

From: MR MICHAEL BRABAZON michaelbrab@eircom.net 

Subject: McHale Clan Reunion 2020

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Dear McHale Clan

Good morning from West Cork - second only to Co Mayo!

Another blockbuster! Something for everyone. As always, all comments/criticisms/additions welcome.

McHALE CLAN REUNION 14-16 JULY 2020 AT THE GATEWAY HOTEL, SWINFORD, Co MAYO

- In response to the mention of Cleveland, Ohio in my last Newsletter, Mick McHale sent me the link to the Mayo Society of Cleveland plus this piece on the twinning of Cleveland and Achill. Thanks, Mick! https://webmail.eir.ie/service/home/~/?auth=co&loc=en_GB&id=414840&part=2.2 If there are any other Mayo Societies close to any of you perhaps you could have them display the attached Reunion ad.

- And an email from a Scottish McHale, Jean Old (Hi, Jean!), giving yet another version of the name...McPhail. McPhail is Scottish, McPhoil in Irish (son of Paul). I can see how McHale could morph into McPhail in Scotland, a good example of changing the foreign into the local familiar. Jean has sent proof positive of her McHale ancestral family changing the name in Scotland, after having migrated from Mayo, and then taking it from there to England the the US. This is obviously important for research, both written and genetic. Besides the Healys, we may have another McHale Lost Tribe!

- Also in Scotland, one of the variants of the name McCall is McKail, but it (McKail) doesn't appear to have noticeably crossed the water (two found in Ulster in the 1901/11 census records, so not of ancient Irish vintage). However, it is certainly a name that migrated south into England and over to North America. So, for example, where we find two of the 1798 Rebels arrested in Mayo, one a McKeal and the other a McKale we can make a pretty shrewd guess that this McKale is one of ours. The name McCall is in Ireland from at least 1740 (two in Co Antrim and one in Derry). It gathers numbers in the subsequent records, especially in the Armagh/Monaghan/Cavan area. Mixed in with these McCalls there are some McCales, an obvious later variant which virtually disappears in the 1901/11 census records.

- I looked in the Irish records to see whether there were any McKeals registered in the 1800s and found three Patricks, one Anne and one Thomas births (records attached):

Anne McKeal - b.1867 - Bohaun, Ballyovey parish: <https://www.townlands.ie/mayo/carra/ballintober/ballyovey/bohaun-north/>

Thomas McKeal - b.1874 - Creeves (Creeve Island, Kilbelfad parish?):

<https://www.townlands.ie/mayo/tirawley/kilbelfad/carrowsmore/creeve-island/>

Patt McKeal - b.1875 - Cleedagh/Clydagh, Kilfian parish: <https://www.townlands.ie/mayo/tirawley/kilfian/kilfian-west/clydagh/>

Patt McKeal - b.1875 - Belderrig/Belderg, Doonfeeny parish: <https://www.townlands.ie/mayo/tirawley/doonfeeny/beal-deirg-mor/belderg-beg/>

Patt McKeal - b.1875 - Glenultra (Glenultra), Doonfeeny parish:

<https://www.townlands.ie/mayo/tirawley/doonfeeny/ballycastle/glenultra/> (mother also nee McKeal)

And yet, the only McKeal/e that shows up (twice) in Griffith's Valuation (1855) is one David McKeale on Achill Island, a member of the Achill Mission colony. But the same David McKeale is also recorded three times (still a member of the Mission) as David

the Achill mission colony. But the same David McKeale is also recorded three times (still a member of the mission) as David McHale. Obviously a leading figure in the Evangelical movement, vehemently opposed by Archbishop John MacHale. So the name on the records and that used by individual families doesn't always match.

Here is a short history of the Achill Mission in which the McHale version is used: <http://www.patrickcomerford.com/2013/04/edward-nangle-1800-1883-achill.html>

"Other family names associated with the mission at an early stage included Hoban, McDowell, McHale, McNally, McNamara, Sheridan and Sweeny; family tradition says that Thomas McHale and David McHale, the Scripture readers, may have been brothers and may have been related to Archbishop MacHale."

