William of Orange.

The Williamite War

James II returned to England in 1689, intending to regain the crown from William and Mary. The resulting war between these two kings became known as the Williamite War. It was a conflict between the supporters of the deposed James II (Jacobites)³ and William III (Williamites).

Rapparees were invaluable due to their fighting skills, knowledge of the terrain, and the ability to blend effortlessly with the local people.

Most Irish, Scots, and Welsh rallied to the Jacobite cause. For Scots and the Welsh, the cause was chiefly about the control of the throne, but in Ireland, the stakes were much higher. For many, it was substantially a religious

and self-determination movement. Some Irish, who had honed their guerrilla warfare skills through the post-Cromwell period, joined the Jacobite army as irregular soldiers. They became known as Rapparees, from the Gaelic *rapaire*, meaning pike-wielding warrior. Rapparees were crucial for the Jacobite cause due to their fighting skills, knowledge of the terrain, and ability to blend effortlessly with the local people. They were encouraged by their communities and highly regarded. A popular song of the time praised the brave Rapparee:

*He has robbed many rich of their gold and their crown.
He has outrode the soldiers who hunted him down.
Alas he has boasted, they'll never take me.
Not a swordsman will capture the wild Rapparee.⁴*

Many men and women from Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes fought as Jacobites.

Jacobites. They served in Jacobite regiments or as irregular soldiers (rapparees) in local fights, including the Battle of Boyle in 1689 and battles in 1690 at Ballymote Castle to the west, Ballyshannon to the north, and the occupation of Sligo town to the northwest. The roads and tracks between Boyle and Sligo were strategically important, with the passage between Boyle and Collooney, particularly challenging. It required passing alongside the steep slopes of the Curlew mountains,⁵ a perfect place for Rapparees, mostly armed with pikes, to ambush Williamite soldiers.⁶ While their Irish brothers and sisters saw them as heroes, the success of Rapparees resulted in the further widespread and indiscriminate killing of thousands of Irish under the pretence they were harbouring Rapparees.⁷ Many townlands were torched, and the Williamite militia destroyed livestock and crops.⁸

Influential Catholics were leading Jacobites, including Colonel Bryan MacDermott from Kilronan parish and Lieutenant Colonel Terence MacDonagh from Geevagh parish.

Connacht was almost exclusively Catholic, and men and women from Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes, including Cullens, fought as

Influential Catholics were leading Jacobites, including Colonel Bryan MacDermott from Kilronan parish⁹ and Lieutenant Colonel Terence MacDonagh from Geevagh parish.¹⁰

Both men were well known, with many local men willing to fight in their company. MacDonagh was noted in the Act of Settlement (1652) as a Lieutenant in James I's army. He was regarded as an enemy of the English crown, and his land was confiscated. His holding in Creevagh was granted to a supporter of Cromwell named Yeadon, who had settled at Boyle. Yeadon, though, did not attempt to remove the MacDonaghs. Some years later, Terence MacDonagh was able to redeem the land from Yeadon.¹¹

In 1660 with Charles II on the throne, MacDonagh returned to Ireland and established a legal practice. After winning a case in sensational circumstances, he acquired the nickname 'Blind' MacDonagh. The case involved two youths who were fishing in a flooded river. One fell in and would have drowned except for his quick-thinking friend, who fished him to safety by hooking him in the eye! The parents of the saved youth attempted to prosecute the parents of the other youth for damages. MacDonagh successfully argued the case for the defence by suggesting: *My clients are willing to pay the damages claimed if the lad is put into the river again and can reach its banks safely by his own efforts.*¹² The case quickly collapsed.

At the onset of the Williamite War, MacDonagh returned to battle. With his cousins from Ballindoon, Tadhg, and Connor MacDonagh, he led a unit of Dillon's regiment from Ballymote Castle.¹³ With 60 or so soldiers and immediate access to 500 strong and willing

local men when required, Captain MacDonagh had a lean, mean fighting machine.¹⁴ They were a major thorn in the side of the English, punching well above their weight, as they frequently engaged the Cootes, Coopers, and Kings¹⁵ who held Collooney Castle for William III¹⁶ and other Williamite forces garrisoned at Boyle, Sligo, and Enniskillen. MacDonagh's unit was secreted in Curlew mountains to ambush the 6th Enniskillen Dragoons and at Boyle town in September 1689 during the Battle of Boyle, an early clash in the Williamite War.

In 1690 MacDonagh took his men north to Ulster when Ballymote Castle fell. He and his men were captured but later released following a prisoner exchange negotiated by Jacobite leader Brigadier Patrick Sarsfield. Following a brief period representing Sligo in the Jacobite parliament in Dublin,¹⁷ MacDonagh returned to Sligo as a lieutenant colonel and was at Sligo town when it fell to the Williamites in September 1691.



Sligo town being taken by Jacobites during the Williamite War

Jacobite soldiers from the parishes fought and died the bloodiest battle ever on Irish soil, the Battle of Aughrim, in July 1691. Over 7,000 lives were lost. The remaining Jacobites regrouped in the mountains of Northern Roscommon, in and around the parishes, before assembling at Limerick for a final and brief siege.

Following the defeat in Sligo, Jacobite soldiers regrouped in Athlone, County Roscommon, fighting and dying at the bloodiest battle ever on Irish soil, the Battle of Aughrim, County Galway, in July 1691. Over 7,000 lives were lost, including men from the parishes. Many were left to rot on the battlefield, their bones

scattered on the ground for eternity.¹⁸ The remaining Jacobites regrouped in the mountains of Northern Roscommon, in and around the parishes, before assembling at Limerick for a final and brief siege. In October 1691, Jacobites and the leaders of their allied French forces agreed to surrender terms through the *Treaty of Limerick*. The treaty guaranteed Catholic liberation, but this did not happen. Victory in the Williamite War precipitated over two centuries of political, economic, and social domination of Ireland by Protestants through extremely harsh penal laws.



View of the Battle of Aughrim, from the Williamite lines looking toward the Jacobite positions.¹⁹

The Jacobite attempt to reinstall James II to the throne failed, and James, the last Catholic monarch of England, Scotland, and Ireland, fled to the court of his cousin and ally, King Louis XIV. The treaty allowed Jacobite leaders and their soldiers to leave Ireland for France and Spain, a departure known as the *Flight of the Wild Geese*.

terms also enabled Jacobite Catholics of influence to retain their property contingent upon them swearing allegiance to William III and Mary II. Many refused to take this oath, and over the next eight years, considerable land was confiscated, and by 1699 almost 4,000 Catholics were on the list of practising Jacobites. Over 170 Catholics living in counties Sligo, Roscommon, and Leitrim were on this list, including surnames such as Dillon, MacDermott, MacDonagh, Plunkett, O'Gara, Kelly, Fitzgerald, O'Connor, McGarry, McManus, Duignan, Gaffney, and Lynch.²⁰

Long standing families suffered the humiliation of being forced to the margins of the land they once owned.

families were new to the area, forced to flee their ancestral land through the 1600s as domestic refugees due to persecution, transplantation, or war. Some were battle-weary, others just weary, but all were determined to prevail, and the parishes' secluded bogs, mountains, and valleys allowed them the refuge to start again. Long-standing families of the area suffered the humiliation of being forced to the margins of land they once owned.

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As the Irish of the Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes ushered in the 1700s, their circumstances were markedly different from their lives just one hundred years earlier. Many

As tenants of new landlords, Irish farmers alienated by race, religion, and custom rallied behind crestfallen clan chiefs.

As tenants of new landlords, some Irish farmers alienated by race, religion, and custom rallied behind crestfallen clan chiefs. They continued a guerrilla war against their usurpers

from their secluded mountain shelters as Tories and Raparees.²¹ Others preferred a lower profile and worked hard to provide for their families. All, though, remained under constant threat due to the expansion of English cattle herds and sheep flocks. This led to repeated fights between landowners and tenant farmers, including houghing livestock.²² So volatile was the area of North Connacht at this time a law was introduced in 1697 which provided a pardon to any Tory who killed two other proclaimed Tories. This statute, extended in 1717, included a pardon to any Tory who tendered the head of one of his fellows.²³

Catholic Ireland had held strong cultural, economic, and religious ties for centuries with Catholic Spain and Catholic France. During the Confederate and Williamite Wars, soldiers from Spain and France fought alongside the Irish against the English. Soldiers from notable families, particularly the O'Rourkes, the MacDonaghs, the MacDermotts, the MacDermott Roes, and O'Farrells from County Longford, left Ireland to take leadership roles in Irish regiments in both Spain and France. Men from local families, including Cullen men, joined these regiments, and this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, *Soldier Simon*. The strong ties also saw the smuggling trade between France to Ireland increase, particularly as the duties on popular commodities such as tea and tobacco grew.²⁴ Large French ships frequently sat off the northwest coast of Ireland, dispatching their consignments by small boats to secluded coves and inlets. Catholics of influence received these goods and then traded them to the folk of the parishes.²⁵ This illicit trade further bolstered the French and the Irish relationship, culminating in the *Year of the French* in 1798, discussed in detail in Chapter 4, *Miley of the Spear*.



The Battle of Aughrim, County Galway, July 1691

Myles of Tir Thuathail

Beside Kilronan Abbey,²⁶ our earliest known Cullen forebear, Myles Cullen, is at rest.



