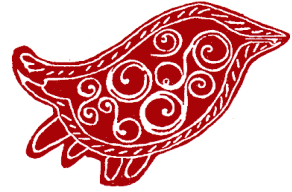


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MOLANA ABBEY.
(Photo by Dr. P. G. Lee.)



CLOISTERS, MOLANA ABBEY.
(Photo by Dr. P. G. Lee.)

Journal of the Cork Historical and Archæological Society.

Molana Abbey, Co. Waterford.

By W. H. GRATTAN FLOOD, Mus.Doc., K.S.G.



OLANA ABBEY, variously known as the Abbey of Molan-*Faidh* and Darinis Molana, is picturesquely situated on the River Blackwater, upon an island formed by the confluence of the Glendine and Blackwater rivers. It is, however, no longer actually an island, as in 1806 its owner, Grice Smyth of Ballynatray, united it to the mainland.

This old Abbey is within the parish of Templemichael, in the grounds of Ballynatray House, Co. Waterford, and is about four miles north from Youghal. It was originally founded by St. Molan *faidh* (i.e., the Prophet) in the first quarter of the 6th century.¹ At the close of the 7th century flourished two most remarkable monks belonging to Molana, viz., St. Ruibin Mac Brogan and St. Cucuimne, who compiled a most valuable work on the Canons, Liturgy and Discipline of the Celtic Church. The former died in 725; the latter survived till 747.

During the 9th century Molana was plundered by the Scandinavians, and in 946 a battle was fought in the valley of Glendine, near Darinis Molana, between opposing parties of Galls, otherwise Danes. It is not surprising, therefore, that this Abbey practically disappeared in the middle of the 11th century. But in 1184 it was re-founded as an Abbey for Austin Canons, or Regular Canons of St. Augustine. Two years later, in 1186, Raymond Le Gros was laid to rest in this Abbey.²

Molana Abbey was well endowed between the years 1185 and 1285, and in 1267 the Abbot and Canons granted to Robert O'Neill, Bishop of Limerick, half the fruits or oblations of the Church of St. Mochua at Darragh in the Diocese of Limerick (*vide* Begley's *Diocese of Limerick*, page 141). The churches of Tallow, Kilwatermoy, Kilcockane, and Templemichael belonged to this Abbey; while the priory of Aghagower or Derrynane, Co. Kerry, was a Cell to Molana Abbey.

Brother Peter de Insula, Abbot of Molana, resigned in 1287, and on

¹ St. Fachtnan Mongach is said to have been Abbot of Molana in the second half of the 6th century. He subsequently founded the See of Ross, and his feast is celebrated on the 14th of August. In the "Martyrology of Donegal" he is said to have been "Abbot of Dairinis Molanfaidh in Hy Cennselach," but a reference to the entry in the "Martyrology of Tallaght" proves that this is a misreading, as under date of August 14th we read:—"Fachtnan mac Mongan of Ross Ailithir; Mac Intsaer Bishop and Abbot of Darinis Moelanfaidh." Lynch however notes the tradition that H. Fachtnan, before proceeding to Ross was Abbot of Molana "situated on the islet of Dairinis, at the mouth of the river Blackwater." The addition of "Hy Cennselach," i.e., Co. Wexford, as given in the "Martyrology of Donegal," is an error.

² Orpen "Ireland and the Anglo-Normans," Vol. II., p. 43.

June 6th of the same year a licence was granted for the Prior and Convent to elect an Abbot.³ Evidently the choice of the Chapter was Philip, who ruled from 1287 to 1290. He resigned on June 24th, 1290,⁴ and was succeeded by a namesake, Philip, on October 16th of the same year.⁵

On September 5th, 1296, William, Canon of the Island of Molana, having duly announced the resignation of Brother Philip, late Abbot, received licence to elect,⁶ when Philip O'Fury was appointed, whose rule was from 1296 to 1310.

