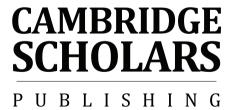# Irish Studies in Britain

Irish Studies in Britain:
New Perspectives on History and Literature

Edited by

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To Sally and John

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PART I:

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON IRISH HISTORY

Chapter One

Introduction

Brian Griffin

As the recent "Troubles" in Northern Ireland demonstrated, and the frequently uneasy development of the peace process there has further highlighted, conflicts over identity—political, religious, national, cultural, personal—constitute one of the key dynamic forces in contemporary Ireland. The influx of a massive immigrant population during the Celtic Tiger years, on both sides of the border, promises to result in further fascinating challenges to, and re-workings of, perceptions of "Irishness" in the future.

Most of the essays in this section illustrate that the myriad ways in which the peoples of Ireland expressed their identity were a powerful shaping influence on Irish history from the late sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Clodagh Tait has shown how the funerary practices of the various communities in Tudor and Stuart Ireland reflected, and helped to reinforce, distinctive expressions of identity in the early modern period (Tait 2002). This idea is explored in detail in the first essay in this collection, Stephen Forrest's case study of the role of Bonamargy Friary as the traditional burial place of the MacDonnells of Antrim. Forrest argues that the friary's buildings and its graves document the MacDonnells' assertion of dominance over the territory of north Antrim: as the arriviste MacDonalds established themselves in Ulster and eventually became the MacDonnells, the appropriation of the Bonamargy site, traditional burial place of the MacQuillan clan, formed a key part in their political, cultural and spiritual domination of the region. The appropriation of Bonamargy to boost the image of the MacDonnells in the status-conscious Irish and Scots Gaelic world of north Antrim reached its peak under Randal MacDonnell, first earl of Antrim.

MacDonnell showed an almost uncanny knack for survival in the cutthroat world of Gaelic dynastic intrigue, English incursions into Ulster in the late sixteenth century, the Nine Years' War and the Plantation of Ulster. Having fought against the forces of Elizabeth I in the 1690s and being one of the few Ulster Gaelic survivors of the Battle of Kinsale,

MacDonnell eventually submitted to Lord Deputy Mountjoy in 1602 and fought against Hugh O'Neill in the final months of the Nine Years' War. He was one of the few Gaelic chieftains in Ulster to survive relatively unscathed in the tumultuous years following the Flight of the Earls in 1607, accommodating himself relatively successfully to the new socioeconomic and political order that emerged after the Ulster Plantation, as suggested by James I's bestowing the title earl of Antrim on him in 1620. His eldest legitimate son, also named Randal, the first marquis of Antrim, was an even more adept survivor during the tumultuous period from the late 1630s to the 1660s. In these years he managed to cram in various experiences as a royalist plotter against the Covenanters of western Scotland, prisoner of the Scottish army in Ulster, rescuer of the prince of Wales, royalist privateer, royalist commander in Scotland, Confederation of Kilkenny commander and rebel against the Confederation of Kilkenny's authority, principal behind the surrender of a number of royalist garrisons, Commonwealth pensioner and prisoner of the restored Charles II (Ohlmeyer 1993).

The collapse of the royalist cause in the Three Kingdoms thrust the young Charles II and many of his supporters into a ten-year exile wandering between the war-torn and often unwelcoming territories of France, the Holy Roman Empire and Spanish Flanders. Left to negotiate the political, religious and cultural intricacies of these predominantly Catholic societies, a group of Irish courtiers rose to positions of substantial influence within the king's circle of trusted advisors by virtue of their familiarity with and adaptability to the religious and diplomatic milieu of Continental Europe. Mark Williams's essay outlines some of the conflicting influences on these Catholic and Protestant advisors and how they placed loyalty to the king's interests above potentially competing confessional or other personal interests of their own—in stark contrast to the first marquis of Antrim, it may be said, whose primary motivation during this period appears simply to have been a desire to regain the ancestral Antrim lands that were confiscated in the early stages of the Ulster rebellion.

