Mhic Mharki (MacMarquis) and the Galloglass

The merciless Macdonwald,
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villainies of nature
Do swarm upon him, from the Western isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606)

In both my book *Life and Times of the Marquis Family of Argyll* and in an article on the early origins of the Marquis family I explained how the name Marquis was tied to Marcus MacDonald, the grandson of Alasdair (Alexander) Óg who in 1293 became clan chief (cinn-cinnidh) of the MacDonalds. After Alasdair's death in 1299 fighting the MacDougalls, his family moved to Ulster where his six sons including the youngest, Somhairle, established one of the leading MacDonald galloglass septs (bands of mercenaries fighting in the conflicts between the leading Irish clans). Marcus MacDonald was the youngest of four sons of Somhairle all of whom were also killed fighting in the endless Irish O'Connor's civil wars. In this article I want to explore the role played by the galloglass in Irish history and their links to the Marquis family.

The First Galloglass Septs

Ancient Kingdom of Dál Riata

This region had a long history of warrior mercenary bands going back to the legendary tales of Fionn MacCumhaill, Dairmat and Goll MacMorna and the Fianna groups of young roving hunter-warriors of the 4th and 5th centuries in the Kingdom of Dalriada (Dál Riata).

The creation of galloglass fighters (in Gaelic *gallóglaigh* 'foreign young warriors') which followed this long-established tradition began to appear during the second half of the 13th century in the

Norse/Gaelic region of the Western Isles and west coast of Scotland called Innes-Gall. They were formed by the newly emerging Norse/Gaelic clans that filled the vacuum left by the defeat of Haakon Haakonsson, King of Norway, at the Battle of Largs in 1263 by King Alexander III of Scotland. It was now that the heirs of the original Somhairle (Somerled), the great Norse/Gaelic 12th century warrior king of Argyll and the Isles, whose sons and grandsons created the Highland Gaelic clans of Clan Donald, Clan Dougall, Clan MacRory, Clan MacSweeney and Clan MacAlister, the principal clans of *A'Gàidhealtachd* (Land of the Gaels). Over the next century the MacDonalds emerged as the dominant clan as the Lords of the Isles in what would become the Gaelic Highlands of Scotland.

With the removal of Norwegian overlordship, the Norse/Gaelic clans, when not fighting amongst themselves, faced an existential threat from both the new kingdom of Scotland and in Ireland by England. A three-way battle for Ireland developed between the native Irish clans, Norse/Gaelic Vikings and the increasingly expansionist Anglo-Norman ambitions for Irish territory. Between 1169 and 1172, Henry II oversaw the final defeat of the Viking kingdoms of Dublin and Waterford and began a war of conquest that would last for 450 years. Raising these elite bands of professional fighters became the main means for resisting the growing threats from both Scotland and England.