In 1306 Molana was valued at £5 13s. 4d.,⁷ the tenth being estimated at 11s. 4d., while Ryncro (Rhincrew), the Knights Templars House near it, is given as £2 16s. 8d. annually.

On February 26th, 1292, Thomas Fitz Maurice Fitz John was confirmed in his possession of the lands of Decies and Desmond by the King, and died on June 4th, 1298. His son, Maurice, was created Earl of Desmond on August 27th, 1329,⁸ and his descendants, the Geraldines, held these lands till the 16th century.

In 1337 the Abbot of Molana was confirmed in the right to the lands of Ardsallagh, Co. Waterford. The first Earl of Desmond died on January 25th, 1356, and Maurice Oge, the 2nd Earl, followed him within two years, whose successor, John, died at Youghal in 1362. Thomas, 6th Earl, was Lord Justice of Ireland in 1413, but died in banishment at Rouen in 1420.

The next notice we meet with of Molana is in 1441,⁹ when Thomas Magrath was Abbot, who received a Papal mandate in September, 1441.¹⁰ He was succeeded by John MacEniry, whose rule was marked by much mismanagement of affairs, and who was deprived by the Pope in 1450, after whom came Donal O'Sullivan of the Diocese of Ardfert (1450-1460).¹¹

On July 29th, 1462, Pope Pius II. granted an Indulgence in favour of the Abbey of Molana to all persons who, being duly penitent, on the Feasts of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin and of SS. Peter and Paul, visited the Abbey Church and gave alms for its repair and maintenance.¹² The then Abbot was a certain John, who on August 5th, 1462, was appointed by the Pope as the joint Nuncio for Ireland with the Archbishop of Cashel. A few years later, on March 18th, 1466, Pope Paul II. gave Abbot John the wealthy Priory of Athassel, Co. Tipperary, *in commendam*, in consideration of the poverty of Molana.¹³

In 1457 the lands of Decies were given by James Earl of Desmond to his younger son, Gerald, who thus became Lord of the Decies, and founder of the Dromana family. This Gerald built Dromana Castle,¹⁴ and was appointed High Sheriff of Cork in 1483. It would seem, however, that the Roches were owners of Ballynatray and Killehala.

³ Sweetman "Calendar of Documents," 1285-1292, No. 321.

⁴ Pipe Roll Edward I., a. r. XIX.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Patent Rolls, 24 Edward I., No. 8.

⁷ Sweetman, "Cal. of Docs.," 1305-1307, p. 305.

⁸ "Cal. Patent Rolls," 1327-1330, p. 436.

⁹ "Cal. Papal Reg.," 1431-1447, p. 183.

¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 194.

¹¹ *Ibid* p. 507, 1447-1455.

¹² *Ibid.* Vol. XI.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ See "Dromana," by Lady MacKenzie, née Therese Villiers Stuart, who considers that the Castle of Dromana was of earlier origin.

Thomas, 12th Earl of Desmond, confirmed the grant of the Decies property on October 19th, 1529, and a beautiful copy of this document now lies before me, the gift of the late Rev. A. G. L'Estrange, who lately bequeathed Conna Castle to the Local Government Board of Ireland.

From 1471 to 1540 the history of this Abbey is somewhat obscure. It was "dissolved" under Henry VIII., although, owing to the Geraldine influence, the Canons were permitted to remain on till 1560. On December 21st, 1550, the Abbey and lands were granted by the Crown to James, 14th Earl of Desmond. Sir Gerald Fitzgerald of Dromana died at Templemichael, near Molana, on February 25th, 1553. Sir Maurice Fitzgerald was created Baron of Dromana and Viscount Decies on July 16th, 1568.¹⁵

Owing to Desmond's "rebellion" the Crown took back Molana from him, and on 6th August, 1575—for which a Fiant was formally issued on 24th November, 1577¹⁶—gave a lease of it for 21 years to John Thickpenny of Lismore, on payment of a fine of £10. In this grant the property is described as—"The site of the Priory (*sic*) of Monalassa alias Molana, in an island in the sea nigh to Youghal, Co. Cork; land in Tamplemyghill alias Rinkroe, Kilnekannanaghe, Donmore, Diskertie, with the walls of a chapel, Co. Cork, the isles of Skarriff and Wynnaghe in the sea; the cell of the Canons of Aghmore and land in Aghmore, same co.; two ruinous salmon and eel weirs on the river Ownore (Blackwater); the rectories of Tamplemighill alias Rinkroo, etc, at an annual rent of £10, maintaining one English horseman."