Myles Cullen 1718-1775, buried with other Cullens near Kilronan Abbey.

Dozens of Cullens are buried in the Keadue cemetery, some in Myles' plot and others nearby. His is one of the earliest identifiable graves, and in 2005 a new headstone was erected to commemorate the memory of the Cullen families from Geevagh and Upper Arigna. Smaller unmarked headstones sit connected with Myles' grave, marking the final resting place of family, including the legendary *Miley of the Spear*, whose bravery is celebrated in Chapter 4.

The reference to *Patrick Cullen of thul* links Myles and Patrick to *Tir Thuathail*, the ancient name for Kilronan parish.^{27 28} In the Connacht dialect of Irish, *Thuathail* is pronounced as *Th - hul*²⁹ and was written as such by the stonemason who chiselled the words.



Ireland (**above**) as it was mapped at the time of Myles' birth³⁰. The area in and around the parishes is magnified. This map is one of the first to indicate Glan (Arigna's Glen), revealing its prominence in the area. By 1775, the year of Myles' passing, over 900 Catholic families, including dozens of Cullen families, lived in this secluded, wild, and remote part of Ireland.^{31 32 33} At least half lived in windowless mud cabins. Most were farm dependent, living as labourers, cotters, or farming modest plots of land leased from the McDermott-Roes, Thomas Tenison,³⁴ or John Keogh. Some worked in other occupations, like Simon Cullen from Kilonan, who worked as a stonemason before he became a soldier. Some drew their livelihoods in small villages, including Geevagh (*An Ghaobhach*), Drumkeeran (*Droim Caorthainn*), Ballyfarnon (*Béal Átha Fearnáin*), and Keadue (*Céideadh*). Arigna emerged as a

village in the latter part of the 1700s to support the ironmaking industry. Myles would have known the area as *Cairn An Ailt*, or *pile of rocks on a steep-sided glen*.³⁵ The new village took the same name as the river winding through the glen. Drumkeeran comprised just twelve houses, while Ballyfarnon had ten.

Many of the houses in these small villages were dram houses where whiskey was bought and sold. In remote locations, like Glan, there was little to no regulation in the making and selling of whiskey, and families were skilled in distilling this mountain dew.

dew. Village market days (*Lá margaidh*), held weekly, provided a crucial time and place for locals to meet, buy, and sell. Monthly or seasonal fair days (*Lá aonaigh*) occurred in the larger villages, including Drumkeeran and Ballyfarnon. Fairs days were popular for locals to trade, drink, and sometimes fight.³⁶

by 26 in width. In the surrounding cemetery are tombs to the memory of Catherine Mac Loughlin, *alias* Brehony, obiit 1803, erected by her husband, Barth' "O'Melaghlin;" Owen "Mac Loughlin," their son, and others of their descendants, are also stated to be buried here.—To Margaret Mac Dermott, obiit 1821.—To Thomas Verdon, who died in 1782, and to his wife Jane Magan, erected by their son James.—To Charles Ward, died 1786, and his family.—To John Ward (1812), and his family.—To Bryan Lee, obiit 1790.—To "Maggy" Daly, otherwise Reynolds, obiit 1797, and her descendants.—To Margaret Regan, *alias* Durkin, obiit 1792, and her descendants.—To Myles Cullen, obiit 1795.—To Anthony Daly, obiit 1802, and his descendants.—To Patrick O'Rourke, obiit 1799, erected by his wife Elizabeth.—To Thady Mac Dermott, 1794, and his family.—To Mary Mac Manus, otherwise Berne, died 1822, and her descendants, &c. &c. A singular custom pre-

Many houses in these small villages were dram houses where whiskey was bought and sold. In remote locations like Glan, there was little to no regulation in the making and selling of whiskey, and families were skilled in distilling this mountain

A Myles Cullen had his death and grave expressly mentioned (*see left*), along with other notable local people, by John D'Alton in 1845 in his description of Kilonan Abbey in the *Annals of Boyle*.³⁷

Who was this Myles?

Myles of Tir Thuathail has his stone near the Abbey, but he died in 1775, with his surname written as *Cullon* and his death year clearly marked as 1775. *Miley of the Spear*, on the other hand, gained local fame following his bravery in fighting for Ireland with the French in 1798. He will likely have died in 1798, and his final resting place is beside *Myles of Tir*

Tuathail.³⁸ The inscriptions on the stones on either side of *Myles of Tir Tuathail* have eroded with time. In compiling his work, D'Alton visited the Abbey in the early 1840s, when any inscriptions were probably legible. After speaking with local people, he would have been aware of *Miley of the Spear*. Rather than this Myles Cullen being a third person, it is possible there was a transcription or typesetting error, and D'Alton was referring to *Miley of the Spear*. It is also likely that *Myles of Tir Tuathail* is the father or uncle of *Miley of the Spear*.

Those bearing the Cullen surname³⁹ across the parishes in the 1700s included:

Myles Cullen, who was born in 1718 and died in 1775.

Patrick Cullen, a son, brother, or father to *Myles of Tir Thuathail*.

Thady Cullen, a farm labourer, who lived with his wife and child in Killamey in 1749.⁴⁰

Simon Cullen, who was born in 1754 and is remembered in Chapter 3, *Soldier Simon*.

Myles Cullen, who fought for Ireland with the French in 1798 and celebrated in Chapter 4, *Miley of the Spear*.

An **unknown Cullen** man from Geevagh who was killed at the *Battle Brae*, Drumkeeran, in 1798.⁴¹

Patrick Cullen, who was born around 1770 and was the brother of *Miley of the Spear*.

Dominick Cullen, who was born about 1760 and living in Cabragh, the father of Bernard Cullen, remembered in Chapter 7, *Father Bernard*.

Patrick William Cullen, who was born in 1786 and lived at Glen Ballynashee in 1837. His life is recounted in Chapter 9, *White Horse Cullen*.

Margaret Cullen, nee Curran, the wife of *White Horse Cullen*.

William Cullen, born before 1765, and Honora Cullen, nee Gaffney, who were the parents of *White Horse Cullen*.

Terence Cullen, who was born about 1770 and lived at Killamey.

Myles Cullen, who was born before 1765 and was a farmer in Srabragan.

Patrick Cullen, who was born before 1770 and was a farmer in Srabragan.

A Cullen family was also said to be living in a remote part of Inishmagrath parish, south of Drumkeeran, in the mid-1700s.⁴²

One of the primary population sources for this time, the Census of Elphin (1749),⁴³ does not list returns for Kilronan parish. Also, there are no population details for Inishmagrath parish during the 1700s. This lack of documents is unfortunate as almost all our Cullen clan were living in these two parishes.

The Elphin census offers a glimpse into life at this time in the parishes. The return for the civil parish of Kilmastranny, for example, notes people occupying a range of occupations, including beggar, brogue⁴⁴ maker, cooper, farmer, herd, labourer, merchant, pedlar, priest, schoolmaster, servant, smith, and weaver. The 227 people on the Kilmastranny list are all men, apart from a handful of widows. Only seven on the list were Protestant. House servants, usually young females, were not listed by name. Each man on the list was assumed to have a wife. Amongst the Catholic families, there were 248 children under 14. The only Cullen listed in Kilmastranny was Thady Cullen, a labourer from Killamey who had one dependent child. Others in Killamey included three widowed beggars, Mary Keerin, Margaret McDonagh, and Honora Loughlin, who sadly had three dependent children. If Thady were after wooden casks or barrels, he would have sought Pat Trinon, who was Killamey's cooper. Owen Curran, the brogue maker at Straduff, was his man if he was after a new pair of shoes. His local priest was Father Peter O'Connor at Staduff mountain.

Their Faith and the Penal Laws

The people of the parishes were deeply Catholic, their spiritual origins dating to the 400s with the monastic settlement founded by Saint Patrick in Elphin, County Roscommon.

The infant Myles, or *Mileadh* in Irish, was baptised a Roman Catholic with the Latin name Miliesius, meaning *hero* or *soldier*. Myles is a recurring given name in our Cullen clan.

The people of the parishes held tightly to their values and traditions and promoted their Catholic faith, many wearing scapulars⁴⁵ and carrying rosary beads.⁴⁶ Their religious origins date to the 400s with the monastic settlement founded by Saint Patrick in Elphin, County Roscommon. The first cathedral of the Diocese of Elphin was built in the 1100s. Monasteries, friaries, and abbeys dotted the area through Medieval times. By the early 1600s, at least 18 religious houses flourished in the diocese, most notably the Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines, and Carmelites.⁴⁷ The area was one of the most ecclesiastically important in Ireland. Much of Geevagh parish was administered by the Premonstratensian Holy Trinity Abbey,⁴⁸ located on Trinity Island in the southern part of Lough Key, and the Dominican Ballindoon Abbey on the eastern shore of Lough Arrow, founded by Thomas O'Farrell in 1507. The Franciscan settlement at Tarmon Abbey on the western edge of Lough Allen in Inishmagrath parish was probably connected with Kilonan Abbey on the northern banks of Lough Meelagh.

