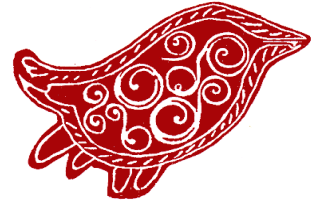


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Diary of General Richard O'Donovan 1819-1823

By DIARMUID Ó MURCHADHA

INTRODUCTION

Among the manuscripts in Bath Reference Library (Avon County Library) is one entitled 'Diary of Maj.-Gen. Richard O'Donovan 1819-1823'.¹ Richard O'Donovan of Bawnlahan (1768-1829) was the recognized chief descendant, in the senior line, of Donnubhán, a tenth-century king of Uí Chairbre in the east of what is now Co. Limerick. Following the Norman invasion and subsequent warfare between O Briens and Mac Carthys, the O Donovans migrated to south Munster, finally settling in west Cork to which they brought their tribe-name 'Carbery'. There were three main segments — Clann Lochlainn, centred on Glandore; Sliocht Aineisliis, a rather scattered group; and the senior line of Clann Chathail (Clancahill), whose lord in the sixteenth century, Domhnall (na gcaiceann) Ó Donnabháin (d.1584) built his principal residence at Castledonovan in Drimoleague parish. His son, also named Domhnall, erected another tower-house at Raheen in Myross parish (close to Bawnlahan),² to protect his maritime interests.

Domhnall II O Donovan (of Castledonovan) supported Hugh O'Neill prior to the battle of Kinsale (1601-2) but managed to avoid confiscation of his lands. In 1615 after 'surrender and regrant' he got permission to set up manors at Castledonovan and Raheen. His son, Domhnall III, played an active part in the rebellion of 1641, as a result of which he was declared an outlaw. Castledonovan was blown up by the Cromwellians and the estates confiscated. The only son, Domhnall IV, in 1661



GEN. RICHARD O'DONOVAN
(From a portrait at Hollybrook House, courtesy of The O'Donovan)

obtained a royal decree for the restoration of the estates, but failed to recover Castledonovan and had to be content with the Raheen portion (over 3,000 acres). Although a colonel — of some renown — of a Jacobite regiment in the 1688-91 period, Domhnall IV obtained the benefit of the articles of Limerick and held on to the Raheen estates. It was he who established a new family seat at Bawnlahan (*Bán Leathan*, 'broad lea') c. 1700, and he died there in 1705. His son and heir, Capt. Richard O'Donovan, married a daughter of the Knight of Kerry. He was succeeded by Danie who conformed to the Church of Ireland in 1729. Daniel married first Anne Kearney of

Garretstown, and secondly Jane Becher of Hollybrook near Skibbereen. (Because of this, Bawnlahan House was for a time called Castle Jane). In his will, Daniel devised a remainder in his estates, in the event of failure of the male issue of his sons, to his kinsman, Morgan Donovan of the city of Cork. (Morgan's grandmother, Helena, was Domhnall IV's only daughter who married Capt. Cornelius O Donovan, — her second cousin, since both were great-grandchildren of Domhnall II).

Daniel's forebodings were justified, as his younger son, John, died unmarried, while the elder, Richard (the writer of the diary) died without issue in 1829. Before he died, however, Richard had succeeded in barring the entail and so left the estate to his wife absolutely. Thereafter, members of her family (the Powells) remained in Bawnlahan until the estate was sold c. 1915, by which time the family had settled in Monkton Combe near Bath.³ In 1946 Mr H.J. Powell of Monkton Combe presented to Bath Reference Library the diary which forms the subject of the present article.⁴

Richard O'Donovan and his brother, John, both took up military careers. John was killed in Jamaica in 1796. Richard received his first commission as cornet in the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons on 5 January 1791, at the age of 22. Two years later he became a lieutenant and from 1 April 1794 served on the continent, mostly in Spain and Flanders, being present at all the principal actions in which British forces were engaged. He was wounded on at least one occasion.⁵ By August he was a captain and five years later was promoted to major. His rapid promotion indicates considerable merit; according to John O' Donovan's account he saved the life of the Duke of York on the occasion of the retreat from Holland. On 2 May 1800 he was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel and on 25 July 1810 Colonel of his regiment. On 4 June 1813 he became a Major-General in the British army but retained also until 1825 his Lieut.-Colonelcy of the Inniskillings.⁶ These were the

ranks held by O'Donovan at the time he penned his diary, though obviously he was not on active service then. Subsequently he was promoted to Lieutenant-General, a rank which he held from 1825 until his death in 1829.