John Thickpenny died in the winter of 1585-6, and on January 9th, 1587, his widow, Anne Thickpenny, petitioned for a continuance of the lease of Molana, and also of the Dominican Priory, Youghal.¹⁷ But a more powerful applicant came on the scene in the person of Sir Walter Raleigh, who under Queen's letter dated July 25, 1587—for which a Fiant¹⁸ was made out on 16th October, 1587—was granted the Abbey and the Dominican Priory of Youghal, "in the occupation of the widow Thickpenny."

Sir Walter Raleigh sub-leased "the Abbey house of Molana" to Thomas Harriott, gent.¹⁹ Some time previously Maurice Fitz William Fitz David Roche of Ballynatray was attainted, and the Castle and lands were granted to Raleigh, who sublet them to Robert Maule.²⁰ On February 19th, 1590, Richard Harding sent Lord Burleigh a survey of Molana.²¹

Raleigh at the time of his attainder, on 17th November, 1603, was found seised of Molana, 7 acres in Kilwaternoy and other lands,²² all of which were

¹⁵ "Cal. S. P. Ireland," 1509-1573, p. 382.

¹⁶ Fiants of Elizabeth, No. 3161.

¹⁷ Cal. S. P. Ireland, 1586-1588, p. 245.

¹⁸ Fiants of Elizabeth, No. 5046.

¹⁹ Cal. S. P. Ireland, 1588-1592, p. 171.

²⁰ *Ibid.* ²¹ *Ibid.* p. 310.

²² Of these Molana Abbey-lands a more detailed list is given in Hayman's "Annals of Youghal," as follows:—"Kilwaternoy, 7 acres country measure lately belonging to the Abbey, or house of canons of Molannan, otherwise Molanassa, the prior and convent of which at the time of its dissolution were seised as of fee in right of the monastery, of the site &c., of the same, situate in the Awmore (Avonmore or Blackwater), near the Castle of Temple Michell and Ballinetra, and containing within its walls one and a-half acres—also of a mill called the Chanon's mill, 3 salmon weirs, 12 acres arable and 6 acres pasture in Temple Michell and Ringroue (Rhincrow),—of Killnegannagh and Downmoone, each two carucates,—the wells and ground of a ruinous chapel in Diskirty,

granted to Sir Richard Boyle. As is well known, Raleigh was beheaded on October 29th, 1619, and his vast estates in the Counties of Cork and Waterford were acquired for a paltry sum by the unscrupulous Richard Boyle, who was made Earl of Cork. A sister of this Earl married Smyth of Ballynatray. Of course, with the Abbey Sir Richard Boyle acquired the advowsons of the vicarages of Tallow, Kilwatermoy, Kilcockan, and Templemichael (Rhincrew).

Hayman tells a story²³ of the desecration of the Abbey, as found in a rare book by Father John Coppinger, S.J., entitled, "The Theatre of Catholique and Protestant Religion." From 1600 the Abbey has been in a fair state of preservation, but so covered with ivy that it is almost impossible to give an exact account of its architectural features. The interested reader, however, will find a ground plan and description in the *Waterford Archæological Journal* for Oct.-Dec., 1898,²⁴ from the pen of Rev. P. Power, M.R.I.A., by whose kind permission the plan (which is not according to scale) and excellent description we here reproduce:—

"The remains of Molana are interesting, extensive, and, as far at least as the church is concerned, in a good state of preservation. Unfortunately they are so veiled in ivy that a satisfactory examination is difficult, if not impossible.

