

CHAPTER 8 - CÚ CHOIGRÍCHE O'CLERY died 1664

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Cú Choigríche¹ or Cucogry O'Clery, of BallyCleary, Co Donegal, "head of the Tirconnel sept of the O'Clerys" according to the introductory remarks to the Annals of the Four Masters by Kenneth Nicholls, who must have been of full age in 1632, when, in an inquisition held on the 25th of May that year at Lifford, it was stated that he held the half quarter of the lands of Coolbeg and Doughill, (the modern Killybegs and Doochill ("DubhChoill, a few hundred yards from Ardara) in the Barony of Boyleagh and Bannagh, in the County of Donegal, from Holland tide 1631-May 1632, for which he paid eight pounds sterling per annum to William Farrell, Esq. assignee to John Murray, Earl of Annandale, undertaker of 10,000 acres in the Barony of Boyleagh and Bannagh under the Plantation of Ulster.

Like his ancestors, he was a professional historian, and together with his third cousins Brother Michael O'Clery and Conaire O'Clery, was one of the "Quatuor Magistri" or "Four Masters", a phrase coined by Fr. Colgan, a contemporary of Cucogry's in 1645. Together they compiled the most comprehensive history of Ireland ever written to that date, from earliest times until 1605, which became known as the Annals of the Four Masters. The Annals were finished in Donegal. Another patron at this time was Brian Ruadh Maguire, 1st Baron Enniskillen.

In 1654 Rory O'Donnell, son of Colonel Manus O'Donnell, who had been killed at Benburb in 1646, transplanted from Lifford to Mayo with a large group of Ulster kith and kin, including the O'Clerys as part of the Cromwellian transplantation. Their descendants are still known as the "Ultaigh" or the Ulster-people. With Cucogry O'Clery were his brother, Cairbre, his wife, at least two sons, (probably his daughter also) along with many other families such as the MacSweeneys and the O'Boyles.

They settled on a remote corner of the Ormond Estate in North West Mayo (Burrishoole) probably partly because the O'Donnells and their followers had been in the faction of the Duke of Ormond during the wars. The O'Clerys first resided at Killalla, before moving to Burrishoole, on the Ormond estate which Rory O'Donnell seems to have settled on, and then moved west to Ballycroy, in

¹ O'Clairigh – Background Family tree DNA webpage

west Mayo, where there are still places named in Irish after Cucogry and his brother, ie “Ard Cairbre” and “Tobar Cucogry”.

He brought with him his most prized possessions, namely his books. After some time, Cucogry migrated back east to Burrishoole, where he settled in the valley of Glenhest, at the foot of Nephin Beg, overlooking Lough Beltra at a place called Gort na hEilte (today Gortnaheltia). Rory O'Donnell owned or leased the land around Glenhest, which Cucogry settled on, and the O'Donnells still owned it in 1796 when they settled a large number of Catholic families there who were fleeing from Ulster. There Cucogry wrote prolifically, one of his last poems being written in 1662; *“Cucogry O'Clery, son of Diarmuid, composed this, lamenting the deaths of the children of Aodh, son of Magnus O'Donnell and particularly Mary, who was the last of that family to die”*. This Mary O'Donnell was last married to David Burke. In addition he transcribed the “Life of Aodh Ruadh O'Donnell”, and the Book of the Invasions of Ireland, and the O'Clery book of Genealogies. It was probably in order to consult this book that the other celebrated Gaelic Antiquary of the Seventeenth century, Dubhaltach Mac Firisigh (1600-1671) of Castle Lacken, Tirawley, Co Mayo, made the then dangerous and arduous journey, *“probably by way of David and Dorothy O'Dowd's estate at Bunnyconnelan, across the south-western side of Lough Conn and down through Glen Nephin to Glenhest”* – from The Celebrated Antiquary by Nollaig O Muraile. This was a journey of over twenty miles, perhaps made easier by the use of a horse, but fraught with danger *“where a man in 1672 could not travayle that road without danger of being kill'd or robbed by woodkerns or outlaws, of later years called Toryes..”*

Cucogry married a Mary MacSweeney, who was a close relation (perhaps 1st cousin once removed) of Dr Bartholomew Murry (1695-1767), of Co Clare, Doctor-Regent of the Faculty of medicine at the University of Paris and founder (in 1761) of a number of Bourses (scholarships) in the Irish College in Paris (College des Lombards), including three Bourses of 500 livres (pounds) each for the education of his relations (his grandparents's names were Murry, Lafferty, O'Cahan and O'Doherty in that order – O'Murry's were a clan of south County Derry along with the O'Cahans according to Lewis's topographical dictionary). Here follows the exact text of the donation: *“Three bourses for students of families transplanted from Ulster to Co Mayo and borders of Sligo and Roscommon with preference for Murrys, O'Dohertys, notably maternal relatives of the donor and descendants of Gerard Og O'Doherty, Touragee near Bellahawnas, O'Clery race, notably descendants of Cucogry O'Clery, of*

Tyrawley, near Killalla, whose wife, Mary MacSweeney was related to the Donor, Dunlevys, particularly relatives of Andre Dunlevy, former prefect, who live on the Mayo-Sligo borders near Bellahy, O'Shiels, or poorest families transplanted to these counties.