Emma Ann Powell, whom Richard O'Donovan married in 1800, was descended from the Powell (Ap Howell) family of Penkelly, Brecknock. She is frequently referred to in the diary as 'Mrs. O'Donovan' but no personal details are given — apart from the fact that her weekly housekeeping allowance in 1819 was £1.14.1½, which appears an odd sum but was actually the equivalent of 1½ guineas, English.⁷

As there were no children of the marriage and as Richard had no nephews or nieces, the influence of the Powell side of the family tended to predominate. Mrs O'Donovan's brother, Major Edward Powell of the 10th Regiment of Foot, was stationed in Malta at the time, so his younger son, Henry, and daughter, Mary Anne, stayed at Bawnlahan with their aunt. Henry was aged thirteen when first mentioned in the Summer of 1819, old enough to enjoy the fishing on sea and lake.⁸ He was probably on holidays from his school in England; in 1821 he was attending Brislington school near Bristol.⁹ But even when on holiday his education was not neglected. While in London with the O' Donovans he rose early on 31 July 1820 (his fourteenth birthday) to attend at his writing-master's at 8.30 — presumably on the instructions of his father who was paying for it.

Henry was obviously destined to follow in his father's footsteps. By October 1820 he was booked into the Royal Military College at Sandhurst and in 1822, at 15 years of age, he was already enrolled there.¹⁰ His sister, Mary Anne, in early entries appears only when accompanying her aunt or brother to church or to parties in neighbouring big houses. But this dutiful image was altered by subsequent events.

FARMING ACTIVITIES

While most of the O'Donovan lands in west Cork and elsewhere were let to tenants, the General, in common with other landlords, retained a 'home farm' to provide for the needs of his own establishment. He took a keen interest in the day-to-day running of this farm; in fact, while based at home, most of his diary entries related to agricultural affairs. Furthermore, weather conditions, because of their effect on farmwork, were carefully reported at the commencement of each entry — a record of no great interest to later generations. (So far as we can judge, the climate in west Cork has changed but little since 1820!)

The home farm then comprised 84 acres,¹¹ which, taking into account the high proportion of tillage, necessitated a considerable labour force in that pre-mechanized era. At the end of vol. I we are given an account of the crops grown in 20 fields over two years, as follows:

1819: Potatoes, 5; grass, 8; oats, 2; wheat, 3; oats and clover, 1; fallow, 1.

1820: Potatoes, 6; grass, 6; oats, 4; wheat, 2; meadow, 2.

Potatoes

For many small farmers and labourers, potatoes formed the staple diet in the early nineteenth century. But for all classes they played a central role in the rural economy generally, so that the planting and harvesting of potatoes assumed great significance. Then, as now, 'eatlies' preceded the main crop. In 1819, for example, as early as 4 February, men were 'grafting'¹² and five days afterwards grubbing up furze in Deer Park for the planting of early potatoes called 'Americans'. They were 'sticking' these on 19 February, with two horses drawing dung to Deer Park. The main crop was attended to after St. Patrick's day:

22.3.1819.¹³ Sent a butt to Clonakilty for some white White Eyes Potatoes for seed. Massey Warren

left us for Cork. Bought 2 Barrels of white potatoes from Stockey his horse died.

Over the following two days kidney potatoes and Brown fancy ones were planted, while on 2 April another variety, Beldrums, was put in. Earthing was carried out on 5 April. After harvesting, storage seems to have been in outhouses rather than in pits. On 5 March 1823 the men were put to 'turning apple potatoes in the house' — presumably to discourage sprouting.

Fertilizing

After the 1819 crop had been lifted, O'Donovan let the 24-acre Deer Park to tenants and labourers, allotting the following acreages: Walton, 4+; F. Driscoll, 2+; D. Sullivan, 2; Ross, 2+; Mulowney, 3+; Rogers, 2; McShawn, 3; Leary, 2; Harrington, 2. A proviso was that each lessee was to fertilize with four boatloads of sand per acre, the General to provide the sand at the quay.

Prior to 1819 he had been supplied with sand by Scarty Donovan at 7s 7d per boatload. Deciding that money could be saved by transporting it himself, he hired a local boat-builder named Mathews who, in February 1819, commenced felling trees, assisted by Dan Reagh. On 10 May, Mathews began building a pleasure-boat. This was completed by 19 June and launched at the head of the river a week later. However, after two trips to Castletownshend early in July, the General made in his diary a memorandum 'not to employ Mathews again on any account' — though the pinnacle did prove useful for fishing trips as well as for excursions to Castletownshend. On 25 August the sand boat was completed, and a week later, the General had his own supply of sand at a greatly reduced cost. If the crew of four — M. Driscoll, D. Hagerty, J. Rogers and J. Bough — who were paid 1s 1d each per day (more than the normal labouring wage) brought in even two boatloads daily, the sand would cost him only two-sevenths of what he

had been paying to Scarty Donovan.

Lime, incidentally, had to be purchased from Sam. Jervise (Jervois), Esq., at 2s per barrel.

Cereals, etc.

One might expect that the setback to the Irish agricultural economy heralded by the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 — and in particular the collapse of cereal prices between 1818 and 1822 — would have led to a decrease in the area devoted to tillage. Instead, as Professor Donnelly has pointed out, the opposite was the case, with an enormous increase in grain exports between 1815 and 1845.¹⁴ This is reflected in Bawnlahan, where oats and wheat account for a quarter of the fields cultivated in 1819 and this increased by 20% in 1820. There is no mention of barley.