"Six compartments can be traced, of which the church, refectory, and what was probably the sacristy are the chief. The monastic church consisted of nave and choir, separated by a choir arch, of which only the jutting basements of the piers remain. A few pieces of moulding which doubtless belonged to the arch lie scattered about. The total length of the church is 122 feet, with a uniform width of 24 ft.

"Interest chiefly centres in the choir, which is longer by 4 ft. than the nave, and is lighted by no less than twelve windows, six on the south side, four on the north, and two, which perhaps ought to be reckoned as one with

with 12 acres arable and 8 furze and briars in the same,—of 50 acres besides pasture in Ardmore,—of 18 acres called the Quarters, two islands near Cumbue, containing 6 acres, 2 salmon and eel weirs on the Awmore,—the tithes and the weir of Ballymcjonick. The said prior and convent were also seised of the rectories, churches and chapels of Templemichell, Kilcocain, Killoghtermoy, Tallagh, Collegan, Licoran otherwise Lycoran, Killvallon, Killynan, Baramegho (Bramegho or Barrarmegho) and Lackadoran, with their glebes, tithes, alterages, and other profits; and also of the advowsons and right of presentation of the churches and vicarages of the parishes above-named, as also of the Cell of Aghenore, with divers lands and tithes in Kerry and Desmond County; and of the church, rectory and chapel of Kilfeenyne, with its tithes in Limerick County, and that of Kilbolane, with its tithes in Cork County, and with the advowsons and right of patronage of Kilbolane and Kilfeeny."

²³ Hayman, 1863, "Memorials of Youghal," p. 43.

The Rev. P. Power kindly supplies the item above referred to as follows:—

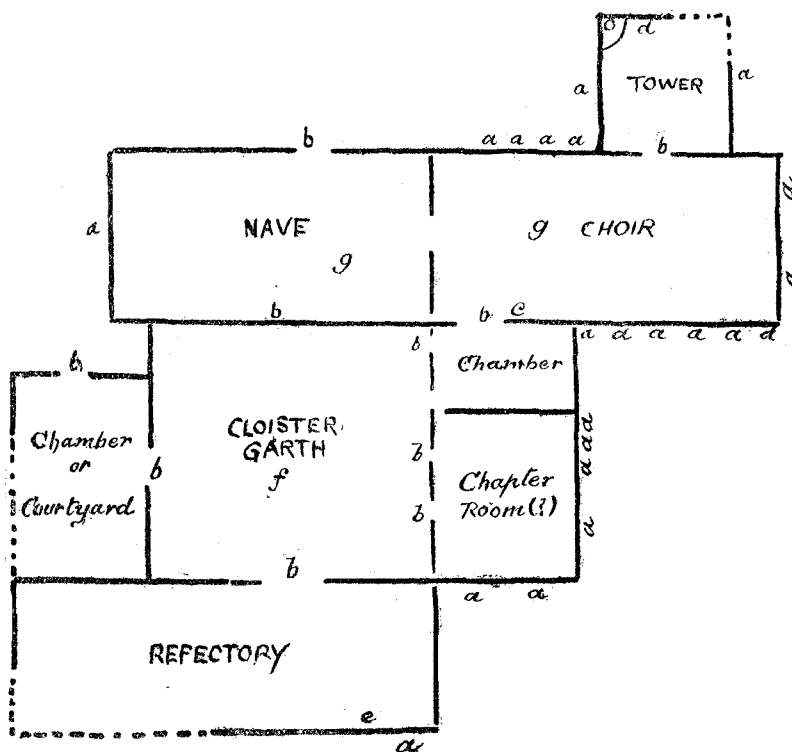
"1587. In a curious book, entitled 'The Theatre of Catholique and Protestant Religion,' pp. 434-435, the writer describes the desecration of Molana:—