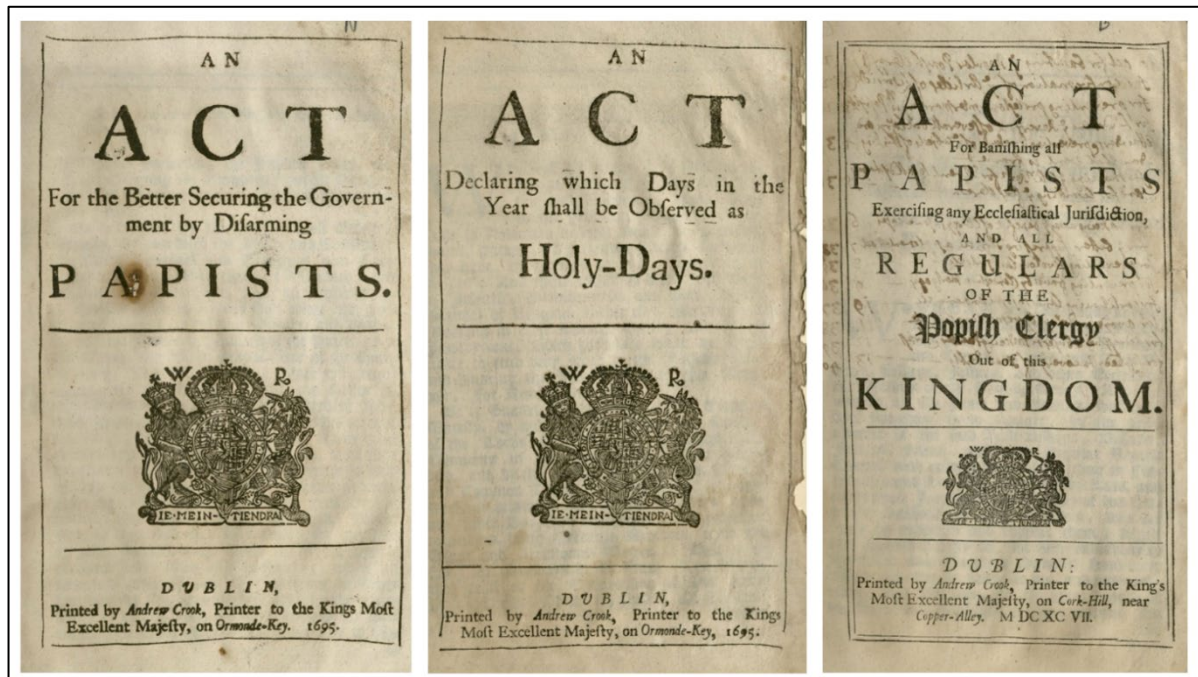
Many local men, mostly on foot, took the fight near and far against their English foe. Some were positioned in the nearby Curlew mountains to ambush the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons and at Boyle town in September 1689 during the Battle of Boyle, an early clash in the Williamite War.

Many of the churches and abbeys had been confiscated by the English or destroyed during the Irish Confederate Wars and the Williamite War. Myles' parents likely supported the Jacobite cause in the Williamite War in an all-or-nothing effort to return the Catholic James II to the

English throne. Some local men, mostly on foot, took the fight near and far against their English foe. Some were positioned in the nearby Curlew mountains to ambush the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons and at Boyle town in September 1689 during the Battle of Boyle, an early clash in the Williamite War.

The Jacobite loss in the Williamite war precipitated a century of Protestant ascendancy and, through a series of harsh penal laws, active discrimination against Catholics. One of the first actions taken by the English was *An Act for the Better Securing the Government by Disarming Papists* (1695).⁴⁹ With a constant fear of uprisings, the English worked quickly to disarm Catholics and bar them from military service. Associated Acts denied Catholics the right to own land, take long-term leases, receive an education, or enter professional occupations and public office. Our Cullen forebears were not even permitted to own a horse valued at more than five pounds! As the term *penal* suggests, Catholics were classed as *offenders* and punished as such.

Further Acts under the penal laws were *An Act Declaring Holy Days* (1695)⁵⁰ and *An Act for Banishing Popish Clergy* (1697).⁵¹



In 1697 the penal laws were extended to banish all Catholic clergy from Ireland.

observing only those religious ceremonies and Saint days on the Protestant religious calendar, and in 1697 the laws were extended to banish all Catholic clergy from Ireland. Archbishops, bishops, deans, priests, monks, and friars were expected to leave Ireland before 1 May 1698. These laws, of course, did not deter the clergy nor the spirited people from the parishes. Friars roamed the countryside, living from remote farm to farm, announcing to all and sundry that the old abbeys would soon be rebuilt and the monks restored.⁵²

The hills, valleys, and bogs of the parishes included many spots ideal for a clandestine Mass.

Peter O'Connor, the parish priest for Kilmactranny, who lived on Straduff mountain.⁵³ Surrounded by hills, these *mountain chapels* made it easy for lookouts to keep an eye trimmed for impending danger. Similarly, many families in Inishmagrath parish heard Mass in a *Bog Chapel* in the townland of Carrowlaur.⁵⁴ Often a large rock⁵⁵ was used as the altar. Mass rocks were also located near existing sacred places such as holy wells. Holy wells also acted as worship sites, including St Lassair's Well near Kilronan Abbey on the banks of Lough Meelagh. Irrespective of the location, the language of Mass was a mix of Latin and Irish.⁵⁶

These acts significantly diminished the times, places, and spaces for Catholic families to worship. From 1695 Catholics were restricted to

The hills, valleys, and bogs of the parishes included many spots ideal for a clandestine Mass. Some priests secreted themselves in the mountains to continue their liturgy, including

The objective of the *Popery Act of 1698* was to reinforce existing anti-Catholic laws and prevent the further growth of the Catholic religion. As such, *Papists*⁵⁷ were compelled to answer on oath when, where, and from whom they last heard Mass, and whether they knew of any Catholic bishops, friars or schools.⁵⁸ The House of Commons sanctioned Priest-hunters, who became active across Ireland and received a considerable bounty if a bishop or priest, they apprehended, was convicted.

Father Moore from Geevagh parish had been forced to live in a mountain cave at Lugmore and lead his services from a Mass rock overlooking the deep valley of Carrickard townland. This did stop two English soldiers, one with a bounty of priest's heads swinging from his horse, from murdering Father Moore.

Penalties for the Catholic clergy usually amounted to life imprisonment or death. In Inishmagrath, Kilronan, and Geevagh parishes, Catholics outnumbered Protestants one hundred to one, and local magistrates generally had little appetite for strictly enacting the laws for fear of agitating the masses. This

reluctance did not stop two English soldiers, one with a bounty of priest's heads swinging from his horse, from murdering Father Moore. Father Moore from Geevagh parish had been forced to live in a mountain cave at Lugmore and lead his services from a Mass rock overlooking the deep valley of Carrickard townland.⁵⁹ St Brigid's Church now sits as a modern replacement for the Lugmor Mass rock. At the fiftieth anniversary of St Brigid's, Father McLoughlin passionately reminded those gathered:⁶⁰

But this morning also, the present, past and future are linked together in a special way. It is a far cry to the day when the first Mass was said fifteen hundred years ago in this parish, in the Patrician Church of Shancough, but it can be truly said that since that time, the continuity of Mass devotion has never been broken here. In the centuries when faith expressed itself unfettered, you had the churches and shrines, the memory of which is perpetuated in the names of townlands like Kilmactranny, Killadoon and Kilmacroy.

From Highwood's heights, you look back down on the Dominican Abbey of Ballindoon whose ruins will stand as a memorial to a great day gone and a sad reminder of alien vandalism. You can recall with pride that when the darkness of the penal days came upon Ireland, the Mass went on in Highwood, and even in the darkest hour we have records of Mass priests who ministered here. We have the old Mass rock in Lugmor, a mute reminder of a people's fidelity and sacrifice.

From 1701 to 1845, Catholics and Protestant dissenters could avoid the restrictions imposed on them by converting to Protestantism, at least in name, thereby qualifying them for full rights under the law.

From 1701 to 1845, Catholics and Protestant dissenters could avoid the restrictions imposed on them by converting to Protestantism, at least in name, thereby qualifying them for full rights under the law. Conversion had to be undertaken in a court of law,

usually the local assizes, by swearing allegiance to the Crown. Conversion also involved renouncing their Catholic faith and receiving a sacrament from a minister of the Church of Ireland. After this process, their name was added to the Convert Rolls.⁶¹ To continue their day-to-day work, many had no choice but to take an oath of conformity to the Protestant church. These tended to be the Catholics with the most to lose, such as freeholders of land and middle-class farmers. Notable family names appeared on the rolls, including O'Connor,

O'Rourke, O'Reilly, and McDermott. Two Cullen men from Kilronan parish were on the rolls. On 19th July 1787, at the Carrick-on-Shannon Assizes in Leitrim, Myles Cullen, a farmer from Srabragan (see below), paid sixpence and converted to Protestantism. Six years later, his brother Patrick Cullen, a weaver from Srabragan, joined him by converting. Most converts, however, maintained a covert commitment to the Catholic Church. In Myles' and Patrick's cases, their grandchildren were baptised Catholic and buried in the Arigna Catholic Cemetery.