On 12 March 1819 low grass and trefoil were being sown in East field — presumably the 'oats and clover' field listed above. On the following day:

13.3.1819. (Saturday) Fine day. 4 horses plowing in oats in deerpark. Men hacking and making drains. Boys and girls picking stones. Paid H. Becher's interest.

On 12 July four men went to mow the lower meadow. In August (27th) five men were reaping wheat in the sheep walk. A week or so later we find a typical entry:

6.9.1819. Men went in Boat for sand, brought the Hay from the Wood, came on rain. Kill'd a sheep. men thrashing oats. 3 Horses bringing in turf. put 4 cows to fat in the Deer park — Hounds were out. Doc. McCarty came to Stone.¹⁵

An entry long after harvest-time (6 December) refers to men and women 'picking and slashing wheat' — presumably threshing with flails. It was done again on the eve of St. Patrick's day following.¹⁶

A new crop is mentioned on 11 September 1822: 'Men and women with flax' is the first (and only) reference to a crop which was to

play a prominent part in the economy of west Cork.

Turf was also cut on the estate in the Summer of 1819. The men were turning the turf on 1 July, cutting it for Tom Harrington a week later, stacking turf on 10 August and bringing it in on 6 September.

Livestock

At the beginning of 1819, Gen. O'Donovan listed his stock as follows: 5 horses, 6 cows, 1 ox, 1 calf, 45 sheep, 3 sows, 1 boar, 6 pigs — killed 2, 25 young pigs, sold 13, gave 7, died 1, kept 4.

Sheep and pigs appear to dominate. The output of six cows would not allow any great surplus for sale, after milk and butter had been provided for the household. There is no mention of cattle-fattening. On 23 May 1819, after a family visit to Castletownshend, O'Donovan got a young Devon bull from Mr Troy and sent the bill for it to Castletownshend. But two days afterwards the calf died after its bladder burst. (Betty, the cook, was blamed for giving it too much milk).¹⁷

Prices were reasonably high. On Saturday, 23 January 1819, the 13 young pigs were sold at Skibbereen for £5.8.3. At Ross fair (Thursday, 26 Aug. 1819) O'Donovan sold a ram and five ewes for over £10, on the following day bought a cow at Drimoleague fair for £4.14.0. and twelve sheep for £6.14.0., and on Saturday bought another cow at Skibbereen for £5.2.6. In October he sold Moggy (presumably a horse) to Capt. Sherwin for £20.

Prices were still higher in 1820. In February he sold two young pigs to Triphook for £1. St. Patrick's day was fair day at 'Curraghbegland'.¹⁸ Here he sold a cow for £9.10.0. and three pigs for £6.1.1½.

Most of the buying and selling was entrusted to Tom Harrington, obviously a man well-versed in the ways of fairs and markets. Unfortunately, during O'Donovan's absence, the opportunities for personal profit proved too much of a temptation for Tom, and so in late



BAWNLAHAN HOUSE TODAY

January, 1823, we find the General writing to Fr Crowley, PP, Castlehaven, who called the next day to be made acquainted with the misdeeds of the unjust steward. Mr Townsend also arrived, 'to swear some men for me respecting Harrington's fraud', and Tom thereafter disappears from view.

Bawnlahan had its own fair on Ascension Thursday, one in which the family took a proprietary interest.¹⁹ Gen. O'Donovan refers to it more than once; even while 'in exile' in London or Bristol he nostalgically recalls that Ascension Thursday is Bawnlahan fair day.

Trees, shrubs, etc.

The General employed a full-time gardener and was anxious to embellish his estate. Tree-planting was very much in vogue in the early nineteenth century — not only among landlords but among well-off tenants also.²⁰

In February 1820 a cargo of trees — fruit

trees as well as specimens of alder, fir, larch, etc. — arrived from Cork in Collins's sloop. A year later Tom Harrington returned from Cork with 7,000 four and five-year-old trees. In March 1819 O'Donovan records the receipt of lettuces, shallots and garlic for the kitchen garden — as well as flower seeds. In September of that year he measured the 'Hedrangea'. It was eight yards round and had 800 blossoms.

SERVANTS AND TRADESMEN

While outdoor workmen at Bawnlahan — masons, carpenters, gardener, etc. — are often mentioned in the diary, domestic servants appear less frequently. Kitty Harrington who married Rider, a carpenter, on 28 May 1819, may have been a housemaid; the only other indoor servant referred to was Betty the cook, who left on 4 October 1819. There seems to have been a fairly rapid turnover of staff. In May of 1820 Will McClauge was given his

wages and discharged. The most erratic employee was Dan Connell, a ploughman, who left his employment in April 1819. The following March he was back, his value to his employer emphasized by the fact that men were put to digging a foundation for his new house. Two years later (3.5.1822) he was discharged because he 'quareled with his breakfast!' The following year there was a reconciliation:

14.8.1823. Dan Connel came to live with me again. to be in the stables, to plow, etc. etc. and to get 6 guineas per annum.