- This McKeal find is one of those odd things that doesn't seem to fit anywhere but worth mentioning: There is a Manne [Manus, Magnus] McKeale McSwine in Donegal in 1611 who is on a list of landowners whose native title is being recognised by James I. Manne's land is in Kilmacrennan, which is a barony, parish and townland: <https://www.townlands.ie/donegal/kilmacrennan/3/> A distance from Mayo, to state the obvious, and the McSwines had no dealings within Bourke territory. If Manne was one of ours the link could be through the McDonnells - numerous in Donegal as well as Mayo, and gallowglass like the McSwines. (McSwine=McSweeney - long 'i' and 'e' in Old English.) There were three branches of the McSwines and those of Kilmacrennan were the most northerly, the Mac Suibhne Fánaid, sub-chieftains of the O'Donnells. Manne was obviously in the centre of McSwine life so whoever bequeathed him the McKeale name must also have been of higher status. Maybe a connection by sea rather than land as the McSwines controlled the coastline down to Sligo, bordering Mayo at Killala Bay. A final word on this one, in the original 1611 list the above entry has a fada over the 'a' in McKeale, i.e. McKeále, (the first time I have seen a fada in an English document of that period) placing an emphasis on the 'a' rather than treating the 'ea' as one sound, which may give a clue as to how we have the Healy sound and the McHale sound from the same root. Like the confusion between the 'k' and the 'h' it's emphasis dependent.

- You'll recall that there were M'Keales at Ballinglen with the McDonnells (the McDonnell HQ being at Ballinglen castle), with the communal address given as Keologeleigh, in 1592. I have attached a Word doc with a screenshot from the Mayo Book of Distribution showing Bourke landownership at Ballinglen (Ballinglan) pre-Cromwell. It's the names of the sub-land divisions which is of interest: Lecarrownekills or Lecarrownecoilow and Coyle or Keill. Lecarrow means 'land adjoining/of' so it looks like the first area Lecarrownekills/coillow is linked to the second area Coyle/Keill. The 'ow' at the end of 'coill' is most likely the suffix 'og/oge' meaning younger or lesser. In that case, Keologe looks very much like coillow. 'Leigh' means stone. Rocky land? Land marker? As a rule, the word cill/kill translates as church or hill, but that doesn't seem to be the case here, especially as 'ne kills' is pluralised. There aren't any mentions of churches I can find in the immediate vicinity and as this is a glen ("in Ballinglan") a hill doesn't appear to work either. Surrounding parcels of land on the mountains are dealt with separately. Conjecture I know, but kills/coill/Coyle/Keill/Keol, in this instance, could refer to McKeal land which would certainly fit their status as kerns to the McDonnell leadership.

- Regarding the McKeal shared ownership around Lahardane (Lahardaun) in the two townlands of Cum and BallyMcRedmond, I discover (having given myself a headache going from written records to maps and back again) that there is a sub-townland at the north end of Cum called Lecarrow, originally Lecarrowkeale. It's the top left strip of land of Cum: <https://www.townlands.ie/mayo/tirawley/addergoole/addergoole/cum/> The name Carrowkeele is found elsewhere but this does look like we could make a viable McKeale translation. Knowing where the McKeal land was (or maybe still is) would help (or did they in fact have in effect the whole townland, albeit technically shared with the Bourkes?). Kathleen (McHale) Blanchard has retained close contact with McHales in and around Lahardane so she may be able to help with local knowledge?? (Hi, Kathleen - any chance you could freehand a rough map?) I have attached a Word doc screenshot of the written record showing the ownership in 1641 of Cum[ig] by "the Sept of the Clankeales" (for BallyMcRedmond it is "Clonkeals"). It could be tautological with Sept=Clan, but the original meanings of the words were slightly different to those of today which treats them virtually as the same. A sept was an extended family group (blood or non-blood) within a clan which came under the leadership of that clan. So is the meaning in this case 'a Sept called Clankeale (the McKeale family) within the Bourke Clan' or 'a Sept in Cum of (=part of) the Clan Keales'? To be honest (and why not for once?!) I'd go for the former. However, if it was a clan-within-a-clan it would mean that we had our own leadership within the Bourke hierarchy (as did the McDonnells). Bourke organisation was originally based on the Bourke Chief ruling through the heads of the septs and those in charge of gallowglass (mercenary) contingents. Something on which to muse.

- Another interesting bit of new research (although I do say so myself). I discovered that the old (back into the late 1500s at least) townland name of Aghaward, south of Foxford, was LecarrowMcKealaghair: <https://www.townlands.ie/mayo/gallen/meelick/toomore/aghaward/> Lecarrow, as above, is 'land adjoining/of' and the aghair on the end is a chair meaning 'a place of', so something like 'the land of the McKeal place'. This adds to the other McKeal/Heal locations around Lough Conn and north Mayo and further illustrates the widespread dispersal of McHales throughout Bourke territory - relatively few in number but obviously of significant middle rank. The picture that emerges is of a smallish non-blood sept (or clan) of the Bourke Clan moving from south Mayo northwards as an integral part of Bourke territorial expansion. At source, I speculate, there must have been a special relationship between our original ancestral family and the Bourke leadership in the person of the first Bourke Clan Chief, known as the MacWilliam, Edmund Albanach Bourke. And the nature of that 'specialness' could well lie in the erenagh status of the O'Birnes of Robeen (which requires an empathy with the medieval mindset)...