"'In the warres of Garret, Earle of Desmond, the English garrison that was at Youghull, a port town in the province of Mounster, in their sally foorth uppon the enemies, went to a certain monasterie called Melanie, which is scituated in an Iland, and in the river of that towne called the broad water: one captaine Peers beinge the leader of that garrison, caused a fire to be made, and one of his companie called Bluett, an Irishman and native of Youghull, making fire of the image of that saint called Melanye, uppon the suddaine fell madd, and died within 3 dayes after. And the said captaine, for that he commaunded him soe to doe was deprived of the use of his limmes, and falling into a dead palsie was never sounde until he died, and his companie were all killed by the said Earle his Senciall; this happened 1580.'"

²⁴ Vol. IV., No. 18, pp. 210-212.

two lights, in the eastern gable. The windows are all of Early English character, long, narrow and pointed. The side windows are 14 ft. in height on the inside by 7 ft. in width, but the measurements of the east window cannot be determined.

"The walls of the church throughout are about 28 ft. in height by about 2 ft. 8 in. in thickness, and in the nave are some pieces apparently very ancient, probably early Celtic masonry. It will be seen that the plan gives



- a a—Windows.
- b b—Doors.
- c—Sedilia (triple).
- o—Circular Stairway.
- e—Tomb of Raymond Le Gros.
- f—Modern Statue of St. Molanfidhe in habit of Canon Regular.
- g g—Tombs (uninscribed) in Church.
-—Breach.

the church four doors. One of these, that in the south side of the nave communicating with the outside, is probably modern; and the door opposite in the south wall is now, and probably has been for centuries, built up. A third door led from the choir into a chamber on the south side, which in its turn communicated with the cloister. The fourth and last door gave access to what was probably the sacristy, viz., the basement chamber of the tower on the north side. The basement chamber in question was, no doubt, originally vaulted. A small winding stone stairway still *in situ* in the north-

west of the apartment afforded access to the chamber or chambers overhead.

“On the south side of the church is the cloister garth. The roofed cloisters themselves have disappeared, but the stone corbels set high up in the surrounding wall show whence the pent roof depended; the cloisters’ six doors led to the adjoining apartments, viz., one door to the small chamber already alluded to as communicating with the church; three doors to a large well-lighted chamber, probably the chapter room on the east; another to a large apartment in the west, and the sixth to the refectory, a long sunny chamber on the south, the windows of which afforded a delightful view down the Blackwater.

“The refectory has evidently suffered much violence. There is a great breach in its outer (south) wall. Two narrow splaying windows remain in the western gable, and the remaining portion of the south side wall contains, besides one smaller ope, a richly ornamented round-headed window. The round-headed arch here springs from triple moulded capitals, which rest in their turn on long slender shafts.

“A modern inscribed slab at the base of the window describes this as the burial place of Raymond le Gros. On what grounds the truth of the statement on the inscription rests the writer does not know. The monastic refectory certainly seems a strange place to select for the burial of the sacrilegious freebooter, who with Harvey de Montmarisco plundered the termon lands of Lismore.”

In the year 1820 a remarkable statue was erected in the central court of Molana Abbey by Mrs. Smyth of Ballynatray, with the following inscription:—

This statue is erected to the memory of
SAINT MOLANFIDE,
Who founded this Abbey for Canons Regular,
A.D. 501.
He was the first Abbot,
and is here represented as habited according to
the Order of St. Augustine.
This cenotaph and statue
are erected by
Mrs. Mary Broderick Smyth.
A.D. 1820.

To this lady is also doubtless due the monument marking the supposed grave of Raymond Le Gros,²⁵ which stands on one of the former side-chapels beneath an arched window, and is surmounted by an urn. It is erected, as Hayman asserts, over the spot traditionally consecrated to that hero’s grave. Hayman also names Raymond Le Gros as the founder of Rhincrew.