His last-related adventure, however, gives little hope that Dan was using his six guineas to cultivate a sober and industrious lifestyle:

3.12.1823. Collins went to Comatholin accompanied by Dan Reagh and Dan Connell — Dan Reagh returned with out his companions and can give no account . . .!

In January 1819 the butcher McCarthy was paid £30.14.3. and Mr Foot, the wine merchant (?in Bandon) got ½ notes for £50 and 3 guineas. In January of 1822 Mr Sisk was paid 9s. for painting the pinnace.

Crowley the mason played a prominent role. At the beginning of 1820 General O'Donovan had plans drawn up for a new bridge at the head of the river, at Bealkenmara (*Béal Cinn Mara*), the crossing-place over the Kealadagneeve stream at Rineen which lay on the route from Bawnlahan to Castletownshend. On 1 February he signed a presentment for the bridge, which was to be built by Crowley. Over a year later, while sojourning in Wales, he received a letter from Crowley on the subject, and as a result contacted Hedges who replied that the Grand Jury had sanctioned the presentment. But in June (1821) a letter from Harrington informed him that a deputation of local worthies — Lord Kingston, John Hingston, Rev. Mr Morrett²¹ and Mr O'Driscoll of Clover Hill — had 'travers'd the building of

the bridge at Bealkenmara!!!' In October Mr Horan, his agent, confirmed that 'the building of the bridge at Bealkenmara has failed in consequence of Crowley's conduct'. So in September of the following year (1822) we find Crowley back at his work of repairing the old walls.

After O'Donovan's return from Wales in 1823, improvements to his property were carried out. In February men were at work facing the ditch at Barry's cross with stone while at the end of the following month all the Cap-pagh tenants and labourers were put to repairing the fences. In April scaffolding was erected in order to pull down the old chimney and in September Hamilton was slating the house.

NOTABLE EVENTS

The type of occurrence considered worthy of being chronicled furnishes an interesting sidelight on the outlook of the diarist. Royal personages frequently figure among the entries. On two successive days in February 1820 he records the deaths of the Duke of Kent (23 Jan.) and of King George III (29 Jan.). On 14 February he refers to the assassination of the Duke of Berri at Paris. On 24 April (in Bath) the king's birthday was kept. In London in May, he attended the Duke of York's levee on the 9th and the king's levee on the 10th²² ('the most numerous assemble ever known, above 2,000 at one time — paid for the hire of a sword and buckler — 13d.'). A week later, at the king's second levee he met Sir Edmond Nagle.

On 16 June he noted that 'Mr Grattan's funeral this day very well attended to Westminster'.

Most of the August entries of that year were concerned with the disowned Queen Caroline's trial before the House of Lords. The following Summer (21 July 1821) he recorded the exclusion of the queen from the coronation of her husband, George IV ('The Queen's mob did some mischief to the houses of the

nobility') and on 8 August the queen's death at Brandenburg House. On 12 August he reports the arrival of George IV at Howth on the occasion of the royal visit to Ireland.

A number of social happenings in connexion with friends and neighbours are casually mentioned and the entries are here listed because of the local or family information they may contain:

- 21. 1.19. Flemming married at Brade.
- 13. 6.19. Mr Hungerford came here had no bed for him he went to Hollybrook.
- 31. 8.19. M. Anne and Henry went in a carr to dine at Brade on Miss Jervis's marriage with Mr Scot.
- 25. 2.20. Went to Hollybrook and attended the funeral of John Becher to Aughadown church. Mr St. Lawrence (Rector of Myross) and his brother came.
- 6. 3.20. I went to a vestry — with regard to enlarge or build a new church.
- 25.10.20. Hannah Warren²³ was married this morning to Mr Allexander a farmer and a widower with 4 children.
- 27.11.20. Sent my letter to Richard Edward Hull, Esq., congratulatory on the Birth of his son and heir.
- 14. 1.21. Mrs O'D. wrote to Mr J. Kenney (Curate of Myross) to subscribe 3 guineas to Glandore Dispensary.
- 2. 1.22. Johnston Church (between Milford Haven and Haverfordwest). In this church yard my Aunt Evans was buried.²⁴
- 17. 5.22. St. Lawrence and Kenney caled, Signed leases for the acre of ground at Kilgliney for a school for them.
- 12.10.22. Tom Sumerville married to Miss Townsend.
- 5.12.22. The Ball at Drishane put off this evening in consequence of the severe illness of Ab^m Townsend.

TRAVEL

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was almost mandatory for Irish resident gentry to socialize in such popular centres

as London and Bath. The latter resort proved so attractive that many took up residence and died there, as an examination of the memorials in Bath Abbey will show.²⁵ The letting of the landowner's own residence offset a good deal of the expense involved. So when General O'Donovan decided to travel, Castle Jane was let, apparently to one Robert Ellice or Ellis, from Lady Day, 1820, to the same day in 1822.