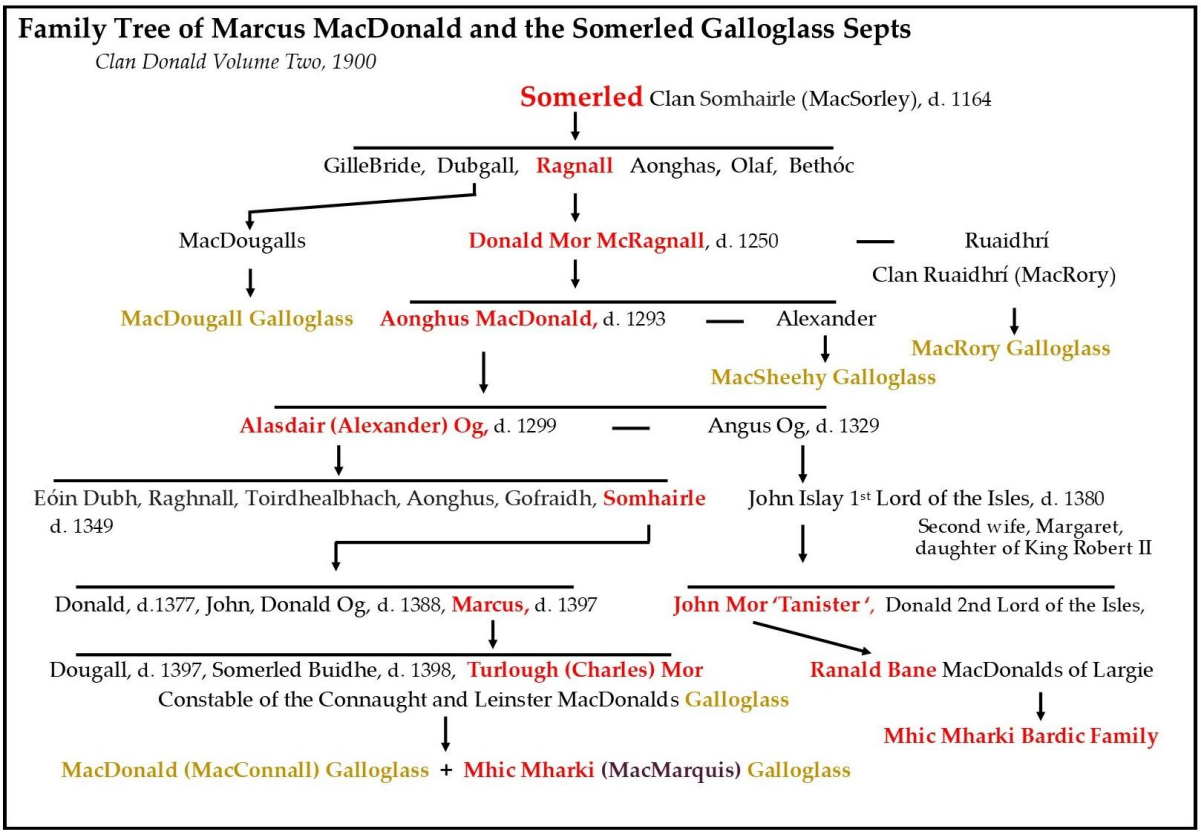
The first recruits to these Norse/Gaelic galloglass units were handpicked clan members, it seems selected for size and strength and then trained to become full-time soldiers in an era when most fighting men were part-time warriors. They were also relatively well-equipped with a chainmail coat, an iron helmet called a basinet, large Viking-like battleaxe or two-handed sword and fairly well-rewarded. Paying for and equipping such a force would have been hugely expensive in what was still a subsistence agricultural society, so inevitably, the first galloglass bands remained small elite fighting units leading irregular troops (kerns) into battle. Initially, galloglass bands were tied to their clan, and many remained so until their demise at the end of the 16th century, but other groups became freelance mercenaries selling their services to the highest bidder. There were even individual galloglass offering themselves for hire

like Samurai warriors in Japan. Leaders (constables) of galloglass bands were paid in grants of land or coin, the rank-n-file usually received some money wages but were mainly compensated in food and lodgings.

13th century tomb of galloglass constable Felim O'Connor

The Mhic Mharki were, of course, tied to those galloglass septs established by the heirs of Somerled. In particular, Marcus MacDonald, grandson of Alasdair Óg MacDonald whose family had moved to Ulster

to escape the wrath of his brother, Angus Óg (younger son), following the conflict that saw Angus Óg rather than one of Alasdair's six sons, become chief of Clan Donald in 1299 on the death of their father.



The first actual galloglass troops (although clearly, they were not the first fighting men from the Isles and Highlands to invade Hibernia) probably arrived in Ireland in 1259 as part of the dowry for the daughter of Dugall MacRory who married Aodh O'Connor, chief of the Connacht O'Connors. Again, this seems to be following a long-established practice, Somerled's father, Gillebride, received a band of youthful warriors as a dowry when he married. Dugall MacRory's brother, Alan, became the leader of 160 warriors, the first constable of the first galloglass sept in Ireland, he later returned to the Isles when his brother died and succeeded him as *cinn-cinnidh* of Clan MacRory.

Although this wasn't the first involvement of Somerled's grandsons in disputes between Irish clan chiefs. In 1212, the brothers Donald Mór MacRagnall and Ruaidhri mac Raghnaill, (founders of Clan Donald and Clan MacRory) are recorded leading a naval force that attacked the ecclesiastical centre of Derry having involved themselves in the conflict

between two claimants to the chiefdom of the Northern O'Neill's. In 1247, a leading unnamed member of Clan Somhairle (MacSorleys) was reported killed at the Battle of Ballyshannon helping Mael Sechlainn O'Connor of Connaught resist an Anglo-Norman invasion led by Hugh de Lacy. One possible candidate for this fallen leader was Ranald MacRory, son of Ruaidhri mac Raghnaill.