The next two essays in this section examine aspects of the history of Irish Presbyterians in the eighteenth century, in the process illustrating the frequently fractious nature of the relationship between Presbyterians and Anglicans in Ireland and North America. As both essays show, the origins of this uneasy relationship lay partly in the perception amongst many prominent Anglicans that Presbyterians were a threat to the established social, political and religious order. Richard Holmes documents how many of the targets of Jonathan Swift's satire in the 1720s were Irish Dissenters,

particularly Presbyterian disciples of the earl of Shaftesbury's iconoclastic libertarian ideals. He pays particular attention to the ripostes to Swift from one of the most important Irish Shaftesburians, the Presbyterian James Arbuckle, whose *Hibernicus's Letters* often parodied Swift's writings. Holmes shows that Swift's attacks on Shaftesburian ideals, and the counter-writings of Arbuckle and other members of Lord Molesworth's circle in Dublin, offer important insights into the political and religious divisions amongst Presbyterians and Anglicans in this period. Benjamin Bankhurst's essay focuses on the experiences of Presbyterian settlers from Ulster on the frontier of Britain's North American colonies, with a particular emphasis on the hostility shown towards them by their Anglican fellow settlers. One South Carolina Anglican minister's reference to "Ignorant, mean, worthless, beggarly Irish Presbyterians, the Scum of the Earth, and Refuse of Mankind" would probably have struck a receptive chord with Jonathan Swift. Bankhurst examines the contemporary prejudices against Presbyterian migrants from Ireland which helped to give rise to such hostile sentiments; furthermore, he documents the persistence of various stereotypes of these pioneers in the writings of modern historians of the Scots-Irish. Bankhurst challenges the validity of certain key assumptions concerning the nature of the Presbyterian community on the colonial frontier in the eighteenth century, especially the notion that Presbyterians' supposed experiences in the violent environment of Ulster helped to predispose them to aggression against an uncivilized "Other" in America. Indeed, even the "Irishness" of these settlers is open to question, Bankhurst explains, posing a serious problem to those historians who argue that most Irish emigrants to North America are, and probably always have been, of Protestant descent—an assertion whose validity depends on the inclusion of the so-called "Ulster-Scots" of the eighteenth century and their descendants in the statistics of the Irish diaspora in North America (Akenson 1993, 219-224, 252-56).

   The three final essays in this section focus on various aspects of the troubled period from 1912 to 1923. David Fitzpatrick notes that "[t]he common rhetoric of militarism transcended political divisions in Ireland" in the early twentieth century, pointing out that "For unionists, nationalists and republicans alike, soldiery was an ideal to be extolled rather than a menace to be confronted" (Fitzpatrick 1996, 379). In the first essay, Jane McGaughey offers a feminist reading of this rhetoric, with a particular focus on the language employed by Unionists in Ulster during the Home Rule crisis from 1912 to 1914. As she argues, this episode involved more than a political struggle, it was also one that defined public notions of manliness in Ulster. McGaughey re-examines such key events as the

Solemn League and Covenant of 1912, the rise of the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Larne gun-running of 1914, highlighting their explicit masculine language and imagery. On the eve of the Great War, traditional masculine ideas of chivalry, bravery, loyalty and sacrifice became increasingly important to how Unionists from Ulster defined themselves and their aspirations for the future.