- Monastic erenaghs originally had the power to bless and curse, being deemed to have received the gift from the relics of the founding saint. And in the case of the O'Birnes they topped the saint's bones with the Holy Rood. The original ancient church of the Holy Rood at Ballinrobe was rebuilt after the demise in 1156 of the famous High King of Ireland and King of Connaught Turlough O'Connor (Tairrdelbach Ua Conchobair). The Annals simply say that it was the descendants of Turlough who had the church reconstructed which, I'm guessing, refers to King Rory O'Connor and his brother Donal (who was buried in Mayo Abbey), Turlough's sons. Why such a concern with the Holy Rood? O'Connor power had been slipping in the face of Anglo-Norman incursions and King Turlough had used a piece of the True Cross sent to him by the Pope Callistus II in 1123 as a symbol of his sacred kingship. It was placed inside the purposefully-made Cross of Cong (as it came to be known) and paraded around the country in great processions. After his death the O'Connors descended into civil war for the leadership, weakening them even further - the need to buttress Rory's dynastic claim could well have included the divine power of the Rood. (To underscore, that although referring to the same thing, the True Cross and the Holy Rood denote different origins or routes and there isn't one other Holy Rood church or relic past or present in Ireland of which I can find reference.) The O'Connors soon lost control of the Holy Rood church to the FitzGeralds who in turn surrendered it to the Bourkes in the early 1200s. Edmund Albanach Bourke basically declared independence from

who in turn surrendered it to the Bourkes in the early 1500s. Edmund Albanach Bourke basically declared independence from English control and established his own Gaelic clan at Cloonagashel castle (Ballinrobe) for which he needed the local Irish to add validity, and the O'Birnes were in the right place at the right time.

- Whether it was the Fitzgeralds or the Bourkes who had the Augustinian Abbey of the Holy Rood at Ballinrobe built in the early 1300s isn't clear, but whichever family, it underscores the importance of what would have been a small and otherwise insignificant church (the Holy Rood church) if not for its sacred content. To have built another abbey within the jurisdiction of Mayo Abbey is in itself remarkable, and added to this the priest of the Holy Rood church was a secular cleric with a measure of independence from Mayo Abbey, a distinction in itself.

- For those interested in the history of the Holy Rood of Mayo in itself, it is indeed a mystery. The Mayo Rood predates by a long way all the pieces of the Holy Rood and True Cross recorded in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, but a piece of the Holy Cross was given to the Abbey of that name in Poitiers, France in 567 by the Emperor of Byzantium. St Colman, the founder of Mayo Abbey, a Connaught man, was the Abbot-Bishop of Lindisfarne and brought the Rood to Inishbofin (off the Galway coast) and then to Magh Eo with other monastic treasures and his monks, English (headed up by St Gerald a Saxon prince) and Irish, from Lindisfarne after the defeat of the Celtic Church at the Council/Synod of Whitby in 664. St Aidan of Iona had founded the community at Lindisfarne at the request of the Northumbrian king, and later saint, Oswald, in 634, who wanted to Christianise his kingdom. The working assumption is that St Aidan, a close associate of St Columcille, the founder of Iona, the powerhouse of the Celtic Church, took sacred relics with him to found the Lindisfarne community. That begs the obvious question of how the Holy Rood got to Iona. The community was founded by Columcille in 563 who was escorted by 12 disciple-monks. Putting aside the legends and myths of St Patrick, the early Church in Ireland appears increasingly as culturally tied to the Coptic Church of Egypt (the original centre of monasticism) with such legends as the Seven Egyptian Monks of Ulster founding a community in Co Antrim. North Antrim was part of the ancient kingdom of Dalriada which included territory in both Scotland and Ireland and is integral to St Columcille's mission. King Oswald of Northumbria, as above, was converted to Christianity in Dalriada in his youth and later had a large wooden cross erected before his most important battle at Heavenfield after he had a visionary dream of St Columcille (echoes of the Emperor Constantine) - image of St Oswald with the Holy Rood attached. If the route of the Mayo Rood is from the Holy Land via Egypt, there were definitely pieces of it well into North Africa by the mid 4th century. Two separate references to relics in what is now Algeria list pieces of 'the sacred wood' which the True Cross/Holy Rood was originally called. Hypothesis, I know, but What a Story! So the history of the McHales may commence with a piece of wood coming out of Jerusalem in the early 300s. Where is it now?!