His departure coincided with a parliamentary election in Cork city. Early on Monday morning, 20 March, he left Bandon, breakfasted at Halfway house and invited three freeholders to accompany him to Cork. Here he met all his friends — Hedges, the Frenches, Sir Augustus Warren, etc. In the election, the outgoing members, the Hon. Christopher Hely-Hutchinson and Sir Nicholas Colthurst, were challenged by a new candidate, Gerard Callaghan. O'Donovan voted for Colthurst, who on Tuesday was only in third place, but later forged ahead to retain his seat, no change resulting.

At 3 p.m. on Saturday, 25 March 1820, General O'Donovan, his wife, the two Powells, Mrs Rogers and two servants all embarked at Cork on the *Viscount Palmerston* (Capt. Dungey) bound for Bristol. The following day they were in the Bristol channel, but as conditions were foggy they did not anchor at Pill until 8.30 on Monday morning. Mrs Rogers went on ahead and booked lodgings at 19 College Green in Bristol. The others dined at Lamplighter Hall as they were delayed awaiting the unloading of their carriage. The next day O'Donovan had to clear the carriage with the Custom House. On an English-made carriage he would have nothing to pay but if it were Irish-made there would be a charge of at least £10. Finally, an opinion was sought from a coachmaker who declared it to be London-built!

After a week in Bristol, during which the General and Henry walked around the city and on the Clifton Down, the family moved to



VIEW OF THE CITY OF BATH (1822) (Courtesy Bath Reference Library)

Bath and lodged at 1 Argyle St. The month of April was spent in receiving callers (Edward Powell, Mrs Ware, George Brown, Capt. Copping, Lt. Petrie, etc.), in returning visits and in meeting friends at the Pump-house — a lifestyle, in fact, quite familiar to readers of Jane Austen's novels.

There is a very human touch in the anecdote concerning Richard Hungerford of the Island,²⁶ who had found a stone which he considered of great value and entrusted to O'Donovan before he left for England. As soon as the family arrived in Bath, Henry was despatched, with his brother, Edward, 'to enquire what Hungerford's pebble was worth'. Result, 'not worth 6d.' In London a month later, O'Donovan enquired of Rundell and Bridge about the stone. Worth nothing, he was told. He made a final effort at the end of June, sending Mrs Rogers to have it valued. The verdict: 'a composition, not worth two pence'. Eventually, on returning to Bath the following year, he paid £1.9.0. to Mr Moore to set the stone in a snuff box — which, no doubt, he duly presented to Hungerford on his return to Ireland.

The O'Donovans' 1820 visit to Bath was marred somewhat when their manservant, John Regan, fell while carrying the tea-things. Their landlady, Miss Radaedge (to whom they paid £1.12.6. weekly for lodgings) made such an exorbitant charge for breakages that they packed up next day and headed for London. Here the cost of lodgings in Portland Place was £5 per week, but part of the expense was defrayed by selling candlesticks and waiter (£63) and the General's repeater (£18), after which they moved to new lodgings in Sloane St.

The usual round of receiving callers and returning calls began, particular friends being Mr and Mrs Hull from west Cork. Mr Hull appears to have been a harbinger of bad news. On 29 May he informed the O'Donovans of the collapse of Roche's and Leslie's banks — a

momentous event in the city of Cork.²⁷ On 12 June he brought them an account of the burning of Hollybrook House.²⁸

The General and Henry took long walks to many of London's landmarks. On a fine Saturday in July, for instance, they walked '... over Westminster bridge to the Obelisk, over London bridge to the Tower, to mile end, the Exchange, bank, Mansion house, and back by St. James park to Sloane St.'

On 29 August 1820, the O'Donovans took a coach for Gloucester, and thence posted to Newnham, Chepstow, Newport and Cardiff, arriving at Cowbridge, an ancient borough in Glamorganshire, two days later. They planned to remain in south Wales for the Winter — undoubtedly because of Mrs O'Donovan's family connexions with the area. After a week or two at Cowbridge they took a cottage about six miles away, near the coast at West Aberthaw, paying £20 to a Dr Nicols for a six months' letting.

Once more the social round commenced, with visits to and from acquaintances in the neighbourhood. One such was Squire Jones of Ton Lion, who would seem to have inherited the anti-establishment proclivities of his ancestor, Col. John Jones, one of the regicides of Charles I. 'Very violent against his Majesties Ministers etc, the Bishops Clergy etc. etc.'

Christmas Day, 1820, was very fine but cold. Mrs O'Donovan, Mary Anne and Mrs Rogers went to church — but not, apparently, the General, who noted: 'My wine and spirits came from Bristol'. The diary at this point is taken up with topographical material relating to the neighbouring villages and castles to which O'Donovan walked. He also copied historical notes from gazetteers and similar sources.