Gemma Clark investigates a hitherto under-explored aspect of the guerrilla tactics and inter-community violence that characterized much of the Irish Civil War from 1922 to 1923. Her main focus is on the widespread use of arson by the anti-treaty Irish Republican Army (IRA) in counties Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. The targets of the anti-treaty IRA's arson tactics ranged from the Protestant, Unionist and landowning minority, with many of Munster's finest mansions being consigned to the flames, to prominent symbols of Free State authority, with the burning of barracks and senators' homes. Clark provides evidence that a mixture of ancient enmities and land hunger motivated many of the arson attacks that were carried out during this period. She also suggests that at least some units of the anti-treaty IRA in the three counties targeted Protestants purely for sectarian reasons. The idea that the IRA, in the War of Independence and Civil War years, engaged in a sectarian conflict is one that has exercised academic and amateur historians in recent years. Peter Hart's study of IRA activity in county Cork evoked considerable controversy by suggesting that the IRA carried out sectarian murder when it killed numerous Protestant men in the Bandon valley in May 1922 (Hart 1998, 273-92). Alan Stanley's *I Met Murder on the Way*, an account of the gruesome killing by the IRA of two young Protestant men at Coolacrease, county Offaly, in June 1921 (Stanley 2005), was one of the sources of a hugely controversial RTÉ documentary on the episode, in which the killings were portrayed as both sectarian and sexual, as the two victims were allegedly deliberately shot in the groin. Alan Parkinson's study of the communal violence in Belfast in the early 1920s also documents widespread sectarian targeting of Protestants by the Belfast IRA (Parkinson 2004). In contrast, Marie Coleman's study of the IRA campaign in Longford argues that the IRA in that county did not carry out sectarian attacks against Protestants (Coleman 2003, 155-57), which indicates that more local studies of IRA activity in the 1919-23 period are needed for a fuller understanding of whether the IRA in these years may be characterized as a sectarian organization: Clark's essay is, therefore, an important addition to the debate on this controversial topic.

Outside of evangelical circles, it has been almost entirely forgotten that the 1920s "Troubles" were accompanied by Ulster's last major religious

revival, and insofar as academics have discussed this revival at all, the operative assumption has tended to be that it tended to deepen sectarian divisions. In contrast, the last essay in this section, Timothy Wilson's analysis of the revival led by the evangelist W.P. Nicholson in Belfast in 1922-23, argues that while it did indeed have the effect of reinforcing communal polarization, its emphasis on the moral reformation of the individual also acted as a potential brake on sectarian violence. This surprising conclusion derives from a close reading of a wide range of contemporary evidence.

In summary, by offering a fresh examination of various political or religious expressions of identity over a period of approximately three hundred years, these essays help to deepen our understanding of numerous controversial topics and eras in Irish history.

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CHAPTER TWO

HAUNTING THE GRAVEYARD:
THE SECRETS OF A COUNTY ANTRIM FRIARY

STEPHEN FORREST

The Island Scots of county Antrim migrated over the course of 200 years from the Hebrides to northern Ireland before the age of the Ulster Plantation. For their support of King James, they received large grants of land in the north of county Antrim in the earliest part of the seventeenth century. Historians have written of their exploits before, but rarely with a focus on the religious aspects of their culture between 1590 and 1620. Indeed, the Island Scots of Antrim lived in an Ireland defined by competing confessional allegiances. On an abstract social or high political level, religion had an effect on the populace of the north Antrim coast, as it did for the rest of Ireland (Gillespie 2007, 20). However, faith was more than simply an external stimulus to the people. Rather it was, in varying degrees, an integral part of the everyday lives of people who lived in north Antrim.

The Island Scots' faith came to its most long-lasting incarnation in the form of the faith-based building projects throughout their Antrim holdings. Randal MacDonnell was noted for his construction projects in Antrim, and central to these were religious spaces. For example, he engineered the building of the parish church for Mahresharkan. This project entailed more than just supervision of construction; Randal settled local disputes, obtained dispensation to cover a graveyard, and financed building of the parish church (MacDonald 1946, 281). After 1620, he remodelled the Layde Old Church in the Barony of Glenarm, in addition to financing repairs and buildings throughout Ireland. It is notable as a part of this great spiritual building endeavour that no record exists of similar works in Scotland or the Scottish Isles.

The most famous of these building projects to contemporary scholars is Bonamargy Friary Chapel near Ballycastle. The Bonamargy Friary Chapel sits away from the coast approximately 200 metres from the mouth of the

Margy River, in what was called Cary Barony. Completed in 1621, the chapel represented the revival of the Bonamargy site into general use following the friary's destruction in 1584 by English forces under Lord Deputy John Perrot. Prior to this destruction, the friary was in use as a Franciscan monastery for the First Order and later Third Order of Franciscans. A closer look at this centre reveals much about the faith of the Island Scots of county Antrim in the early part of the seventeenth century.