Five decades later nearly all the sons of Alasdair Óg, grandson of Donald Mór MacRagnall, were in Ulster, and all apparently became galloglass constables. One appalling reality soon emerged: the short-term life expectancy amongst galloglass constables. The first of Alasdair's sons to go was Eóin Dubh (the dark), in 1349, all but two of his five brothers were also reported killed in battle, that certainly seems to be the case for the youngest, Somhairle. Marcus MacDonald became the constable after the death of his brother, Donald Óg in 1388. Marcus, of course, and his son, Dugall, were killed in 1397, followed by another son, Somhairle Buidhe, who died in battle a year later.

A third son of Marcus took over the family gallowglass, Turlough (Charles) Mór (eldest son), who managed to survive long enough to establish himself as the Chief of the Connaught and Leinster MacDonalds. The Mhic Mharki would also establish a strong presence in both Ulster and Argyll. There is some speculation that another possible son of Alasdair Óg, Ruaidhrí of Islay, who had all his possessions seized by Robert the Bruce in 1325, if true, this could explain why the heirs of Alasdair Óg seemed to have permanently relocated to Ulster. It is also believed that Clan Alasdair of Loup (MacAlister) of Kintyre, another supplier of galloglass, descended from Alasdair Óg.

Marcus MacDonald and the MacDonnell Galloglass

Marcus inherited the leadership of the MacDonald (MacDonnell in Ireland) galloglass from his brother Donald Óg who had been fighting for nine years on the side of the sons of Cathal Óg, chief of the O'Connor Ruadh faction, against the O'Connor Don faction in the interminable civil war that would eventually bring about the decline of the O'Connors as a major force in Irish society. Marcus and his son, Dugall, were killed in a

battle near Lissadell on the northwest Connaught coast after a largely successful campaign of victories and plunder. However, the O'Connors Don were able to gain support from O'Donnell of Donegal and several other Irish clans which turned the tide in the conflict: -

> " An arm of the sea was on their left hand, the stream of Bun Brenoige was on the riqht. A fierce and bloody battle ensued which resulted in disaster to the sons of Cathal Og O'Connor, in which Marcus MacDonnell, Captain of O'Connor's Galloqlach, and his son Dougall MacDonnell were left dead upon the field with a large number of Galloglach." The Four Masters, Vol. IV, page 753.

Yet another Marcus son, Turlough (Charles) Mór was able to consolidate the survivors of the Battle of Lissadell and establish a significant galloglass sept located mainly around Roscommon in Connaught and continued to support the Ruadh faction of the O'Connors.

The MacDonnell galloglass suffered another major defeat in 1419 but Turlough survived; he died in 1435. Turlough's son, Aodh Buidhe (Buidhe is pronounced 'boy' and means yellow, fair or blonde), was killed along with two of his sons and three brothers and 160 galloglass in 1467. Despite these defeats, the MacDonnell galloglass in Connaught managed to survive as a potent galloglass sept until the end of the 16th century, although, by then they seemed to have aligned themselves, first to the Earl of Kildare and after his demise, they appear to have switched support to the administration of Queen Elizabeth – an act of true mercenaries. Three descendants of Turlough and Aodh Buidhe received grants of land from the English to purchase their support as mercenary galloglass, but this didn't apparently guarantee their long-term loyalty, two of them were later executed for supporting the O'Neill's in the Nine Years War (see below). Even these events didn't end the influence of the MacDonnells in Connaught, especially in County Mayo. In 1786, George Robert FitzGerald (descendant of the O'Connors) was executed for the murder of Patrick Randal MacDonnell, a local populist politician.

Galloglass in the 15th and 16th centuries

By the 15th century the galloglass had become the main elite fighting units on all sides and although many bands were still led by constables from the heirs of Somerled, their ranks were increasing filled with native Irish recruits, though still selected due to their size and fighting prowess. Their growing numbers made it increasingly difficult for their employers to maintain, equip and feed so they began to shift the costs onto their peasant tenants through forced billeting which was an unmitigated disaster for already desperately poor subsistence farmers. Feeding an aggressive professional soldier with a huge axe or sword put a major strain on a peasant family's pitiful resources, not to mention the threat of sexual violence. But it would be the 16th century that saw the peak of the galloglass as the dominant military force in Ireland but also witness their final downfall.