His servants, John Regan (the ware-breaker) and Norry Driscoll, found their own entertainment. On 24 October he wrote: 'cannot keep Norry in the house a moment — she is looking after (i.e. 'for') a husband — and simple John

aiding her — the house frequently left without either of them'. A month later he warned her that 'she gives herself too much trouble in looking after a husband — fancies every man that looks at her is in love!!!!' At the end of January, 1821, John was discharged, and the amorous Norry left a week later — but not without prospects. On 25 March banns were called in church for herself and a young man named Owens from St. Athan's.

But a worse calamity was to follow. Three days later the O'Donovans left Cowbridge in the Cambrian, crossed the old passage and arrived at the White Lion, Bristol, about 7 p.m. Here on the following day an urgent letter from Mrs Rogers reached them, bearing the distressing news that Mary Anne Powell had run off to marry a local youth, David Davies ('aged about 20, new light, simple boy . . . Who could have thought such a thing to happen!!! What will her father think'). Her father was, of course, still abroad. Mrs Hull took it on herself to write to the elder brother, Edward, concerning the runaway marriage, while Mr Hull walked with the General to Brislington to see Henry. Mary Anne does not appear again in the diary.

The O'Donovans remained in Bristol until the 22nd August, when they proceeded to Bath where they spent a month in lodgings on the North Parade. They then returned to Bristol, to their old lodgings at Park St., for a further stay of over two months.

Departure to Ireland proved to be a lengthy process. On 3 December the General packed up all his things to send by Capt. Dungey, and a week later they all left Bristol for Milford Haven to await a packet for Ireland, but the weather was so atrocious that it was not until 6 January 1822 that they embarked on the *Iris* (Capt. Holland). They landed at Dunmore (East) the following day and stayed overnight in Waterford. They spent three nights in Cork and finally arrived in Clonakilty for dinner on 11 January. But as his tenant (Mr Ellis) was not

due to vacate until 25 March, it was only then that O'Donovan returned to Bawnlahan, finding 'my house not the better for my absence'.

POLITICAL EVENTS

The worsening social conditions of the post-1815 era reached crisis point with the heavy rains and disastrous harvest of 1821. Not only was the potato crop a complete failure in the south and west of Ireland²⁹ but cereals also were badly affected. On 5 September 1821, while relaxing at Bath, the General received a letter from Mr Horan to the effect that the whole wheat crop had been destroyed.

By Christmas food had become scarce and the early part of 1822 was marked by widespread violence. Whiteboys were particularly active in the Macroom area, with affrays at Keimaneigh, Deshure and Carriganima. Of the prisoners captured by the military and militia in those places, nine were executed by hanging.³⁰

General O'Donovan, on reaching Clonakilty in January of 1822, found himself practically in the eye of the storm. He spent the 16th and 17th visiting his many friends and relatives, including the Hungerfords. The 16th was young Tom Hungerford's 27th birthday; it is at this point we take up O'Donovan's account:

- 17.1.22. Caled Cam; Townsend, the Miss Townsends the Hungerfords etc. Tom Hungerford went with a party in aid of the Revenue this night.
- 18.1.22. Hungerford's party were attacked bringing off the still and two prisoners — one prisoner unfortunately was shot the other escaped — they brought in the still.
- 24.1.22. Affair with the white boys at Carriganimy near Macroom.
- 25.1.22. Affair with the White boys at Deshure.
- 28.1.22. I attended the coroner's Inquest at the request of Hungerford.
- 29.1.22. attended the jury.
- 1.2.22. Left Clonakilty for Cork. arrived at Conway's hotel 6 o'clock to dinner.
- 3.2.22. breakfasted at the Castle Macroom.

4.2.22. Revd. Mr and Mrs Brooke etc. dined with us. Sir N.C. Colthurst's tennants from Balavourne and Jo' Brown's from Inchagely came in with very few unserviceable arms and took the oath of allegiance.

14.2.22. Hedges went to Cork — for the Special Commission, promised to remain at the Castle during his absence.

18.2.22. 10 men found guilty of Whiteboyism, those taken at the affair of Carriganimy.

19.2.22. A number of White Boys found guilty of those taken at the affair of Deshure.

27.2.22. the Sherrif came from Cork with 9 men to be hanged.

28.2.22. 4 men hanged at Carriganimy.

1.3.22. 5 men hanged at Deshure. Col. Dobeney, Hon. Mr. Boyle 82d. and Cap. Hay and Webster 6 DG dined with us.

2.3.22. The party from Cork went back with the bodies of the 9 poor men that were hung.

10.3.22. A company of the Rifle Brigade came in on their way to Skibbereen — under the command of Captain Mac nemara.

4.4.22. Wrote to Hedges about Jer Scarty — he brought me a gun which I sent to Col. Limberick.

29.5.22. St. Lawrence called for me to go to the strand tomorrow to form a Committee to consider the state of the poor.

6.6.22. A lamb stolen from me and two fine young sycamore trees torn up by the roots — some grass cut by () and Sullivan Mannings (?) of Arda in the East fields. Dick detected them.

8.6.22. found the dead lamb and skin near Sheperton.

LITERARY, CULTURAL, ETC.