Cú Choigríche (Cucogry) died about 1664 (his partially legible will is dated 1664 at Gortnaheltia, Mayo) and he is said to have been buried in Burrishoole Abbey, near the altar.

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I bequeath my soul to God Almighty, and I charge my body to be buried in the Monastery of Burrishoole, or in whatever other consecrated church.....in which it will appear best to my friends to bury me. I leave the property most dear to me, that I have put into my possession in the world, namely, my books, to my two sons, Diarmaid and Sean. Let them take their profit out of them without injuring them, and according to their necessities; and let them give their sight and their constant access to Cairbre's children like themselves; and let them instruct them according to the best benefit of Cairbre's children, to teach and instruct their own children likewise. I am charging them to be loving, friendly, respectful,as they would be to their own children, if they wish that God should be propitious to themselves, and give them prosperity in the world here, and their share in the Kingdom of Heaven in the other world, and I charge in like manner

*..... Catherina
.....or great that shall be in her possession, and the horse.....in her own hands, and I give her its possession from my own death out..... and accordingly as it shall appear best.....
..There is.....
examine what shall be in her hands, and I give her possession after my own death outand accordingly as it shall appear best
.....There is
.....examine what shall be in her hands, and I give her possession (after my death)of a horse*

and of a foal, and let him do all the good that he can to her until he has put her care of him non-shamefully. Should.....go..... another woman in the time of their idleness or the womanupon the share of her sister, and if the woman of them who shall be..... brethren that shall be heirs of them both in their time there..... without being alive. If the little boy Eoch..... should take quietness of residence to himself, and come to the one place with And Sean, I am charging you to do every good which can be doneaccordingly as I have done, and father and to his grandfather and to his grandmother a cow which I put into his possession to him of your share or of your brothersresidence in which he is, dispose of it according to your own wishes..... as a benefit(pay) for saying Mass for the soul of Sean Meg-G.....as it shall appear to yourselves.

Cucoigríche O Cleirigh In Curr-na-h-Eilte (Gort na hEilte), the 8th day of February 1664.

FOOTNOTE:

In 2019 my brother Peter had a DNA match with James Cleary of St Pauls Minneapolis. James is descended from Cú Choigríche (Cucogry), (son of Diarmaid and grandson of Cosnamhach who died 1584). Diarmaid was a first cousin of Lughaidh and our direct ancestor Flan.

James (whose grandparents had emigrated to the USA from Mayo) had been gifted a DNA test by his three daughter, Kathleen Molly and Maureen as a Christmas present!

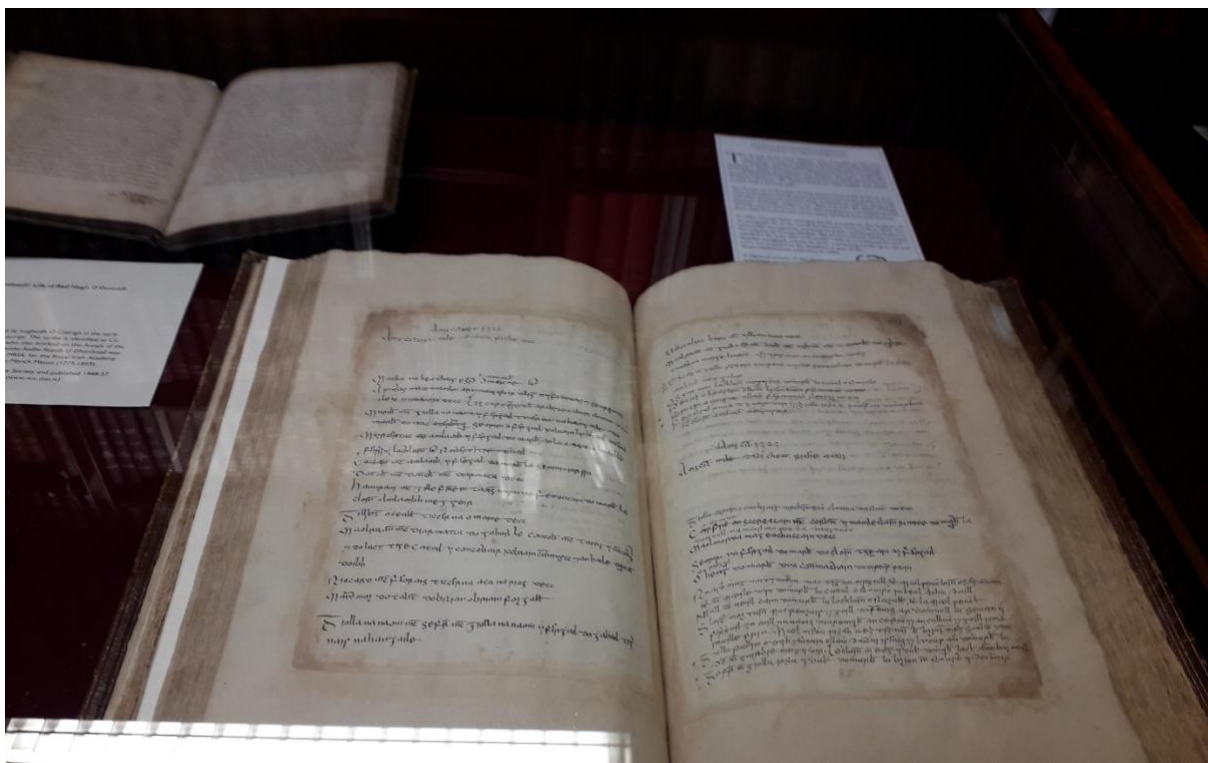
I contacted him and arranged to meet him on his next visit to Dublin. I also arranged with Dr Bernadette Cunningham of the Royal Irish Academy for us to view some of the Annals in their manuscript form.