Albrecht Durer's drawing of Irish Galloglass in 1521

By 1500, Ireland had become even more than usual a permanent battlefield, with Irish clans in the west and northwest in continuous conflict while Ango-Irish and English nobles battled it out for control of large estates in the area around Dublin known as the Pale as England aggressively expanded its territory.

Into this maelstrom were added two new incendiary dynamics. One was James V, the increasingly powerful king of Scotland after his father, James IV, had defeated the MacDonald Lords of the Isles in 1494, finally bringing *A'Gàidhealtachd* into a 'united' Scottish kingdom. James V increasingly tried to undermine English expansionary ambitions in Ireland. The second, and even more volatile explosive mix was the Protestant Reformation that would rip the British Isles apart. In Ireland, it would extend the conflict with the rest of Britain for the next five hundred years.

The Battle of Knockdoe, 1504

This was the largest battle ever fought between Irishmen on Irish soil and epitomised the political situation as the country entered the second half of the millennium. England had emerged as the predominant political power in Ireland represented by the Lord Deputy, Gerald Fitzgerald, 8th Earl of Kildare but many Irish clans continued to resist by forming endless shifting alliances to fight the English or each other. In 1504, such a rebellion occurred when Ulick Burke of county Mayo attacked his neighbours the O'Kelly's against the explicit orders from Dublin to uphold the peace.

Both armies assembled at Knockdoe, just to the north of Galway, where Ulick's forces had been mercilessly rampaging. Kildare's army numbered around 6,000, Ulick's probably nearer to 4,000, with galloglass providing the elite fighters for both sides, supported by irregular and poorly armed kerns. But it was the makeup of Kildare's forces that is most illuminating regarding the nature of warfare in Ireland at that time: -

> "Kildare gathered together a substantial private army, including his own MacDonnall galloglass (at least 120 of them by c.1500), and

assembled a confederation of clans, many who employed galloglass: O'Kellys, Mayo Burkes (with MacSweeneys), O'Donnalls (with MacSweeneys), O'Neills (with MacDonnells), MacMahons (with MacCabes), Magennisies, O'Reillys (with MacCabes), O'Connors (with MacDonnells [the heirs of Marcus MacDonald], O'Dermots and other Gaelic, Anglo-Irish and English soldiers from the Pale …"

The forces of Kildare shown on the left, in *The Image of Irelande* (University of Edinburgh)

Heavily outnumber, Ulick's forces were eventually overwhelmed: -

"After hours of hand-to-hand fighting, sheer weight of numbers began to tell against Ulick's galloglass. Falling back in small groups they regrouped along the banks of the river Clare, where they were ruthlessly cut down by their pursuers. Ulick had lost. About half his army – 2,000 or so men – lay dead. Perhaps 1,000 of Kildare's men perished; we have no way of knowing for sure."

The Kildare Rebellion of 1535

Although, as Lord Deputy and officially Henry VIII's representative in Ireland, the FitzGerald family like all major Anglo-Irish families and clan chiefs had their own private galloglass led forces and valued their semi-independence from London. However, persistent conflict between the Anglo-Irish and English nobles in Ireland and the intrigue of nobles at court back in London also wanting to gain a presence in Ireland, created permanent tension over the governance of Hibernia.

Without going into details, Thomas FitzGerlad (Silken Thomas), the 10th Earl of Kildare, found himself at odds with Piers Butler, 8th Earl of Ormond (descendants of an Anglo-Norman family from the invasion by Henry II). When Henry VIII sided with Piers Butler, FitzGerald rashly mounted a rebellion against a now aged, in permanent pain and almost psychotic Henry, who sent a major force that crushed Fitzgerald after being abandoned by most of his allies. FitzGerald and five uncles were executed in the Tower of London. The MacDonnell's galloglass (descendants from Marcus MacDonald) who had tied themselves to Kildare and who would have suffered heavy casualties now needed new paymasters.