Parties Names -	Residence -	When Qualified -	Where -
Comy Edward Gent	Hermitage Co: Roscommon	5 th 2 ^o	2 ^o
Cassidy Myles Merchant	Kilcorky Co: Roscommon	1 st 6 th 1791	2 ^o
Clarke Simon Esq: off: D:	Leghawnagh	20 th March 1783	2 ^o
Comyn Andrew Gent	Elphin Co: Roscommon	8 th 2 ^o	2 ^o
Cullen Myles Farmer	Srabragan Co: Roscommon	19 th July 1787	2 ^o
Con Edmond	Southpark Co: Roscommon	off: 1779	2 ^o
Conry John Farmer	Lisderm Co: Roscommon	off: 1779	2 ^o

If a key aim of the penal laws was to suppress the Catholic spirit, then it failed, as the harsh statutes further emboldened the psyche of the Irish to resist, rebel, and fight the English occupation.

It is easy to imagine how Myles of Tir Thuathail, his family, and other Cullen families would have responded to the penal laws. A big *kiss my behind*, I would suggest! If a key aim of the penal laws was to suppress the Catholic spirit, then it failed, as the harsh statutes further emboldened the Irish psyche motivating many to resist, rebel, and fight the English occupation. For others, further death and ruin was the last thing they wanted.

Two men well known to the people of the parishes, Charles O'Connor and John Keogh had a significant role in the withdrawal of the penal laws.

Most of the penal laws were removed by 1793 with two men, well known to the people of the parishes, Charles O'Connor of Bellanagare, County Roscommon, and John Keogh of Geevagh, who owned a large portion of Geevagh parish, each having a significant role in their withdrawal. O'Connor, who held ancestral land in Roscommon, was a descendent of Toirdhealbhach Óg Donn Ó Conchobair (Turlough O'Connor 1384-1406), a King of Connacht. As a central figure in the newly formed Catholic Association from 1757, he worked hard to rally Catholics against the penal laws. He also had an unwavering commitment to the Catholic church and wrote extensively about Irish history and Gaelic culture. In stark contrast, John Keogh was a self-made man who rose from obscurity to become one of the most influential Catholics in Ireland in the 1790s.

Unlike County Sligo and County Leitrim, which had been planted with English and Scottish soldiers in the 1600s, much of the land in County Roscommon was retained under a unique royal title by the influential Catholics of local heritage, including the McDermotts, McDermott-Roes, McDonaghs, and O'Connors.

Unlike County Sligo and County Leitrim, which had been planted with English and Scottish soldiers in the 1600s, much of the land in County Roscommon was retained under a unique royal title by the influential Catholics of local heritage, including the McDermotts, McDermott-Roes, McDonaghs, and O'Connors. These

families preserved some wealth and exerted considerable influence. Most received an education abroad and, through the 1700s, played principal roles in Irish religious, intellectual, military, mercantile, agricultural, and political affairs.⁶² Thomas McDermott-Roe, for example, was born in Kilronan parish around 1697. Following an extensive education in Paris, he received a Master of Arts in 1728 and was appointed the Kilronan parish priest upon his return. McDermott subsequently became the Vicar General,⁶³ and in 1747, Pope Benedict XIV confirmed him as the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. Many men from these influential families led Irish regiments in French and Spanish armies, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, *Soldier Simon*.

Banned from professional occupations and owning, many Irish turned their hand to mercantile endeavours, including land speculation abroad and trade.

In a wonderfully ironic twist, the penal laws contributed to the emergence of a robust Irish Catholic middle-class.⁶⁴ Banned from professional occupations and owning

land for much of the 1700s, many Irish, including those of considerable influence, turned to mercantile endeavours, including land speculation abroad and trade.

As our Cullen patriarch Myles' was drawing his last breaths in April 1775, the first shots rang out to start the American Revolutionary War, and by 1783 the independent United States of America was a popular destination for the Irish seeking new lives and opportunities.

The O'Connor's of Bellanagare, in collaboration with the McDermott family looked to purchase 40,000 acres on the Potomac River in Virginia to establish an Irish colony. Two men from the families, Hugh O'Connor, and Charles McDermott travelled to Virginia to manage the purchase. The purchase failed to the angst of all concerned, with Hugh even petitioning George Washington, the first President of the United States, to intervene in the matter!

In 1791 Charles O'Connor of Mount Allen, in Kilronan parish, the second son of Charles O'Connor of Bellanagare, hosted the French consul, Coquebert de Montbret, during his tour of Connacht. Charles' senior and junior met with him and discussed their plan to purchase 40,000 acres on the Potomac River in Virginia to establish an Irish colony in collaboration with the McDermott family. While it was illegal to offer

Irish families an inducement to emigrate, Charles senior intimated to the consul the excellent

name of both families would ensure the venture was a success.⁶⁵ Two men from the families, Hugh O'Connor and Charles McDermott, were responsible for travelling to Virginia to manage the purchase. The purchase failed to the angst of all concerned, with Hugh even petitioning George Washington, the first President of the United States, to intervene in the matter! The text of his letter, as written, is on **page 17**.⁶⁶

President Washington declined to intervene but did provide details about where Hugh may purchase land elsewhere on the Potomac River. Clearly, the families of influence in the parishes were looking to the United States to make money and assist the Irish locally in establishing new lives.

The English were becoming increasingly concerned about the rising power held by Catholics in trade. This concern was flagged as early as 1718 when William King, the Archbishop of Dublin, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury warning, *I may further observe that the papists being made incapable to purchase lands, have turned themselves to trade, and already engrossed almost all trade in the kingdom*.⁶⁷ While some of the business was legal, much of it was illegal. Much of the illicit trade involved the smuggling of goods into Ireland, which the English heavily taxed as a revenue source to assist their constant war efforts. Smugglers often used the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and the French coast as holding and distribution centres. Secluded coves and inlets the length and breadth of the Irish coast, including Counties Galway, Mayo, Sligo, and Donegal, provided perfect sanctuary for their covert activity.

Many men from Catholic families of influence in the and around the parishes played a leading role in both legal and illegal trade, with the people of the Kilronan, Geevagh, and Inishmagrath parishes not only benefiting from cheaper goods but also taking the opportunity to seek their fortunes.

The goods smuggled included tea, tobacco, wine, silk, and spirits. Skilled sailors and reliable vessels were easy to hire, with it commonplace for sailors to buy a share of the cargo to receive payment for their services and a part profit. As it was often called, this smuggling club ensured all

remained tight-lipped if pressured by customs and excise officers. The French East India Company provided smugglers with a ready supply of tea. Spain, France, and Portugal provided brandy and wine. The vast sugar plantations of the West Indies ensured rum was a commonly traded commodity, while Dutch gin was also a popular commodity. However, the most lucrative trading commodity was tobacco, grown in Maryland and Virginia's emerging North American communities, often supported by Irish capital and labour.

Many men from Catholic families of influence in the and around the parishes played a leading role in both legal and illegal trade, with the people of the Kilronan, Geevagh, and Inishmagrath parishes not only benefiting from cheaper goods but also taking the opportunity to seek their fortunes.

To George Washington from Hugh O'Connor, 22 September 1791

From Hugh O'Connor

Philedelphia Sept 22nd 1791

Please your Excellency,

I hope youll Excuse the liberty I take in addressing you. I am a Native of Ireland and a Bror of mine Councillor John oConnor wrote to me last year a most flattering letter to come to America with my family. at the same time he Inclosed me a Contract he made with Coll Wm Deakeins Junr for 40000 Acres of his Lands Situate from 15 to 25 Miles from the head Navigation of the Patowmack River in Consequence of this Contract a friend of mine mr Charles oConnor and I: got upwards of thirty Gentlemen of Fortune some of which are the first Merchants in Dublin and the Cashier of the Bank of Waterford who all agreed for the purchase of the above tract of Lands provided they answered the Description set forth by mr Deakeins in his Contract, they Commissioned a mr Charles mcDermott and me to come out to regulate all preliminaries relative to this purchase. but my being obliged to waite to Dispose of my Lands in Ireland and having along family Consisting of a wife and seven Children wee could not be together. but on my Arrival here I was Informed that mr mcDermott Waited on mr Deakeins and his Answer was that he had no ground this Side of the Alleagany mountains. on which mr mcDermott went to Ireland before I arrived here without purchaseing any ground. however I have as much power as he had. if I could get a tract of land in any of the three States this Maryland or Virginia in a good Country Convenient to A Navigable River and Commercial Town I would purchase it and go to Ireland and leave my family here and I would bring out this Collony. I have been the principle Sufferer by mr Deakeins not abiding by his Contract, for my Voyage Cost me upwards of £200. and I was so provoked at the Disopointmt that I would return, but some friends of mine prevailed on me to Waite some time and Endeavour to make out a Clear plantation for myself. but I am quite at a loss for any friend that would find me Such a tract as I want. but from your great and Humane Character I take this liberty of Informing you of my Situation and hope you will honor me with an Answer directed for me to mr Cary the printer here—I am with great respect your Excellency's most obedt Humble Servant

Hugh OConnor



An example of this *rags-to-riches* tale is John Keogh. The actions of George Keogh in 1908 and the impact of the evictions he ordered on the Keogh estate remain a painful memory. Even today, the Keogh name shudders the spines of many in Geevagh parish. He was not the man his great-grandfather John Keogh was. John Keogh profoundly influenced the Irish of the parishes and the country itself.