Rituals of Life

At its heart, north Antrim was Catholic. Accounts of Bonamargy mention that "great crowds frequent the place" for purposes of religious service (Giblin 1964, 111). Even Randal MacDonnell himself was partially open about his Catholicism. It was an open secret within Ireland that Randal and his wife were married according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church and all of their children were considered illegitimate in the eyes of the government. The secret was well enough known that Randal attempted to seek parliamentary relief to guarantee the transfer of his titles and lands to his son.[1]

In this context, the story of religious life in north Antrim at the level of the people can be seen as a re-engagement with the Catholic church by the common person. Prior to 1590, the Catholic institutions of the area are rarely mentioned in government documents. The religious house at Bonamargy was burned down in 1584. It was not rebuilt until after 1618. This absence of Catholic building activity in north Antrim was part of a larger issue throughout eastern Ulster. Areas that once supported monks found themselves slowly emptying. In one case a report notes that

> no member of the third Order Regular [of Franciscans] has been seen in the diocese of Connor in the dioceses bordering on it for many years, even through there are many houses of that order in the said diocese […] (Giblin 1964, 46).

More generally, the late sixteenth century represents a time where the Catholic parish system had broken down across Ireland (Corish 1981, 28). It is not surprising to find little evidence of it in Antrim.

After 1590, there seems to have been an upswing in religious activity in north Antrim. By 1598, priests were active throughout the north Antrim area. Additionally, the Island Scots had a deep respect for these religious figures. In one case during an encounter with a priest, "Rannel McSourl and all his camp made obeisance […] and threw off their head clothes"

(MacDonald 1946, 297). In 1617, the Jesuits sent a priest to the north of Antrim to "console the Irish Scots who dwell in Ulster" (Hogan 1894, 467-468). By 1620, it was noted that eight or nine priests were normally in residence in the Ballycastle area alone (Giblin 1964, 111).

This resurgence in the priesthood occurred simultaneously with a reengagement of the populace with the church. Throughout all levels of society, a desire to be part of the Roman Catholic Church was taking hold. At the level of the laity, this manifested itself in a desire to go beyond daily religious rites. At one point, a Franciscan based in north Antrim asked for permission to "to enrol people in the chord and habit of St. Francis" (Giblin 1964, 59). Such an enrolment would have taken place under the auspices of the Third Order Regulars of the Franciscans. Thus, the people who would have been enrolled were looking for greater engagement with faith as part of their daily lives. At the upper levels, the demand for greater influence of faith manifested itself in a more intellectual way. Grave goods in the Bonamargy Friary crypt included a portion of St. Thomas Aquinas's writings and a fifteenth-century translation of St. Bonaventure's *Life of Christ*, consisting of 35 two-column pages (Bigger 1898, 38). This resurgence of faith extended outwards. Even while the missions to the Scottish Isles operated, Island Scots still came to north Antrim for religious services (Giblin 1964, 178). The transfer of the people from the Isles to Ireland would have been a spiritually easy journey. The western Isles had always looked spiritually to Ireland (McKerral 1951, 3-4). One record notes that priests in the Isles "worked day and night baptizing" (Giblin 1964, 45).

For all the renewal of Roman Catholicism, the Island Scots maintained good relations with the Church of Ireland. At one point, Randal MacDonnell obtained most church properties inside of the Glynns and Route, including the parish churches at Ballymoney, Bille, and Aromy in exchange for lands surrounding Carrickfergus.[2] Furthermore, no outcry emanated from the Church of Ireland when both MacDonnell and James Hamilton were caught harbouring a Jesuit priest.[3] Nor does any record show that the church protested when Randal received a mild punishment for this offence.

This relationship between the Island Scots and the Church of Ireland may be described as one of pragmatism. Randal MacDonnell, as a major landholder, made the enforcement of recusancy laws troublesome, and the Church of Ireland had no real presence in north Antrim (Corish 1981, 30). While 23 Protestant parishes existed on paper in north Antrim, a 1610 document shows only six as active.[4] The property of all of these was transferred to Randal in exchange for land near Carrickfergus. This would

suggest that the Church of Ireland was not an active internal force in the north Antrim holdings.