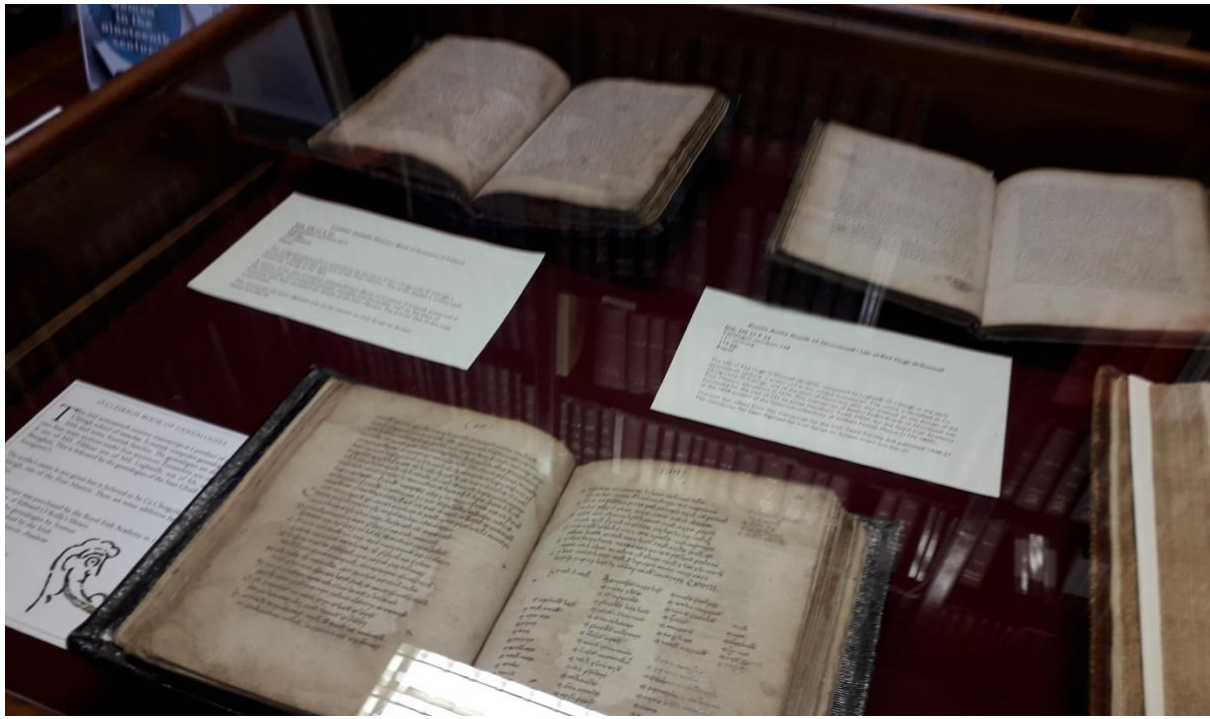


Peter Cleary 2019

Back Row: Dr Bernadette Cunningham, Fergus Cleary, Mary Cleary, Veronica Cleary, Madeleine Cleary, Tom Doyle (Veronica's husband)

Front row: James's wife Judy, his daughter Kathleen, James Cleary





I have to say that this visit and its historic significance was one of the most memorable days of my life. To look at and appreciate examples of our ancestors' penmanship and to think back to the circumstances under which they worked, i.e. cold damp buildings, candles and firelight for lighting, eye strain, chilblains, smoke fumes, quills, using horses for transport or, failing that, walking the length and breadth of Ireland gathering up all these historical sources, was quite emotional. Dr Cunningham noted that she had never seen so many Clearys in one place and I answered that it was linking the human with the academic story!