John Keogh (**left**) died in 1817, a wealthy man who had enjoyed a successful career in the silk trade, property development, and politics. He was a leading Catholic emancipist and political activist who was instrumental in repealing the penal laws and once declared he *devoted near thirty years of his life for the purpose of breaking the chains of his countrymen*.⁶⁸

As a result of Cromwellian settlements, most of the land in Geevagh parish had remained in

the hands of English families and soldiers until 1775 when Keogh was permitted to lease over 3,000 acres in Counties Sligo, Roscommon, and Leitrim. In 1788 following the passing of the first of the *Catholic Relief Acts*, where conveniently, he had played the crucial role in arguing the case, Keogh was able to purchase much of the land in Geevagh parish. His holdings included 450 acres in Cabragh (*An Chabrach*), 605 acres in Tap (*Ceathrú Mhic Cíosóg*), 801 acres in Carrowcashel (*Ceathrú Chaisil*) and Glen Carrowcashel (*An Gleann Ceathrú Chaisil*), 743 acres in Tullynure (*Tulaigh an Iúir*) and Glen Tullynure (*An Gleann Tulaigh an Iúir*), 746 acres in Straduff (*An tSraith Dhuibh*) and Glen Straduff (*An Gleann An tSraith Dhuibh*), and 1165 acres in Ballynashee (*Baile na Sí*) and Glen Ballynashee (*An Gleann Baile na Sí*).^{69 70} This acquisition enabled many more Catholic families to take farming leases in the Geevagh parish, and numerous Cullen families drew their livelihoods from Keogh's land into the 1800s.

John Keogh emerged from very humble beginnings. He was born in c1740, the son of a poor farmer, probably in Athlone, Roscommon,⁷¹ who left home to try his luck in Dublin. He went to the Isle of Man and became an apprentice in a merchant firm run by three O'Connor brothers, Valentine, Hugh, and Malachy.⁷² They were likely heavily involved in smuggling

wool, cotton, sugar, rum, wine, and other spirits.⁷³ In c1769, the recently widowed Mary Francis Lincoln, a leading silk mercer⁷⁴ in Dublin, gave Keogh work. John Keogh eventually bought into the business, resulting in a highly successful partnership lasting about three years until Keogh decided to start his own business. The relationship quickly soured, resulting in nasty legal battles over the distribution of the business assets, during which Mrs Lincoln waged a payback campaign suggesting Keogh was dishonest. The matter was eventually resolved, with each party receiving £10,000 from the sale, a tidy sum for the times.⁷⁵ Apart from silk, Keogh also invested in brewing.

John Keogh began political activism in the 1780s, arguing for Catholic rights and abolishing the penal laws. By 1790 he had gained the confidence of leading Anglo-Irish statesman and Member of Parliament Edmund Burke. He also led the Catholic Committee, the same association co-founded by Charles O'Connor some years earlier. Keogh invited a young Theobald Wolfe Tone onto the committee, and both provided pivotal arguments for the passing of the Catholic Relief Acts (1771-1793), which effectively ended the penal laws. Tone had looked to Keogh with a *certain degree of hero worship as the first creator of democratic agitation in Ireland*.⁷⁶

In his political activism, Keogh was often mocked by his opponents for his shadowy beginnings. He would stare down his detractors and, in a classic back-at-you moment, once announced *he was the founder of his own fortune and that it was not dishonourable to be without a hereditary estate in a country where robbery, under the form of confiscation or the penal code, has deprived all the ancient Irish of their property*.⁷⁷

Keogh's political acumen was legendary. On 5 March 1829, more than a decade after his death, the *Sligo Observer* ran a story entitled, *A short history of associations, agitation and rent in Ireland*. The piece discussed John Keogh and his presence during debates about the Catholic Relief Acts:

About 1792 the stimulating influence of the Volunteers, and the conduct of John Keogh, a man of intents and address, produced a change in the character of the General Committee...

In 1792 the election took place as the delegates assembled in Dublin. It is a curious fact, that one of the representatives from Clare on the occasion, was a Daniel O'Connell, Esq-(See Tone's memoirs.)

...At their head was John Keogh, although Mr Byrne was called to the chair. Keogh sprang from the middle class. He was a silk-mercantile, in Parliament Street, Dublin, and was very successful in trade. His education was not liberal, but he had a vigorous, stubborn intellect: his manner was simple and energetic; he was a ready, fluent, and skilful speaker; and was of a sanguine intrepid, unconquerable disposition. Keogh was rather under than over middle size; but still he was a man of powerful bearing; his eyes had a particular brilliancy, and he combined a very extraordinary manner, vehemence of feeling, with the coolness and inculcation of wisdom. In debate he was without an equal; perhaps more eloquent speeches might have been spoken in the discussion, but assuredly, whatever John Keogh proposed, was sure to be carried...

Wolfe Tone, who called him Gog⁷⁸, wrote at the time of one of Keogh's many arrests, *I can scarcely promise myself to ever see him again, and I can sincerely say that one of the greatest pleasures which I anticipated in case of our successes was the society of Mount Jerome, where I have spent many happy days, and some of them serviceable to the country. It was there he and I used to frame our papers and manifestoes. It was there we drew up the petition and vindication of Catholics which produced such powerful effects both in England and Ireland*.⁷⁹ Wolfe Tone often travelled the countryside with Keogh, meeting and

greeting local people during their trips. It is easy to imagine Keogh and Tone in a carriage, together taking the journey from Dublin and veering north at Boyle, venturing onto the old track through the villages at Keadue, Ballyfarnon, and Geevagh, maybe chatting with a few Cullens on the way, to stay at one of the Keogh estates, resting for a day or two at Ballynashee Lodge.

Town and Farming Life

Although now tenant farmers on reduced holdings, the people in the parishes used many farming methods and practices that had prevailed for centuries. They represented an old Ireland where time had seemingly stood still.⁸⁰ The country they farmed in was hilly and rugged, with large tracts of bog. Oats and potatoes were grown on arable land, nourished by the frequent flooding of the Feorish and Arigna Rivers. They ran small herds of long-horned Irish cattle and bred pigs. Growing flax for spinning and weaving linen expanded in the latter years of the 1700s,⁸¹ with the raw yarn sent to markets in Sligo, Drogheda, and Dublin.

The slopes of Curran Hill, Corry Mountain, and Kilronan Mountain were used extensively by the farmers of the Geevagh, Inishmagrath, and Kilronan parishes as booley or summer pasture mainly for cattle.

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The stock movement enabled the farmer's best lowland pastures to replenish for the autumn and winter and free up some additional land for tillage. The term booleying is derived from the Irish word *buaile*, meaning an enclosure for cattle or a milking place. The expression is noted in townlands such as Boleymaguire (*Buaile Mhig Uidhir*) or Maguire's Booley, on the south-western slope of Corry Mountain in Inishmagrath parish. As sheep herds grew through the latter part of the 1700s,⁸² they, too, were moved to upland pastures. Many of the townlands included mountain slopes, leased by tenant farmers as common land from the landholder or leased directly from the landlord for a fee. Farmers had limited access to upland pasture in some areas, and often lots were cast to create a cyclical order to manage resource use.

It was commonplace for farmers to send their male and female elder children to mountain pastures to care for the herd. They sheltered in booley huts and could be away from their families for over four months. Booleying was an important responsibility, and an essential task was ensuring the cows were milked daily, the milk used mainly for churning butter. The milk and butter could be collected regularly if the distance between the booley hut and the farmhouse was relatively close. Alternatively, butter was stored in an annex in the booley hut or kept very effectively for extended periods in a bog. Due to its low temperature, lack of oxygen, and high acidity, the bog was an excellent preservative.⁸³

Seasonal booleying also had an important social and cultural element and was seen by the young as a coming-of-age experience as they transitioned from child to adult.

Seasonal booleying also had an important social and cultural element and was seen by the young as a coming-of-age experience as they transitioned from child to adult. It

was a perfect time and place for young people to sing, dance, tell stories, and play music. The folk memory of the Irish reminisces with delight the booley experience,⁸⁴ and maybe a young William Cullen and Honora Gaffney shared their first warm glance on the slopes of Currane Hill! The traditional song *Aililiú na Gamhna*⁸⁵ is a moving reflection of a young women's booley experience.

It was not until the late 1600s that the potato found its way into the daily fare of people in the northwest of Ireland. Oats, though, had been a mainstay of the Irish diet for thousands of years. While Myles and his family were able to manage their potato crop, the production of their oats into food required much more work and involved many steps, including cutting, stooking, drying, threshing, flailing, winnowing, and sieving; tasks all done by hand. To manage many of these tasks, Myles and his neighbours joined forces. During the sieving process, the part that passed through the sieve was called the meal and used to make bread and porridge. The remainder, called seeds, was used to create a fermented flummery *by placing it in soft water until it ferments, which it does in one, two or three days according to the temperature. If it becomes too sour this is remedied by decanting the heated liquid and replacing it with fresh water. After fifteen days, when the starchy substance has detached itself, it is strained or evaporated at the fire leaving a fine paste of the consistence of blancmange enjoyed with milk and sugar. When eaten with bread it is called cafri cuthbhruith.*⁸⁶

In good times the daily menu for Myles and his family was potatoes, buttermilk, eggs, and oatmeal. Rabbits, chickens, ducks, and geese provided variety to their diet. The rivers and Loughs Allen, Meelagh, and Skean provided pike, eel, trout, and perch that also helped fill their bellies. Excepting religious feasts, they rarely ate beef or pork. The ready supply of turf ensured they kept warm in winter and had fuel to cook their meals. Hand-made creels resting on the back of their donkey made the passage of goods and turf across the valleys and hills much more manageable.