Additionally, there seems to have been little interest in north Antrim coming from the Scottish Kirk (Macdonald 2006, 25-6). In a report on the Protestant bishop of the Isles by the Franciscans, the bishop—most likely Andrew Knox—shows no interest either in the Island Scots of Antrim, in spreading the faith to Antrim, or even in Catholicism in Ireland (Giblin 1964, 59). Regarding the Island Scots and Catholic missionaries, no mention is made of the Irish coast, or of any centres of population (Giblin 1964, 45). Indeed, the lack of interest by the bishop of the Isles in the affairs of Antrim was used as legal justification for Rathlin being part of Ireland rather than Scotland.[5] Even attacks initiated by the bishop of the Isles on Catholicism and Gaelic practices did not mention north Antrim. The 1609 Statues of Iona and the 1616 General Bond do not even mention the growing Catholicism in nearby Ireland.

Rituals of Death

In death, the Island Scots showed the greatest humility. Large memorials and special ceremonies for specific people were eschewed in favour of smaller-scale collective memorials. While the construction of smaller memorials could have resulted from constrained finances, the emphasis on modesty across the spectrum of socioeconomic class suggests a more theological motivation. At the end of life, the relative unimportance of the individual was juxtaposed with the importance of community as a whole.

At the centre of this paradox was an enduring faith in God. The preamble to the will of William Boyd of Dunluce demonstrates this enduring belief:

> First I comitt my sowle to almightie God maker off heaven and earth and all yt yr in is, on ture hly eternall and infinit god[…] my creater off nothige, my redeemer when for my owne sine I was deservedly lost, and my yternall preserver, since my conception wt ot whose help and providence every minute off ane hare I should be readie to fall in utterdestruction of Bodie and soal […]. As to my body I bequeath itt to the earth from whence it came, to be buried in ane Christain Buriall yr itt shal please God (Hill 1873, 390).

The rest of Boyd's will is dedicated to the distribution of property. Given the contested confessional nature of Ireland, the lack of instructions considering death was ambiguous.[6] A similar case occurs with Randal

MacDonnell who was willing to place the care of his body in the hands of the earl of Abercorn, James Hamilton, if he died before his heir had come of age.[7]

The general lack of concern for the body would run counter to burial practices prevalent in Irish society at the time. Roman Catholics in this period put emphasis on being buried as a Roman Catholic in consecrated Roman Catholic ground (Anonymous 1917, 51). Officially, the Catholic priests were not allowed to prepare the dead, but this was often circumvented (Anonymous 1917, 51). With the Island Scots, the importance was on the spiritual rather than the theological side of death. The lack of adherence to dogma, perhaps developed during the lack of priestly pastoral care, led to pre-eminence being placed on pragmatism and to less rigid expressions of a particular confession, at least amongst some Island Scots.

Such historical trends are affirmed by the archaeological evidence at Bonamargy. The burial of the dead in the monastic cemetery, such as Bonamargy, is nothing out of the ordinary. Indeed, there is a long tradition of monastic burials in Ireland. The monastic cemetery added spiritual credit to the faithful who happened to be buried there (Corish 1981, 35). When the final judgement came, the piety of the monks would rub off on the laity who happened to be buried in the same area. This monastic burial pattern is also seen in the Scottish Isles (O'Sullivan 1994, 327-65). In many cases, as with the Bonamargy site, this emphasis meant that church buildings were claimed as sacred burial space, with burials occurring within church ruins. Within this hallowed ground, repeated reuse was acceptable, and the burial over or exhumation of old burials to make way for new was acceptable (Mytum 2004a, 32). At the Bonamargy graveyard site, the ground shows this type of reuse in the extreme, with gravemarkers and kerbstones disappearing as newer burials and memorials were placed over the old. The total build-up of graves in some places amounts to two metres in depth. Only the MacDonnell crypt, a large imposing structure, did not succumb to this recycling fate.

This archaeological evidence would suggest a relative unimportance of the individual unless he or she existed at the very height of society. At Bonamargy, stone grave markers do not become prevalent until the late eighteenth century. While the earliest grave dates from 1617, the next grave to be marked by a stone is dated 1706. The date distribution of the Bonamargy graveyard indicates that the Island Scots continued to reuse graveyards throughout the seventeenth century. This type of graveyard reuse, where previous burials are buried over or the plots excavated, is consistent with patterns of burial throughout Britain and Ireland during this period (Mytum 2004b, 24-5).