Thomas FitzGerald, 10th Earl of Kildare

16th-century woodcut of 'Silken' Thomas's failed attack on Dublin Castle

Thomas FitzGerlad's heir, a twelve-year-old boy, escaped to the custody of his aunt, Lady Eleanor McCarthy. To ensure his safety, Lady McCarthy married Manus O'Donnell chief of the Donegal O'Donnells,

and supported by Conn O'Neill (chief of the O'Neills), they declared their allegiance to the young FitzGerald heir in 1537 by forming the Geraldine League. Hovering in the background was King James V of Scotland who together with Alasdair MacDonald of Dunnyveg and the Glens (Clan Donald South) promised support for the Geraldine League rebellion. King James had, in fact, tried to aid the revolt by sending 3,000 to 4,000 troops but they had arrived too late to prevent Thomas FitzGerald's defeat and submission to Henry.

In August 1539, O'Donnell and Conn O'Neill were heavily defeated by the new Lord Deputy, Leonard Grey, 1st Viscount Crane, at Lake Bellahoe in County Monaghan. By this date King James had become less interested in confronting his uncle Henry in Ireland and the troops he promised never arrived making the defeat at Lake Bellahoe almost an inevitability. Manus O'Donnell's only option was to try to make a deal with Henry. In 1540, he sent the young Gerald FitzGerald into exile in France and submitted to Henry resulting in his new wife leaving him in disgust. O'Donnell's submission left Conn O'Neill little choice but to follow suit. The English now had complete control over Ireland and in 1541, the Irish parliament passed an act making Henry VIII king of Ireland.

Queen Elizabeth and the Galloglass

Much of Elizabeth's reign was taken up in trying to consolidate that control won by her father but with increasing difficulty. Being a Protestant monarch in a largely Catholic country only intensified the unrest, making any conflicts even more vicious. Elizabeth faced three major rebellions during her reign, two by the Earls of Desmond who were part of the FitzGerald family based in Munster. As in the case of the Kildare Revolt, trouble arose out of the ongoing family feud between the FitzGeralds and Butlers, in the case of the first rebellion, between Gerald FitzGerald, 14th Earl of Desmond, and Thomas Butler 10th Earl of Ormonde. Butler was a cousin of the Queen and used this familial connection to have FitzGerald and his brother arrested and brought to England.

In their absence, James FitzMaurice FitzGerald, a cousin of the Earl, responded by laying waste Butler's lands around Cork eventually leading

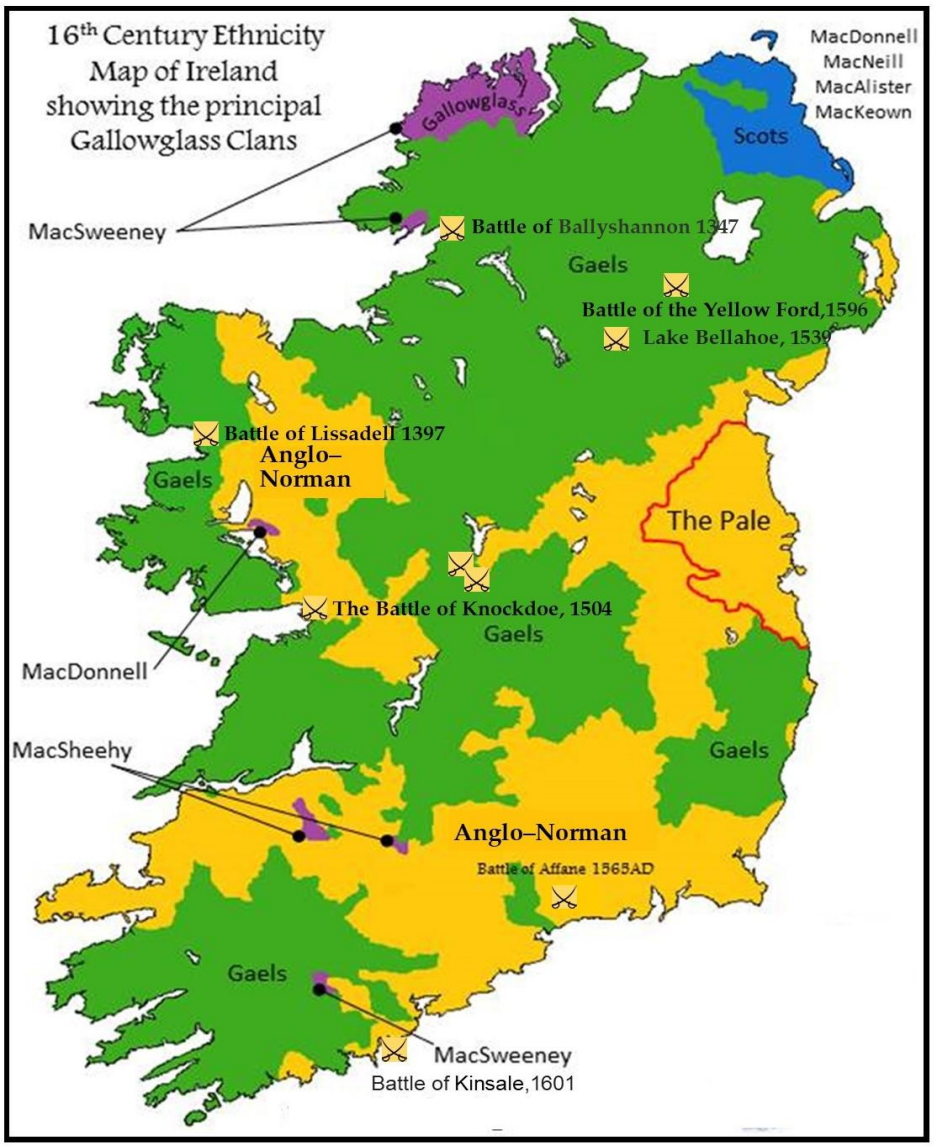
his 4,500 galloglass to besiege Kilkenny, seat of the Earls of Ormonde. Having amassed a much larger force, Butler, aided by Henry Sidney and Humphrey Gilbert (half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh) who was especially brutal, killing civilians at random and setting up corridors of severed heads at the entrance to his camps. After a major defeat at the Battle of Affane in 1565, FitzMaurice was forced into the mountains of County Kerry where he launched a guerrilla war that lasted for three years before being forced to submit with only 100 men left. In the meantime, around 700 galloglass were executed, and new laws enacted that banned Irish dress, bardic poetry, forbade private galloglass armies causing much resentment that would flare up in a second rebellion in 1579. A foretaste of England's treatment of the Gaelic Highlands after their victory over the Jacobite clans at Culloden in 1746.