While General O'Donovan made no effort to cultivate a 'literary style' in his straightforward diary entires, we have evidence that his interests were not wholly confined to agricultural and military affairs.

Strangely, he never mentions newspapers, but on each occasion that he visited Bath, his first concern was to pay a subscription to Upham's library. He also subscribed £1 for a copy of *Explanations of the Holy Scriptures* 'to be left for me when published at H. Browell's, Esq.'

On Ascension Thursday 1820 ('Banlahan

fair') he finished reading *Philibert, a Poetical Romance* by Thomas Colley Grattan.³¹ On the first Sunday in June he read an essay on *The Inspiration of the Holy Spirit* by John Dick, AM.³²

Two poetic essays may have been O'Donovan's own. At the end of 1821 is written a verse in praise of Redland Court, Bristol, while the opening page of vol. 2 proclaims ultra-loyalty to England in a well-constructed 12-line stanza which commences as follows:

Some nobler pen this Era shall portray,
England — thou mistress of imperial sway!
Who, while thy sons turn recreant to their throne
Claim'st homage wide from nations half unknown.

Yet despite his deeply-felt loyalty to the crown, one senses that O'Donovan, perhaps because of his paternal ancestry, had more sympathy with the mass of his fellow-countrymen than had most people of his station. Although aligned with the establishment in the anti-Whiteboy activity of early 1822, his distaste for the executions is shown by his reference to 'the bodies of the 9 poor men that were hung'.

While the picture that emerges from the pages of the diary is that of a conventional Irish gentleman of the nineteenth century, one wonders if perhaps his Irish-speaking neighbours³³ held him in special regard since he was O Donovan, descendant of a long line of west Cork chieftains.³⁴ Though the Irish language is nowhere mentioned in the diary, it is unlikely that O'Donovan lacked a speaking knowledge of his ancestral tongue.³⁵

It is an intriguing speculation that a tenantry alienated by the actions of

Barnet agus Becher,

*Hedges agus Faotigh is na málte eile leo*³⁶

might well have reacted differently to landlords with Gaelic surnames, that Whiteboys and Land Leaguers might not have come into existence and that our whole political development might then have taken a different course.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Catalogued as MS 1253-4, it consists of two small volumes (c. 6" × 4") crudely bound with brown paper and string. The cover of vol. 1 is damaged and the first page is numbered '17', although nothing of the diary appears to be missing and subsequent pages are unnumbered. Page '17' has farm accounts, details of lettings, etc., while 17v. has a stock account on top and the commencement of the diary below. There are 108 pages in vol. 1 and 166 in vol. 2. The first entry is dated 1 January 1819 and the last 31 December 1823. Each week's entries are strictly limited to one page; daily entries are frequently so brief as to give the impression that they were entered *en bloc* at the week-end.

For permission to quote from the MS, I wish to thank the authorities of Avon County Library and Mr V.J. Kite, FLA, Area Librarian, Bath/Wansdyke.

I am also indebted to Dr John O'Brien of UCC for his helpful comments on the first draft of this article.

2 Copious details of O Donovan family history will be found in John O'Donovan's Appendix to his edition (1848-57) of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, pp. 2430-2483. A more concise account is available in D. Ó Murchadha, *Family names of County Cork* (Dún Laoghaire 1985), pp. 124-132.

3 Bawnlahan House is now the residence of the Newman family.

4 Other mementoes of Gen. O'Donovan — his uniform, sword, sash and portrait, as well as various family papers — were restored (c. 1924) to the O'Donovan family, formerly of Liss Ard, Skibbereen, and now, as it happens, seated at Hollybrook where the Becher family resided in the last century. I am indebted to The O'Donovan for his interest and assistance in providing information and photographs.

5 A diary entry of 22.3.1822 notes: 'gout bad — and in my wounded knee very bad not able to stir'.

6 For providing these service details I am indebted to Capt. C. Boardman (Retd.), Regimental Secretary, 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, Chester Castle.

7 Coincidentally, this information is to be found in another article in the present issue — G.J. Lyne's edition of 'The Journal of Lewis Dillwyn' (p. 91).

8 'Lough Lewre' (L. Cluhir), close to Raheen castle, was a favourite spot for fishing expeditions.

9 Diary, 29.1.1821.

10 Diary, 26.10.1820 and 15.5.1822.

11 Tithe Applotment Books (1828), par. Myross. (It should be noted that the total acreage for Bawnlahan as given in the TAB is only 233½ acres, whereas the OS makes it 411½ acres).

12 i.e., scraping off the top-sod and burning it. See James S. Donnelly, Jr., *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork* (London and Boston 1975), p. 30.

13 The abbreviated dating is mine. In the diary, each month is written once, and each day recorded as 'Friday 1st', 'Saturday 2nd', etc.

14 Op. cit., pp. 31, 48.

15 Stone, 'a faithful honest servant', aged about 37 years, died three days later and was buried at Brade.

16 St. Patrick's day, of course, was not a workday. Other holidays indicated were: 6 January (Epiphany); Ascension Thursday; 24 June (St. John the Baptist); 29 June (SS. Peter and Paul); 1 November (All Saints); 25 December (Christmas day).