The pattern of graves located around this new chapel shows how seriously the Island Scots viewed the importance of hierarchy by family. The MacDonnells reserved the new chapel's crypt for their own lineage and the first burial was Sorley Boy MacDonnell, the father of James and Randal. Radiating out from the crypt, the graves show a distinct hierarchy of importance in the Island Scot society. The cousin and attorney of Randal MacDonnell is located closest to the crypt entrance. The important client clans of the MacDonnells such as the MacAlisters, the MacGlwineys, the Blacks, the Stewarts, and the MacHenrys are positioned directly around the chapel.[8] This familial burial pattern is often marked by use of an "Ulster slab", a large, thick stone partially raised from the ground that denoted an intergenerational family burial space. Further out from this are tangentially related families. The further the family burial plots from the chapel and thus the friary site, the less important the family was. This is distinctly different from burial patterns at Iona, in the Scottish Isles, where proximity is meaningless and groupings are by social identity—children, married women, unmarried women, etc.—rather than by family (Anonymous 1994, 2). Indeed, the very notion of family burial plots, as a whole, was not a notable feature of early modern burial plots (Mytum 2004a, 31).

Claiming of Sacred Space through Building

Within the context of life and death for the Island Scots, Bonamargy Friary occupied a central role. Though vital to the Island Scots, the most notable part of this building is its complete absence in the Dublin or London governments' record. It was the burial place for the earls of Antrim, yet no reference to it is made. Additionally, Bonamargy was the base for the Franciscan missionaries to the Isles of Scotland in the early seventeenth century. Furthermore, Bonamargy was the nexus point for Catholics wanting pastoral services on the north Antrim coast (Giblin 1964, 111). These factors combined should have brought these religious sites to the attention of the sheriff or even the lord deputy. However, the Island Scots somehow kept their buildings hidden. One possible reason for this invisibility could come as a by-product of the policies keeping Crown agents out of internal affairs.

For the Island Scots, these buildings served two purposes. First and more ethereally, the buildings represented a claiming of existing sacred space by the Island Scots. Second and more concretely, the buildings supported the administrative districts within the Antrim holdings by providing a local point of contact for religious affairs. The paramount

function of the Island Scots' religious building projects was that of laying claim to the sacred space that already existed along the north Antrim coast. By doing so, the Island Scots attempted to reinforce their legitimacy to their holdings in Antrim. This motivation is distinctly evident at Bonamargy where both the architecture and the graves show a desire to place a spiritual claim on area. Indeed, the Bonamargy chapel rests at the centre of numerous ancient religious areas including chambered tombs (Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 2003). The friary site in itself was called by George Hill "one of the most historical in Ireland" (Hill 1860, 26). Francis Bigger noted it as the holding place of St. Columba's cross (Bigger 1898, 15). However, such status must have been of only regional importance, as C.P. Meehan does not mention the friary in his survey of Irish friaries (Meehan 1869).

The architecture of the Bonamargy site has troubled scholars for over a century. The site is an assemblage of stone structures in various states of disrepair and with all traces of wooden structures having disappeared. Furthermore, recent graves and memorials have taken over parts of ruined buildings to such a degree that defining where a monument ends and part of a building begins is troublesome. These obstacles have led to many false starts with regard to the site. For example, until the McNeill/Bell survey of 2002, the ruined window on the east side was initially taken to be the remains of a Norman style window, only for it to be found out later that a Gaelicized design was more probable (Bell and McNeill 2002, 100-1).This sort of mistake is also evident in reconstructing the use of the site between 1590 and 1620. The classic interpretation of the site has been to see it as abandoned until the 1610s, when a massive rebuilding project took place that revitalized the site as a whole and included the building of the MacDonnell chapel in 1620-21. Instead, current research has found that the site was only partially revitalized, with almost half the site remaining in ruins.