Bliain an Áir

The vagaries of the weather and poor yields could result in a famine at any time, placing immense pressure on Myles and his family. They drew heavily on their Gaelic roots to counter the never-ending challenges and worked in *meitheal*⁸⁷ with other Cullens and their neighbours to share labour, food, and industry to ensure survival. This closeness ensured they endured the disastrous famine of 1740 and 1741. Known as *Bliain an Áir* or the *Year of the Slaughter*, up to 30 percent of the Irish died from extreme cold, starvation, or disease.

The vast Lough Allen froze for the first time in recorded history.

Severe freezing weather, estimated at -12°C for continuous periods during the Christmas and new year period of 1739/1740, caused the land and

waterways to freeze, including the vast Lough Allen, which reportedly froze for the only time in recorded history.⁸⁸ All crops, including staples, oats, and potatoes, failed. Any potatoes available at markets quadrupled in price, putting them out of reach for almost all families. With no seed potatoes available, there was no potato crop for the Cullen families in 1741. Much of the turf dug for use over the winter months quickly disappeared to keep people warm, which produced a further crisis as the cold, dry, windy weather continued. Most farm animals perished due to the lack of feed. The 1740-41 famine produced hardships comparable to the worst hunger years from 1845-1852. It is impossible to know how 22-year-old Myles, his family, and the other families in the area survived. Many perished, with the young and the elderly the most vulnerable. Lesser famines in 1757, 1765, and 1770 again challenged the resolve of the families of the parishes.⁸⁹ In these challenging times, farmers in the parishes often looked to their sheep as an additional source of milk and butter. They also ate sorrel and other edible herbs cooked in blood taken from their animals.⁹⁰

W E H Lecky (1838-1903), a historian who wrote extensively about Irish and English history in the 1700s, observed:⁹¹

[The famine] of 1740 and 1741, which followed the great frost at the end of 1739, though it hardly left a trace in history, and hardly excited any attention in England, was one of the most fearful on record. 'Want and misery,' wrote a contemporary observer, 'are in every face, the rich unable to relieve the poor, the roads spread with dead and dying bodies, mankind the colour of the docks and nettles they feed on, two or three sometimes on a car going to the grave for want of bearers to carry them, and many buried only in the fields and ditches where they perished. The universal scarcity was followed by fluxes and malignant fevers, which swept multitudes of all sorts, so that whole villages were laid waste.'

Through much of the 1700s, there were no roads and bridges in the modern sense, just dozens of well-worn tracks and rudimentary river crossings that were centuries in the making. The rugged terrain across the parishes, with mountains, drumlins, valleys, and bog, made travel by foot, laden donkey, horseback, or cart difficult and often dangerous.

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limestone that provided a solid base for some sections.⁹³ Myles witnessed the excavation of the first roads and bridges through the parishes, with construction commencing sometime after 1760.⁹⁴

Great swathes across Ireland, including the area covering the parishes, were mapped in the early 1800s.⁹⁵ While many of the old tracks have long vanished, it is possible to understand how and where Myles and other Cullens may have travelled for work, prayer, and play. An old track in Inishmagrath parish runs from Boleymaguire (just across the Arigna River from

Glen Tullynure) through Derrycuillinan to Drumkeeran. Similarly, a path seemingly starts from Glackaunadarragh, also just on the Inishmagrath side of the Arigna River, and bordering Altagowlan (Kilronan parish), Glen Ballynashee, Glen Straduff, and GlenTullynure following the north side of the river closely through to Mount Allen and then south to Drumshanbo and beyond. A third track, also originating in Glackaunadarragh, appears to follow the County Leitrim / Country Roscommon border through Tents, Ardlougher, and then Catron, where it meets with the Drumerkeeran / Drumshanbo road. Other tracks traverse the Inishmagrath / Kilronan parish borders linking townlands from either side. In contrast, there do not seem to be the same linkages south from the Arigna valley into the Geevagh parish. There is, though, a track that runs almost parallel with the bases of Kilronan mountain and Currane hill from Gubbarudda through Straduff and Carrowcashel, then past Saint James's Well and beyond.

Until John Keogh acquired his land in Geevagh parish, most of the Cullen families were likely living in Inishmagrath and Kilronan parishes, and the pathways through them would have been used extensively by them. Many smaller trails would have connected individual farms and townlands, eventually joining the larger tracks, forming a complex network of travel. When Cullen families began to take Keogh leases on the southern banks of the Arigna's glen, much of their movement would have most likely remained northward by crossing the river rather than cutting new paths across Currane Hill. This may explain why Patrick William Cullen and Margaret Curran chose the old catholic church in Drumshanbo for their marriage.

The banks of the river Arigna were raised up to three metres above the riverbed to decrease its rate of flooding as it wound its way through Glan.

In the mid-1700s, alongside other Cullens, Myles lent a hand in a community effort to raise the banks of the Arigna River as it wound its path through Glan. The banks in some

areas were raised to three metres higher than the riverbed, significantly decreasing the river flooding rate. Charles O'Connor depicted the Arigna River as a natural curiosity noting:⁹⁶

No river in this kingdom swells so suddenly after a fall of rain, the torrent being irresistible, and carrying along an immense quantity of fine earth, sand and mountain sludge, etc. In the first four miles of its course, through the glyn which divides the two mountains, it has many rapid falls through the rocks, and runs a line rather straighter than when it entirely quits the mountains at Argnach (Arigna) Bridge; after it passes this bridge, it meanders through a valley for near three miles, rendered, by its overflowings, almost as flat as a water level, and mightily enriched by its depositing there much of its fine earth and sediment.

Arigna or *An Airgnigh* in Irish means *the plundering*, hence the plundering river. The oats crop in Arigna's glen was said to ripen three weeks earlier than the crops in surrounding counties due to the richness of the soil and the intensity of the sunlight reflected from the sides of the mountains that formed the valley. There was only one mill on the river, mainly used to grind oat malt for distilling *poitín* or pot whiskey, a practice lamented by O'Connor:⁹⁷

I think this a proper place, to give an account of another species of employment, in which the inhabitants of this parish and adjacent district, spend much of their time, namely, that of distilling. As every cottager, to a man, distills his oats into spirits, every cabin becomes alternatively a whiskey house, until the produce is drank. The neighbours making it a point to help out the consumption of their friends produce, he, in turn, pays his compliment in the same way; and a rotation of idleness and drinking is the consequence. The women also, being rather idler than the men, seem very great promoters of this traffic.

Despite the threats posed by the penal laws, people often gathered, within and across families, to pray, mourn, sing, dance, or rejoice, especially at wakes or weddings. They were essential during religious and Gaelic celebrations such as St Brigid's Day, St Patrick's Day, Easter, May Day (Bealtaine), St John's Eve (Bonfire Night), All Hollows Eve, Samhain, Christmas, and St Stephen's Day.

Despite the threats posed by the penal laws, people often gathered, within and across families, to pray, mourn, sing, dance, or rejoice, especially at wakes or weddings. They were essential during religious and Gaelic celebrations such as St Brigid's Day, St Patrick's Day, Easter, May Day (Bealtaine), St John's Eve (Bonfire Night), All Hollows Eve, Samhain, Christmas, and St Stephen's Day.

There is no doubt the families in the parishes had a challenging existence, but this doesn't mean they did not enjoy themselves and have fun. It is believed Halloween grew from the Gaelic festival, Samhain. Samhain occurs the day following All Hallows Eve and dates to over 2,000 years ago in Rathcroghan Cave, County Roscommon, just 20km due south of Arigna.⁹⁸

The Arigna Iron Works

Ironworking was labour-intensive, and Dunbar and Coote sought hundreds of skilled workers from England and Scotland to undertake the work. This caused significant animosity among local Irish, and it was little surprise these ironworks were destroyed during the Irish Confederate Wars in 1641.

The Irish used the rich iron-ore deposits around Lough Allen for smelting iron through the ages. Through the early 1600s, the English began to exploit the resource. James Dunbar and Charles Coote built commercial ironworks in Counties Leitrim and Roscommon, probably drawing iron ore from sources west of

Lough Allen.⁹⁹ Ironworking was labour-intensive, and Dunbar and Coote sought hundreds of skilled workers from England and Scotland to undertake the work. This caused significant animosity among local Irish, and it was little surprise these ironworks were destroyed during the Irish Confederate Wars in 1641.¹⁰⁰ The ironworks relied heavily on charcoal from burning wood to heat their furnaces. The northwest of Ireland was once heavily wooded,¹⁰¹ and through Myles' lifetime, the last remnants of native forests all but disappeared. This rendered many local place names such as Ballycullen (*Bhaile an Choillín* - Town of the Little Wood), Derrynaslieve (*Dhoire na Sliabh* - Oakwood of the Mountain), Tullynure (*Tulaigh an Iúir* - Yew-tree Hillock), Cuillard (*An Choill Ard* - High Wood),

Kilmore (*An Choill Mhór* – Big Wood), and Glackaunadarragh (*Glacán na Darach* - Hollow of the Oakwood) somewhat obsolete!