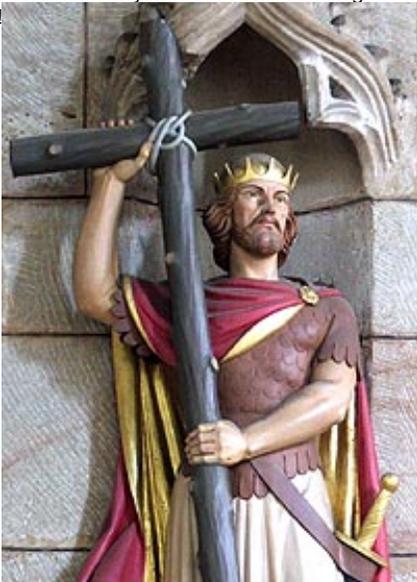
- As an addendum, I have attached two pics of the silver chalice of Ballinrobe Holy Rood Priory (formerly the Abbey) made in Spain in 1663 (Stuart Restoration in 1660) and found in a demolished house in 1926 in the village of Cross, south of Ballinrobe. It was most likely hidden during the Penal Law time in the 1700s and brought out for covert Masses. In the second image, part of the inscription on the base, you can see the Holy Rood towering above Ballinrobe and the River Robe. The chalice is in safekeeping at the Archbishop of Tuam's premises.

- I'm off to Galway City this weekend to attend a Mayo History Conference meeting (preparing for the Conf on 1-3 March in Swinford) and won't be checking my emails on Saturday, Sunday or Monday, so if you do send me a message there may be a slight delay in replying. This will be the inaugural Conference and if it flies then it will become an annual event. I am optimistically already planning my talk for the 2020 Conference...'The Mac Hales of Mayo - a Clan History in the Making' which should be a good intro to the Reunion. If it does work out like that, I can use it to attract the attention of McHales in Ireland, especially in Mayo. Start lighting the candles! I have attached the Conference advert in the magazine History Ireland and the Conference programme (just in case any of you can make it).

LE CHÉILE!

Michael Brabazon

PS Well, that was thirsty work which calls for a glass of the old uisce beatha (but a bit later on!). And you'll need one after reading it - Sláinte!





180	Seventeenth February 1875 Bledagh	Pat	dn	Thomas McKeel Bledagh	Mary McKeel formerly McKeel	Small Farmer	Thomas McKeel Mark Father Bledagh	Twenty Fifth March 1875	John Deputy Registrar
365	Sixteenth February 1875 Bledagh	Pat	dn	John McKeel Bledagh	Mary McKeel formerly Price	Farmer	Mary McKeel Mark Present at Birth Bledagh	Twenty Second February 1875	John Deputy Registrar
<i>John Shannon Deputy Registrar of Births and Deaths in the District of Bledagh</i>									
370	Fifteenth February 1875 Beldorrig	Pat	dn	James McKeel Beldorrig	Mary McKeel formerly Mally	Farmer	James McKeel Mark Father Beldorrig	Third March 1875	John Deputy Registrar
394	Fourteenth August 1867 Bohoun	Female		Michael McKeel Bohoun	Catherine McKeel formerly Derrig	Farmer	Bridge Walsh Mark Present at Birth Bohoun	Twenty First August 1867	John Deputy Registrar



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Announcing the Inaugural Mayo Annual History Conference

Gateway Hotel, Swinford, Co Mayo 1-3 March 2019

Friday 1 March 2019

8pm - Official Opening by the Earl of Mayo - free admission

A presentation of Swinford History

by local historians Michael Comer & Breege Rowley

Saturday 2 March - All Day! - €30 (includes a light lunch)

Archaeological and historical settlement in County Mayo
by Bernard O'Hara, author of Exploring Mayo

Irish Rock Art from Cork to Mayo
by Finola Finlay + Robert Harris, Irish Rock Art researchers

The 17th century land settlements in County Mayo
by Dr John Cunningham, Queen's University Belfast

The Brownes of Westport
by Anne Chambers, historical biographer

Ulster Migration 1795/6 to County Mayo
by Michael Brabazon, Mayo historian

The peoples of Mayo through the ages - an overview
by Dr Nollaig Ó Muraíle, leading Irish scholar and historian

A hedge school (round-table) forum
chaired by Tommy Graham, editor of History Ireland

Sunday 3 March -

*A walking tour of Swinford and visit to Hennigan's Heritage
Centre in Killasser*

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