Evidence for this can be found throughout the site. For example, the builders of the MacDonnell chapel did not tie the roofline into the friary buildings proper. If they had, the roof support on the north side of the chapel would have been timber-framed, and open to the main chapel that the MacDonnell chapel abutted. However, the roof support is closed and made of the same stone with which the structural walls are built. This closed roof support would suggest that it was meant to shield against the weather, something that would not be done if it had abutted a functioning roof to the north. The only reason to close the roof would be if the older chapel to the north were not in use.

Furthermore, the McNeill/Bell survey observed that the north wall of the MacDonnell chapel, which abuts the older main chapel, was not tied into the already existing structure. Instead, the 1621 addition was simply placed next to the older friary. This abutment without structural joining denotes not just a lack of use in the older building but also a planned lack of use into the future. If a plan had existed to use both the MacDonnell chapel and the old friary in the future, builders would have tied the buildings together. This separation rules out the possibility that the chapel was actually an aisle—a small transept added on to Scottish churches for purposes of burial. These aisles were in widespread use in Scotland by regional elites (Colvin 1991, 297; Mytum 2004a, 32). The use of a chapel instead of an aisle would suggest that the MacDonnells did not subscribe to the religious trends inside of Presbyterian Scotland, even though it was adopted by other families in Ulster. Indeed, the area inside of the decaying chapel began to be used for burials, a common occurrence in post-Reformation Catholic sites (Mytum 2004a, 32). Additionally, the Franciscan missionaries note that the MacDonnell crypt is a 'magnificent tomb' and in no way related to the decaying chapel structure (Giblin 1964, 111). The nearby MacNaughten tomb constructed in 1630 obstructed one of the doors to the old chapel.

Thus, the MacDonnell building project was added to an already existing sacred area. The goal was not to rehabilitate and extend the site. Rather, it was to use the space, honouring its spiritual power, but neglecting the already existing structures. In this light, the motivation for building at Bonamargy by the Island Scots lay in claiming a spiritual space previously occupied by the MacQuillan clan, a process known in archaeology as peer-polity interaction (Renfrew and Cherry, 1986). By taking over space, the MacDonnells claimed the entire spiritual history of the site from the prehistoric chamber tombs found nearby to the friary structure built by the MacQuillans. They did not need to reuse any of these sites to make this claim; they only needed to construct their own building to show themselves as the latest part of a long tradition of spirituality. Adding to this claim are the burial patterns based on proximity of graves.

The proximity of a family does not just reveal the importance of that particular family. The clustering of graves shows that proximity was valued by the Island Scot elite. By placing their graves close to the MacDonnell chapel, the client families showed two strong values. First, their burials close to the leader, rather than near their own holdings, demonstrated a spiritual allegiance to the lead clan. Second, by supporting the MacDonnell building project, the client clans partook in the MacDonnell claiming of spiritual space. Such an arrangement runs counter

to most Irish medieval and early-modern burial patterns, which were not based on family groupings, but rather on simple availability of space inside the graveyard (Mytum 2004a, 31).

Additionally there are no cases of familial crests inside of the friary. Such an absence may seem strange for a building constructed to lay claim to a space. In the context of religious buildings, monuments and decorations are a bridge between the spiritual and secular world. A secular claim to spiritual space would show in decorations on the friary buildings. However, in the case of Bonamargy, the claim was the building itself. No questioning of the ownership or credit for the building was needed. In this case, the building itself is the monument in question.

Thus, Bonamargy represents a conscious concerted effort by the Island Scots to claim, spiritually, the north Antrim coast as their own. This was not solely a MacDonnell project. Rather, it involved all major landholding families on the north Antrim coast. In so doing, the newcomers hoped to integrate themselves into the long spiritual tradition that Bonamargy represented. In doing this, the Island Scots are an example of a commonplace trend regarding burial places throughout the modern period. They wanted to control the geography through the claiming and control of spiritual space (Mytum 2000, 17).

Supporting the Estates through Building

The building project was far more than a way for the Island Scots to stamp spiritual authority on the land; a more pragmatic reason existed in the construction and rehabilitation of buildings. Places like Bonamargy represented a religious gathering place for the people of the barony. In areas where the Roman Catholic faith could not be displayed openly, the gathering places allowed for the people to receive rites, such as baptisms, marriages, and communion without fear of reports going to Dublin or London.