Arigna was a perfect site for ironmaking with abundant supplies of iron-ore, coal, limestone, and clay.

By Myles' passing, coke made by heating coal in the absence of air had replaced charcoal in ironworks. Ironworks were only sustainable in areas with abundant coal, iron ore, and limestone supplies. Limestone acts as a flux to remove impurities from iron. Arigna was a perfect site with generous amounts of coal, iron ore, and limestone. Much of the land also carried a one-metre clay seam necessary to make bricks for furnaces and forges.¹⁰² Thomas Tenison, by this time, owned the land around Arigna.¹⁰³ Realising the commercial potential of iron production, he encouraged the wealthy O'Reilly family from Dublin, who had some ironmaking and selling expertise, to invest in the venture. Substantial leases were quickly arranged for favourable land in Arigna and Aughabehy, and modern ironworks were built under Thomas O'Reilly's direction. Even though O'Reilly, too, imported some skilled labour from England, the ironworks at its peak in 1790 had turned Arigna into an industrial village, with over 300 local men employed to mine and cart ironstone and coal and perform a host of ancillary work. This work was a godsend for local Cullen families, some of whom leased small plots of farmland on the Tenison Estate. Ironmaking, with varying levels of success, continued until the late 1830s, when the focus of the enterprise shifted predominantly to coal production and local collieries were established.

Former owner Thomas O'Reilly, a Catholic, joined the United Irishmen and joined with local Defenders to seize control of the Arigna Ironworks in June 1795 and oversee the manufacture of 600 pikes to support the local uprising.

Through the period of iron making, the big winner was Tenison, who received significant royalties for the coal removed from his ground. On the other hand, Thomas O'Reilly was not experiencing the same financial joy. He petitioned the House of Commons

several times for financial assistance to keep his forges operational. He was continually denied, forcing him to borrow money from La Touche Bank in Dublin to keep the business active. The financing did little to help the situation, and by 1793 the O'Reilly family was bankrupt and defaulted on their bank loan. A bank principal, Peter La Touch, subsequently purchased the company.

The Fire for Rebellion Burns Once More

In 1796 another Frenchman, Chevalier De Latocnaye,¹⁰⁴ journeyed through Connacht and captured the following desperate and inescapable scene:

The nakedness of the poor...is most unpleasant – is it not possible to organise industry which would enable these people to lead a less painful existence? Their huts are not like the houses of men and yet out of them troops flocks of children healthy and fresh as roses. Their state can be observed all the easier, since they are often as naked as the hand, and play in front of the cabins with no clothing but what nature has given them. These poor folk reduced to such misery as cannot be imagined...They live on potatoes, and they have for that edible (which is all in all to them) a singular respect, attributing to

it all that happens to them. I asked a peasant, who had a dozen pretty children, "how is it that your countrymen have so many healthy children?" "It's the praties, Sir," he replied.

On May 26th, 1793, a Cullen man from Geevagh was one of ten who lost his life alongside other Defenders in a fight for liberty against the English at *Battle Brae*, near Drumkeeran in Inishmagrath parish.

This scene of all-pervading poverty indicated how most Irish lived through the 1700s. At the same time as the Keogh, Wolfe Tone, and other United Irishmen were finalising their arguments for passing the Catholic

Relief Acts, some rural Irishmen were taking matters into their own hands, organising their own defence against attacks by Protestant militia. Armed only with pikes and pitchforks, *Defenders*, as they become known, snowballed in numbers, and by 1793 fierce battles between English soldiers and Defenders were a frequent occurrence. On May 26th, 1793, a Cullen man from Geevagh was one of ten who lost his life fighting alongside Defenders against the English at *Battle Brae*,¹⁰⁵ near Drumkeeran in Inishmagrath parish.

A Catholic, Thomas O'Reilly joined the United Irishmen and, with local Defenders, seized control of the Arigna Ironworks he once owned in June 1795 and oversaw the manufacture of 600 pikes to support the local uprising.¹⁰⁶ Similar scenes in other parts of Ireland had the country on a knife edge. With the United Irishmen and Defenders in an unsigned alliance against the English, the stage was well and truly set for outright rebellion, the detail of which is discussed in Chapter 4, *Miley of the Spear*.

¹ D'Alton, J. (1845). *The History of Ireland: From the Earliest Period to the Year 1245, when the Annals of Boyle, which are Adopted and Embodied as the Running Text Authority, Terminate: with a Brief Essay on the Native Annalists, and Other Sources for Illustrating Ireland, and Full Statistical and Historical Notices of the Barony of Boyle*, Volume 1. John D'Alton (1792–1867) an Irish lawyer, historian and genealogist who devoted his life to the study of Irish antiquities.

² A member of a group of English Protestants of the late 1500s and 1600s centuries who regarded the Reformation of the Church of England under Elizabeth as incomplete and sought to simplify and regulate forms of worship.

³ The term Jacobite is derived from the Latin word *Jacobus* (James) and describes those who supported James II in the Williamite War.

⁴ Gallagher, R. (2015). Irish Partisans: Rapparees of the Williamite Wars, 1689-1691. *Irish Marxist Review*, Vol. 4, No. 13. www.irishmarxistreview.net/index.php/imr/article/viewFile/185/181

⁵ From the Irish *An Corshliabh* meaning the rough or rugged mountain.

⁶ Seward, D. (2019). *The King over the Water. A Complete History of the Jacobites*. Birlinn Limited, Edinburgh.

⁷ Op. cit., Gallagher (2015).

⁸ Op. cit., Seward (2019).

⁹ D'Alton, J. (1885). *King James' Irish Army List (1689)*. Second Edition, Author.

¹⁰ As you read about Terence MacDonagh listen to the piece of music at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocx-3c175UQ> This piece was composed by blind Irish harper Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738) on the occasion of the death of Terence MacDonagh in 1713.

¹¹ MacDonagh, J. C. (1947). Counsellor Terence MacDonagh: A Great catholic Lawyer of the Penal Days. *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 36, No. 143, pp. 307-318.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The McDonagh clan had held the castle since the 1300s.

¹⁴ Childs, J. (2007). *The Williamite Wars in Ireland, 1688-1691*. Continuum Books, London & New York.

¹⁵ Richard Coote and Robert King were both members of the English parliament while Cornet Edward Cooper served under Cromwell and was granted Markree Castle (Collooney Castle). Prior to Cromwell the castle was owned by the MacDonagh clan.

¹⁶ Op. cit., MacDonagh (1947).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Childs, J. (2007). *The Williamite Wars in Ireland, 1688-1691*, Continuum Books, London & New York.

¹⁹ Jan Wyk 21 July 1691 *Battle of Aughrim*. Public Domain.

²⁰ Simms, J.G. (1960). Irish Jacobites, *Analecta Hibernica*, No 22. The Irish Manuscripts Commission Ltd.

²¹ Lecky, W.E.H. (1892). *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, Volume 5. Longman, Green & Company, London.

²² Ibid. Houghing involved cutting an animal's leg tendon, rendering it immobile and forcing its eventual death.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cullen, L. M. (1969). The Smuggling Trade in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*. Vol. 67, pp. 149-175

²⁵ Patterson, J.G. (2006). Republicanism, Agrarianism and Banditry in the West of Ireland, 1798-1803. *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 137, pp 17-39.

²⁶ Kiltonan Abbey, built by the O'Duignan family in the 1300s was also the place of internment for Turlough O'Carolan, the famed blind harper and composer.

²⁷ Genes and Septs Reunited: History and Genetics Synthesized in the Families of McManus and O'Connor of Connacht, Ireland. <http://mexlist.com/mcmanus/mcmanusoconoreessay1.htm>

²⁸ Kelly, M. & Lynch, J. (1848). *Cambrensis everus: the history of ancient Ireland vindicated: the religion, laws and civilization of her people exhibited in the lives and actions of her kings, princes, saints, bishops, bards, and other learned men*. <https://archive.org/stream/cambrensiseverus01lyncooft#page/n7>

²⁹ Foras na Gaeilge New English: Irish Dictionary <https://www.teanglann.ie/en/fuaim/tuathail>

³⁰ Homann, J. B., Petty, W. & Visscher, N. (1715). *The Kingdom of Ireland, Divided as Much into the Main Regions of Ulster, Connacht, Leinster and Munster*. Nuremberg: Johann Baptist Homann. [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress. www.loc.gov/item/2021668670/.

³¹ O'Connor, Charles. (1775). Statistical Account of the Parish of Kiltonan, in Ireland, and of the Neighbouring District. In 1773 respected Roscommon historian and influential Catholic, Charles O'Connor compiled a detailed account of the Parish of Kiltonan. O'Connor was a fervent advocate of Gaelic culture and history.

³² The Census of Elphin. This dataset includes records for 19,820 households in the Diocese of Elphin in 1749 and lists all households, the names of the head of each household, their addresses, details of occupations, numbers of children, adults and servants, by age and religious denomination. The document gives a unique insight into rural Ireland in the mid-18th century. The parish of Kiltonan was not included in the census.

³³ Gibbons, H. (1993). *Kiltonan: An Overview*. Public lecture delivered by Dr Gibbons. Author.

³⁴ Op. cit., O'Connor (1775).

³⁵ Ni Chinnéide, S. (1977/1978). A Frenchman's Tour of Connacht in 1791. Part II. *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, pp. 30-42.