²⁵ Raymond FitzWilliam, better known as Raymond Le Gros, is said to have been one of the bravest and most adventurous of the Anglo-Norman invaders of Ireland in the 12th century. Sent over by Strongbow with ten men-at-arms and seventy archers, he landed on the Irish shore on the 1st of May, 1170, about four miles from Waterford, over whose citizens he soon gained a victory. He next fought against the Irish in Dublin, and having married Strongbow’s sister he received as her dowry a large portion of Irish land, and the post of Constable or Standard Bearer of Leinster. He next fought in Meath and at Limerick, which city he captured from the O’Briens, and later on secured considerable possessions from the MacCarthys. Having assisted Dermot MacCarthy, King of Cork, in putting down his rebellious son Cormac, Dermot bestowed on him a princely inheritance in Kerry, which Raymond Le Gros made over on his eldest son, Maurice, whose descendants, the FitzMaurices, became Barons of Lixnaw in Co. Kerry. In 1183 he entered and sacked Lismore and pillaged the whole district around it. Whilst waiting at Youghal for a fair wind to convey their plunder to



STATUE OF ST. MOLANFIDE IN MOLANA ABBEY.
Erected by Mrs. Broderick Sayth about 1840.



TOMB OF RAYMOND LE GROS, MOLANA ABBEY.

Mrs. Mary Broderick Smyth was the widow of the Grice Smyth of Ballinatrav who united Molana Island by a causeway to the mainland in 1806. He died at Limerick on the 18th of January, 1816, in his 54th year, but was buried at St. Mary's Church, Youghal, where an elaborate monument, with a lengthy inscription, was erected by his widow to his memory.

It is to be regretted that later owners of Ballinatrav have evidently not taken the interest in this historic spot that Mrs. Grice Smyth did, else it would not be left to us to deplore the derelict condition in which we now find the venerable ruins of the ancient Abbey of Molana.

Waterford, his men were attacked by a party of the Danes of Cork, who came hither for that purpose, but they were routed by the Anglo-Normans, who had the advantage of crossbows and iron corselets against the stone slings and battleaxes of their Danish assailants. He also came to the rescue of his uncle, Robert FitzStephen, when the latter was besieged by the MacCarthys in Cork City.

Raymond Le Gros' successes in Ireland aroused the jealousy of King Henry the Second, and though selected by the Council of Dublin as the successor of Strongbow on the latter's death, Henry appointed FitzAudelin to that post. This ended his public career, and Raymond Le Gros appears to have lived thenceforth as quietly as the times permitted on his estates at Wexford till his death in 1182. He is described by his contemporary, Giraldus Cambrensis as: "Very stout, above the middle height, his countenance high-coloured, cheerful and pleasant, and though corpulent, lively and active. He was prudent and temperate, a liberal, kind, and circumspect man, and although a daring soldier and consummate general, even in military affairs prudence was his highest quality."

The Siege of Cork, 1642.

By JAMES BUCKLEY, M.R.I.A.

ÉIGSEART NA nÉIREANNAÓ FÉIN
 DO TRÉARSDAIR IAS DO DON-DÉIM,
 AS RPARINN FÁ CEART SEAIRI CORMAC,
 NÍ NEART AIRM NA n-EACTRONNAC.¹



THE Civil War that broke out in Ireland in the year 1641 has received more attention from historians than any national disturbance in the country before or since, not even excepting that of 1798. Its political bearings have been considered from every standpoint, but, owing doubtless to the rude and inferior generalship displayed in the encounters of the time, before the genius of Owen Roe O'Neill enlightened the scene, the contrary is the fact as regards its strategical character. The subject presents an attractive field for the party

¹Through the kindness of Theodore Count Wratislaw, to whom I submitted a literal translation of this quatrain from Keating's poems, I am indebted for the following impromptu rendering:—

Your sin, ye Irish, wrought your own defeat,
 Crushed and dispersed by one swift stroke and strong,
 Ye, wrangling over this and that small wrong,
 Heard not the tramp of the invaders' feet.