The second rebellion took much the same path as the first with James FitzMaurice laying waste the lands of the Butlers, although this time with the explicit support of the pope which added larger numbers of Catholic Irish clans to the cause, especially when a token force of 600 Spanish troops landed to aid the rebellion. With Protestant England involved in an escalating conflict with Catholic Spain, Ireland was seen as potentially offering a backdoor for mounting attacks on England. This made the subjection of the Irish an even more crucial imperative for Elizabeth. In 1580, a large army was sent out from England to aid the Earl of Ormonde and the rebels were again badly defeated after their territories were systematically put to the sword as wholesale massacres destroyed whole swaths of the native population in Munster and Leinster: -

> "In those late wars in Munster; for notwithstanding that the same was a most rich and plentiful country, full of corn and cattle, that you would have thought they could have been able to stand long, yet ere one year and a half they were brought to such wretchedness, as that any stony heart would have rued the same. Out of every corner of the wood and glens they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them; they looked Anatomies [of] death, they spoke like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eat of the carrions, happy where they could find them, yea, and one another soon after, in so much as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and if

they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue therewithal; that in a short space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentiful country suddenly left void of man or beast."

This calculated use of what we would today call the 'genocidal' destruction of whole populations was brutally successful in finally suppressing any attempts at serious rebellion in Ireland outside of Ulster. The Geraldine League had been annihilated and rebel areas were swamped with English colonists and ex-soldiers who were given grants of land in what was essentially an empty landscape. The first deliberate and systematic 'plantation' of Protestant settlers in Ireland. A tactic of 'divide and rule' that would be used extensively in the future expanded British Empire.



The Nine Years War and the End of the Galloglass

Hugh O'Neill, 2nd Earl of Tyrone

After the total subjugation of the southern Ireland, Elizabeth's attention turned to Ulster and the O'Neill's. Hugh O'Neill, 2nd Earl of Tyrone, who, while ostensibly offering allegiance to Elizabeth, was secretly supporting the rebellion of Hugh Maguire, Chief of Clan Maguire, and Lord of Fermanagh, who achieved some early successes against English forces.

Encouraged by these minor victories, Tyrone led the third and most significant rebellion against Elizabeth in 1595, making one last attempt to break free of English domination by launching an attack on the English garrison of Blackwater Fort and thus starting the Nine Years War.