Receiving the spiritual services of a priest was always a troublesome problem for the Island Scots even when they were in the Isles. In 1611, the rector of the Scots College in Rome reported that people throughout the Scottish Isles had not seen a priest for over 100 years (Anson 1970, 19). Several reasons existed for such a long absence. The Scottish Western Isles cover a large area, much of which is separated by water, and even travelling priests would have had a hard time making their way to all the islands. Additionally, the Isles were on the periphery of Europe, separated from priests on the Continent by the imposing, hostile powers of England and Scotland. Even reaching the Isles demanded a long arduous journey

by both sea and land. Furthermore, few priests understood the Gaelic language, which created an impenetrable linguistic barrier. Though an official ceremony would have been said in Latin, the informal pastoral care of a priest, such as adjudicating disputes or giving advice, required knowledge of the local language. Adding to the entire problem was the fact that the Isles were claimed by Scotland, a power not only hostile to the Roman church but also actively attempting to stamp out its influence in the Highlands and Isles. In the face of such obstacles, the MacDonnells of the Isles reacted by not pressing to have priests sent to the Isles.

The spiritual building programme in Antrim was an attempt by the MacDonnells to remove some of the barriers by creating spiritual centres in their holdings. Bonamargy occupied a site hidden from casual observation of travellers but close to a central village and town of Cary Barony. This positioning gave the Island Scots protection from possible observation and interference. Additionally for Bonamargy, the home base for the Franciscan mission to the Isles was at the old friary, thus an ample supply of priests was on hand for the spiritual needs of the community. The result was not perfect, for parish churches did not exist in each village (MacDonald 1946, 281). However, the centralized location did provide for pastoral care of the populace to a degree that was not available in the Isles.

Most interestingly, the practical purpose of creating spiritual centres developed from the actions of the people on the north Antrim coast. The Franciscan missionaries at Bonamargy record that in many cases they could not do their work in the Isles as people in the Ballycastle area were constantly asking them for services (Giblin 1964, 111). The MacDonnells seem to have built on this by helping to expand the number of Franciscan missionaries to cope with demand. Additionally, there was some pressure on the physical facilities at Bonamargy as the MacDonnells requested that they be allowed to place a dedicated altar for their own use.

Thus, the rehabilitation of the Bonamargy site, as part of a larger spiritual building programme, can be viewed not only as a method for the Island Scots to claim spiritual territory, but also to solve the concrete pastoral problems that existed in the Isles. In so doing, they created, spiritually, a more stable society than the one they left in the Isles of Scotland and one that gave meaning to all parts of their lives of faith.

Notes

1. Sir H. May to Annesley, 7 May 1613, Clarendon MSS. II, fol. 68, Bodleian Library.
2. Repertoricum Hibernicum, 16 January 1610, MS.1059, Trinity College, Dublin.

3. James VI to Lord Deputy Sir Oliver St. John, 22 May 1621, *Calendar of State Papers Ireland* (hereafter *CSPI*), vols. 1615-1625, 324-325; James VI to Lord Deputy Sir Oliver St. John, 6 October 1621, *CSPI* vol. 1615-1625, 337, National Archives, Kew.

4. Repertoricum Hibernicum, 16 January 1610, MS.1059, Trinity College, Dublin.

5. Sir R. MacDonnell's Arguments Regarding Rathlin Island, c. 1615, Cotton MS. Titus C VII, fol. 84, British Library.

6. The possibility exists that a scribe could have interfered with a will, added sections or taken text from previous wills. While these constitute possible problems, wills form an important source for analysing death and faith in Ireland. For further information, see Tait 2002, 8-9.

7. James I to Sir A. Chichester, 5 February 1613, PRO31/8/195 vol. 2, 106, National Archives, Kew.

8. The currently existing graves from these families date from the eighteenth through to the twentieth centuries with only two graves dating from the time period between 1590-1620 remaining (dated 1617). However, this is not uncommon due to periodic reuse of graveyards by the community. In such a process the familial groupings, when they exist, often remain intact. For more information, see Mytum 2000, 43-6.

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