17 Domestic pets whose deaths were recorded include: 'the dog Prince', 'the poor pea-cock' (killed by a fox or a weasel) and 'the poor cock-a-too' who died in midwinter.

18 Currabeg near Castletownshend. On 9 June 1766, Richard Townsend of Castle Townsend, Esq., was granted the right to hold a fair at Carrabeg on 17 March, 24 August, 20 December and Whit Monday. Rent 13s. 4d. (R. Caulfield, *Council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale*, p. 355).

19 As far back as 29 June 1615, Donald O'Donovan of Castle Donovan, Gent., was granted licence to hold the following: Rahine: a Friday market. Banelahan: a fair on the feast of the Ascension and the day following, rent 13s. 4d. Ir. Dromdaleighe: A Tuesday market, and a fair on 14 Sep. and the day following, rent 13s. 4d. Ir. (Caulfield, op. cit., p. 349).

20 44,170 trees were planted by aristocratic tenants in the parish of Myross between 1820 and

1834. (See D.P. and E. McCracken, 'A register of trees, Co. Cork, 1790-1860', *JCHAS* lxxxi (1976) p. 58).
- 21 English-born Rev. Robert Morrirt, Rector of Castlehaven from 1807 to 1824, was the central character in the two tithe affrays at Ardgeehane, Castlehaven, in February of 1822 and July of 1823. (I wish to thank Rev. J. Coombes, Adm., Skibbereen, for this information).
- 22 According to John O'Donovan (*AFM*, p. 2459), he was an intimate acquaintance of the Prince Regent (later George IV) and of the Duke of York. This acquaintance is not referred to in the diary.
- 23 Richard O'Donovan's sister, Helen, was married to John Warren of Warren's Court. (*BLGI* (1958) p. 535).
- 24 Jane Becher's sister, Eliza, married William Evans of Bulgaden Hall. (*BLGI* (1958) p. 72).
- 25 Taking Co. Cork alone, there are memorial tablets to members of the families of: Cross (1782), Nagle (1784), Bennet (1810) and Purcell (1813).
- 26 i.e., Inchydoney. Richard was married to O'Donovan's cousin, Frances Eyre Becher; his mother and grandmother were also Bechers, while Frances's mother was a Hungerford and so was her brother's wife!
- 27 See account by C.M. Tenison in *JCHAS* IA (1892) pp. 242-4.
- 28 It must have been repaired as it remained in use until early in the present century. In 1903-4 it was replaced by a new house built by the Morgan family. This is now the residence of Madam and The O'Donovan. (Mark Bence-Jones, *Burke's Guide to Country Houses, Vol. 1, Ireland* (1978) p. 154).
- 29 Donnelly, op. cit., p. 45n.
- 30 See traditional account in Jeremiah O'Mahony, *West Cork and its story*, pp. 264-5. The 'Deshure five' were commemorated at Kilmurry old church in 1972, the speaker on that occasion being our fellow-member, Mr C.J.F. MacCarthy.
- 31 Thomas Colley Grattan was born in Dublin in 1792. (His grandfather was a first cousin to Henry Grattan). After settling near Bordeaux he joined the Paris literary set. His first work, *Philibert . . .*, published in 1819, was an octo-syllabic poem in six cantos (*DNB*).
- 32 John Dick, DD (1764-1833) came from Aberdeen. His *Essay on the inspiration of the Scriptures*, published in 1800, gave him considerable standing as a theological writer. (*DNB*).
- 33 Even 30 years later, 58·3% of those in the barony (West Carbery, ED) were Irish-speakers. (*Report on the Census of population 1851*) In Kilgarriff parish to the east, in 1816 '... the language of the common Roman Catholic peasantry is Irish; Protestants of the lower order speak both English and Irish . . .' (W. Shaw Mason, *Parochial survey of Ireland*, ii, 311).
- 34 John O'Donovan (*AFM*, p. 2450) relates an anecdote concerning a visit paid by Daniel (III) O'Donovan (d. 1660) to the Marquis of Ormond at Cork in 1648. Ormond's quartermaster-general, a former acquaintance, stood up when O'Donovan entered and loudly proclaimed: *Lá éigin dar éirigh Ó Donnabháin suas*. And when Ormond enquired how these rhymes originated, O'Donovan told him what he had heard from his ancestors.
- 35 The early death of his uncle and namesake, Richard O'Donovan, was the subject of an Irish lament which bewailed the loss to poets (and others) of *Saor-mhac treóin na hÓine is Míodbrois* ('noble son of the lord of Nowen Hill and Myross'). (See R. Ó Foghludha, *Eoghan an Mhéirín Mac Carrthaigh* (1938) pp. 31-5).
- 36 So listed by Máire Bhuidhe Ní Laoghaire in her celebrated poem, *Cath Chéim an Fhiaidh*.