Initially, things went well for Tyrone with a major victory at the Battle of Yellow Ford in 1598. This prompted Elizabeth to send a new 16,000 strong army under her latest favourite, Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, to crush Tyrone. Essex did the opposite by avoiding any direct contact and instead he led the army on fruitless marches in the Pale and stationed most of his troops in strategically pointless garrisons while at the same time awarding his favourites knighthoods without permission from an increasingly perplexed and frustrated Elizabeth. In the meantime, Tyrone was consolidating his power in Ulster and beyond. Essex, rather than confronting Tyrone, signed an unauthorised peace treaty. Essex's inept self-serving intervention nearly led to the collapse of English rule in Ireland.

King Phillip III of Spain seized the opportunity and sent 4,000 troops to support the rebellion, but unfortunately, they landed on the south rather that the north coast and captured the port of Kinsale. This put Tyrone in a difficult position. To support the Spanish meant sending his main army a long way from his powerbase, supplies and lines of

communication, but he felt he had little choice as he couldn't afford to see the Spanish defeated and then abandon Ireland altogether.

After putting down the disgraced Essex's pathetic attempt at a coup, Elizabeth, on hearing of the Spanish landing, was forced to send another army in 1601 to support existing forces under Lord Mountjoy. Having divided his army, Tyrone arrived at Kinsale with around 5,000 troops to support what remained of the Spanish forces. Mountjoy had a least 12,000 men, including a large number of increasingly effective heavy cavalry. Isolated from their homebase and outnumbered by better equipped and trained troops, the inevitable defeat followed. The Battle of Kinsale was certainly the last hurray for the galloglass as a credible military force.

The impact of this defeat was profound. Along with the earlier defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, it marked the beginning of the decline of Spain as a major military power and the rise of Britain to compete with France for dominance not only in Europe but around the globe. It certainly ended any hope of Irish independence for the next four hundred years. For the native population of Ulster an even greater calamity would follow with the Protestant Plantation, sowing the seeds of conflict still with us today. For Tyrone and other Irish clan chiefs, their only option was complete capitulation or exile – the Flight of the Earls followed in 1603. Commemorated in a 1607 poem by Aindrias Mac Marcuis (see below)

MacMarquis Galloglass

There are two mentions of a MacMarquis presence in Ulster in the second half of the 16th century during the final phase of the English conquest of Ireland. In 1568, Donnell McMarques, "whose statement made to the English authorities in Carrickfergus, concerning the possibility of the Campbells and MacDonalds entering the war in Ireland, was passed on to Elizabeth I." Twenty years later there is also a reference to a poem honouring the chief of the MacMarcuis galloglass of 'Knocknacloy' (Knockloughrim, Antrim, today). It is dated to 1588, but we do not have the name of its author nor the first name of that chief. Although, by this

time my direct ancestors had moved back to Argyll with the MacDonalds of Largie.

What to make of all this? These references would suggest that the MacMarquises had at some time since Marcus MacDonald created their own separate galloglass sept and it appears of some significance. Whether it was connected to the MacDonnell galloglass of Connaught or more likely Clan Donald South established by John Mór 'Tanister', it is impossible to tell (see the article on the Origins of the Mhic Mharki). The heirs of Marcus MacDonald's galloglass mainly remained in the service of the O'Connors of Connaught until the defeat of the Earl of Kildare in 1535 when their allegiance was transferred to the English administration – again, as pointed out above, the act of true mercenaries. The reference to Donnell McMarques's report to Elizabeth tends to suggest they did likewise.

In 1569, we get the intriguing account of the marriage between Turough Luineach O'Neill (clan chief) and Lady Agnes Campbell, daughter of Colin Campbell, 3rd Earl of Argyll, and the widow of James MacDonald, 6th chief of Clan Dunnyveg and the Glens. Her dowry consisted of 1,200 galloglass to add to the 5,000 or so galloglass already in Ulster. We do not know whether this included any of the MacMarquis galloglass, though they must be in there somewhere, but it does reflect an increasingly complicated relationship between the MacDonalds and Campbells by this date (see my book for further clarification).