³⁶ Op. cit. O'Connor (1775).

³⁷ Op. Cit., D'Alton (1845).

³⁸ Personal communication with a Cullen family in Geevagh parish.

³⁹ The confirmation is provided through modern genetic science, coupled with documentary evidence such as government and parliamentary reports, gravestone epitaphs, convict transportation documents, family histories, and the *1749 Census of Elphin*.

- ⁴⁰ Op. cit., Census of Elphin (1749).
- ⁴¹ The Schools' Collection (1937). www.duchas.ie *Johnny Cullen's grandfather from Geeva was killed at the battle of Lavagh, Drumkeerin*. This was provided by James Cullen who is Gerry Cullen's grandfather's brother who was born about 1878. In 1938 he was living at Drumkerran and provided the story. The Johnny to which he was referring was most likely John Cullen (1873-1952) the son of Terry and Bessie Cullen (Nangle). This would make his grandfather a sibling of Miley of the Spear. www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4605938/4604102/4650001
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Op. cit., Census of Elphin (1749).
- ⁴⁴ A rough shoe of untanned leather.
- ⁴⁵ Devotional scapulars typically consist of two rectangular pieces of brown cloth, sometimes with passages of scripture, connected by bands and worn around the neck.
- ⁴⁶ Kelly, Liam. (1998). *A Flame Now Quenched. Rebels and Frenchmen in Leitrim 1793-1798*. The Lilliput Press Ltd., Dublin, p. 77-78.
- ⁴⁷ Diocese of Elphin. (2023). www.elphindiocese.ie/history/
- ⁴⁸ Clyne, M. (2005). Archaeological Excavations at Holy Trinity Abbey Lough Key, Co. Roscommon. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, and Literature*. Vol.105C, No. 2, pp. 23-98. Royal Irish Academy.
- ⁴⁹ Ireland (1695). *An Act for the Better Securing the Government by Disarming Papists*. Dublin: Printed by Andrew Crook,
- ⁵⁰ Ireland (1695). *An Act Declaring Which Days in the Year Shall be Observed as Holy-Days*. Dublin: Printed by Andrew Crook.
- ⁵¹ Ireland (1697). *An Act for Banishing All Papists Exercising Any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and All Regulars of the Popish Clergy out of This Kingdom*. Dublin: Printed by Andrew Crook, 1697.
- ⁵² Op. cit., Lecky (1892).
- ⁵³ Fenning, H. (1996). Clergy – Lists of Elphin, 1731-1818. *Collectanea Hibernica*, No. 38, pp. 141-155.
- ⁵⁴ Parish of Inishmagrath (2023). www.inishmagrath.com/
- ⁵⁵ In some instances, stones were removed from church ruins.
- ⁵⁶ Op. cit., Ní Chinnéide (1977/1978).
- ⁵⁷ Catholics
- ⁵⁸ Op. cit., Lecky (1892).
- ⁵⁹ Moore, S. and McGloin, A. (1996). *Aspects of Geevagh and Highwood*. Lough Arrow Research Project. Geevagh Re-development Association, Arrow Community Enterprise, FAS.
- ⁶⁰ Sligo Champion (2007). *Highwood church's golden jubilee a local milestone*, 10th September
- ⁶¹ The National Archives of Ireland. (2023). (2023). Catholic qualification rolls, 1700–1845. www.nationalarchives.ie/article/catholic-qualification-rolls-1700-1845/
- ⁶² Thomas McDermott-Roe, for example, was born in Kilonan parish around 1697. He was the son John McDermott-Roe. Following an extensive education in Paris, he received a Master of Arts in 1728 and appointed the Kilonan parish priest. McDermott subsequently became the Vicar General⁶², and in 1747 he was nominated by James III and confirmed by Pope Benedict XIV as the Bishop of Ardagh (and Clonmacnoise).
- ⁶³ A vicar general is appointed by the bishop as the highest administrative officer of the diocese, with most of the powers of the bishop.
- ⁶⁴ Wall, M. (1958). The Rise of a Catholic Middle Class in Eighteen-Century Ireland. *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 42, pp. 91-115
- ⁶⁵ Op. cit., Ní Chinnéide (1977/1978).
- ⁶⁶ "To George Washington from Hugh O'Connor, 22 September 1791," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-08-02-0387>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 8, 22 March 1791–22 September 1791, ed. Mark A. Mastromarino. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999, pp. 558–559.
- ⁶⁷ Op. cit., Wall (1958).
- ⁶⁸ Plowden, F. (2018). *The History of Ireland: From Its Union with Great Britain, in January 1801, to October 1810*, Vol. 1 or 3. Forgotten Books.
- ⁶⁹ Conlon, A. (2021). *A History of Geevagh Parish 1500-1800*, The Print Factory, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh.
- ⁷⁰ The National Archives of Ireland. (2023). *Tithe Applotment Books 1823-37*. <http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/home.jsp>
- ⁷¹ Op. cit., Wall (1958).
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ O'Brien, G. (Ed) (1989). *Catholic Ireland in the Eighteenth Century: Collected Essays of Maureen Wall*. Dublin, p.81.
- ⁷⁴ A dealer in textile fabrics, especially silks, velvets, and other fine materials.
- ⁷⁵ Donlan, S. P. (2011). *The Laws and Other Legalities of Ireland, 1689-1850*. Routledge.
- ⁷⁶ Gwynn, D. (1928). John Keogh and Catholic Emancipation. *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 17, No. 66, pp. 177-195.
- ⁷⁷ Op. cit., Wall (1958).
- ⁷⁸ Probably because Keogh in Irish is pronounced Ky-Ogh.
- ⁷⁹ Wolfe Tone, T. and Wolfe Tone, W. T. (nd). *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone: Written by himself, and continued by his Son*, Vol. 1. Cambridge Library Collection – British & Irish History.
- ⁸⁰ Op. cit. O'Connor (1775).
- ⁸¹ Ibid.
- ⁸² Ibid.
- ⁸³ Costello, E. (2020). *Transhumance and the Making of Ireland's Uplands, 1550-1900*. Boydell & Brewer, Limited

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- ⁸⁴ The Schools' Collection (1937). www.duchas.ie
- ⁸⁵ <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/ailili%C3%BA-na-gamhna-calling-home-calves.html>
- ⁸⁶ Op. cit., Ní Chinnéide (1977/1978).
- ⁸⁷ Co-operation in agricultural work is an old practice in Ireland. Sporadic references to it are found in written sources from the Brehon Laws onward, and official reports and other documents of the 19th century have many references to people helping each other with their work on the land.
- ⁸⁸ Op. cit., Ní Chinnéide (1977/1978).
- ⁸⁹ Ó Gráda, C. (2015). *Famine in Ireland, 1300-1900*. UCD Centre for Economic Research Working Paper Series. University College Dublin.
- ⁹⁰ Op. cit., Ní Chinnéide (1977/1978).
- ⁹¹ Op. cit., Lecky (1892).
- ⁹² Drumlin, from the Irish word *droimnín* - little ridge.
- ⁹³ Op. cit., Conlon (2021).
- ⁹⁴ Op. cit., O'Connor (1775).
- ⁹⁵ Historical Maps. (2023). William Larkin (Counties Sligo and Leitrim) and William Edgeworth (County Roscommon). www.logainm.ie/en/resources/historical-maps
- ⁹⁶ Op. cit., O'Connor (1775).
- ⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ⁹⁸ O'Connell, R. (2022). Inside the Irish 'hell caves' where Halloween was born. *National Geographic*, October.
- ⁹⁹ Hegarty, S. (2020). The Arigna iron and coal works during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. DCU School of history and geography. <http://doras.dcu.ie/25218/1/TheArignaironandcoalworksBreifnefinal.pdf>
- ¹⁰⁰ Mac Cuarta, B. (2001). The Plantation of Leitrim, 1620-41. *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 127, pp. 297-320. Cambridge University Press.
- ¹⁰¹ Irish Manuscripts Commission (2023). Strafford Survey 1635-1637. www.irishmanuscripts.ie/
The Strafford Survey was based on a series of inquisitions regarding land ownership in the Province of Connacht for the years 1635-1637. These were conducted by Thomas Wentworth who was the Lord Deputy and afterwards the Earl of Strafford. The basis for the survey was to produce revenue for the King and juries made up of the largest landowners in each county were instructed that their findings must be in favour of the king, or lose their estates. All but Galway conceded and the Galway jury abdicated after being severely fined by the Court of the Castle Chamber. Only the records for County Mayo survive.
- ¹⁰² Donovan, J. (2003). Henry Foxall and the Arigna Iron Works. *Methodist History*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (July).
- ¹⁰³ Richard Tenison (d. 1726) second son of the Bishop of Meath purchased considerable estates in counties Leitrim and Roscommon, which formerly belonged to Sir Thomas Dundas, Baronet- among them the lands of Kilronan.
- ¹⁰⁴ De Bougrenet de Latocnaye. (1917). *A Frenchman's walk through Ireland, 1796-7* (Promenade d'un Français dans l'Irlande). Translated by Stevenson, John. Hodges, Figgis & Company, Dublin.
- ¹⁰⁵ The Schools' Collection (1937). www.duchas.ie
- ¹⁰⁶ Op. cit., Hegarty (2020).