There also remains the connection to the notable family of Mac Marcuis court poets to Clan Donald South who remained in Ulster until at least the 19th century. Their most notable member, Aindrias Mac Marcuis, wrote a lament to the 1603 Flight of the Gaelic Earls in 1607, following the defeat of the Irish fight for independence at the end of the Nine Years War. There is more on this family in my book.

'Tonight, is Ireland Lonely' – by Aindrias Mac Marcuis, 1607

This night sees Éire desolate,
Her chiefs are cast out of their state;
Her men, her maidens weep to see`
Her desolate that should peopled be.

How desolate is Connla's plain,
Though aliens swarm in her domain;
Her rich bright soil had joy in these
That now are scattered overseas.
(First Verse)

Nationalist mural, Ardoyne Avenue, Belfast. Recent sectarian conflict has kept the events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries very much alive in today's Ulster.

Aftermath

With Elzabeth's total victory and the Flight of the Earls there were no prospects of employment for galloglass mercenaries in Ireland. Many constables and some of their men offered their services to any who would pay them, including serving in the Dutch Blue Guards, the Swiss Guard, the French Scottish Guard, and the army of King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. Other constables remained as landowners on lands granted to them by their previous employers. As for the ordinary ex-galloglass warriors, they sank back into the rest of the population.

Some galloglass descendants joined in the 'War of the Three Kingdoms' which broke out in 1641, as Catholic Ireland took advantage of the growing conflict between king and parliament in England and rebelled in support of Charles I. Perhaps, we can say that the last great

'galloglass' leader was Alasdair Mac Colla MacDonald who led an Irish/Scots' invasion of Kintyre and Argyll in 1644, supported by the Antrim MacDonalds of Dunnyveg and the Glens, of which Mac Colla was a member. He was also supported by the Jacobite clans of Argyll, including the MacDonalds of Largie and, therefore, members of the MacMarquis family, in one last echo of their galloglass past.

Over the next three years Mac Colla, his mainly Irish Army, the Largie MacDonalds and other Argyll Royalist clans, ravaged and terrorised the pro-Scottish government Campbells and their supporters throughout Argyll, with Kintyre suffering the most. It wasn't until early 1647 that the Campbells and General Leslie, with the support of the Scottish Government, were able to gather sufficient forces to take on Mac Colla and the Largie MacDonalds.

Finally, at the Battle of Rhunahaorine Moss in May 1647, the last Royalist forces left fighting in Scotland were routed. Mac Colla and Angus, Laird of Largie, fled to Ireland; many of their followers wouldn't be so lucky. The immediate aftermath of the battle saw the destruction of nearby Largie Castle. Royalist survivors who had failed to get on a boat escaped south to the last MacDonald stronghold at Dunaverty Castle. Having refused initially to surrender on the dubious promise of 'quarter', the Castle defenders were eventually starved into submission and the garrison of around 300 were then summarily slaughtered.

The years 1644 to 1647 were among the most destructive in Scotland's savage history. In England it has been estimated that roughly ten per cent of the population perished in its civil war. Scotland's figure must have been similar. With the worst atrocities being concentrated in Argyll, and especially Kintyre, the percentage killed would have been much higher. It has been estimated that in Kintyre alone around 28,000 fighting men and a possible 15,000 or so civilians were killed as a direct result of conflict. There may also have been an additional 30,000 or so who died from the mass outbreak of plague that followed the cessation of the fighting. General Leslie described the peninsula as a 'smoking ruin', virtually abandoned by its inhabitants – no rents were collected from Kintyre at all during 1646. A year later, Leslie reported he was unable to provision his command from local sources.

Their close ties to the Largie MacDonalds would have meant that members of the MacMarquis family almost certainly fought alongside Alasdair Mac Colla. Described as the 'Killing Time', Kintyre during the 17th century was convulsed by endless clan conflicts, a civil war and Jacobite rebellions during which most of population either died or fled. Amongst them were the MacMarcuis Jacobite bardic landholders of Laggan and Kerranmore.

The ancestors of the galloglass like many other Gaelic highlanders would eventually end up fighting in the British army, especially after the final defeat of the Jacobite cause at Culloden in 1746.

Three books used on the Galloglass – *The World of the Galloglass*, ed. Sean Duffy, 2007; *Galloglass 1250-1600*, Fergus Cannan, 2010; *'Of Kerns and Galloglasses'*, Robert Gresh, 2024.

Steve Marquis, 2024.