



# The Black Castle of Wicklow

## My history, related to Quin or Quinn

The Ancient Norman clans of this area in Ireland have been in a constant struggle to prevent English monarch from taking control over the whole of Ireland long before the English Crown attempted to shire the area in 1578 in hopes of disenfranchising all Irish Gaels and the last remaining bastions of Gaelic Ireland. It would not be until 1606 that the area known as Wicklow would be under the control of Dublin Castle and the alleged subjugation of all the ancient inhabitants whom predominantly were Roman Catholic. There were three principal clans; the O'Byrnes, O'Tooles and O'Kavanaghs according to academia. However my genetic research reports a differing series of realities.

The O'Byrne family occupied and held the northern portions of Kildare with the O'Toole family occupying and holding part of south Kildare and portions of north Wicklow. The O'Toole family after the Norman Invasion acquiesced the area in favor of safety at the base of the nearby Mountains. The family was strategically located along the east coast from Newtown mount Kennedy (Ballygarny) to the north of Wicklow Town, south yet of Dublin down the eastern base of the Wicklow mountains following a SSW heading following the foothills at the range's base to Glenmalure, Carriglinneen where they spanned SSE to Arklow by the first quarter of the 13th century in tandem. The two clans were allied through marriage and strongly in defiance of any incursions by the Anglo Normans.

There were incidents of open warfare such as the burning of Wicklow town in 1306 when the O'Byrnes and the O'Toole's conspired against the Butlers. The

Gabhall Ranalagh O'Byrnes sided with the Fitzgeralds in their war with the Butlers. Garoid Og Fitzgerald was the Lord Deputy. On being summoned to England in 1534 he appointed his son, Silken Thomas, vice deputy. On rumours of his father's death, Thomas rebelled against the King. Many clans, including the O'Byrnes, joined his revolt, which was successful for a time. The O'Tooles fought back and defeated the English, spiking 60 heads on the gates of the O'Tooles' castle at Powerscourt. Together the clans fought the English and killed the Lord Lieutenant in 1388.

By the 1390's, or the end of the 14th century; Roger Mortimer, Earl of March and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland with the Earl of Ormonde launched many attacks within O'Byrne Country and took the Black Castle of Wicklow from the O'Byrne clan. It had become a land of great pretenders when alliances between Gaelic chieftains and English nobles were viewed as dangerous by the English Crown. The Crown in its desire for full control and by supplanting English loyalist set about dismantling by blood, or by fire the Anglo Norman holdings of Catholics that had long been allies of King James, I by transferring their lands to the English Protestant invaders. It would be under these new systems that Thaddeus, chief of the O'Byrnes, agreed to sign a treaty with the King of England in 1535. In this treatise with the Crown, Thaddeus swore to be a loyal subject for the remainder of his life. Thaddeus in his deeds had requested that his territory be shired and called County Wicklow. With marked opposition by his clan and its various septs, he was removed as chief and a new chief elected. During the span of the 16th century, most remarkably there was a time of relative peace throughout with the authorities in Dublin remarking on the good behavior of the O'Byrnes and their allies.

By 1578 the authorities were preparing to shire Wicklow to create the last county or Ireland at Wicklow and Ferns. The army of the English Lord Grey, the Lord Deputy was sent to subdue the county, but his forces were decimated by Fiach MacHugh O'Byrne and his ally Lord Baltinglass at the battle of Glenmalure placing a kibosh on any plans for a new county in the face of open defiance and urgency to protecting themselves from nefarious English thievery. Two branches of the O'Byrne clan emerged within the

county. The eastern branch, Crioich Branach, was based at Kiltimon Castle while the Gabhall Ranalagh stretched from Lickeen to Aughrim and Bahana to Glenmalure. Between them they occupied east and west Wicklow by the start of the 6th century.

In 1606, subversive efforts got underway to dispossess the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles of their lands in Wicklow. Phelim and Redmond O'Byrne, sons of the great Fiach MacHugh O'Byrne who was killed in 1597 were given temporary land and title grants to part of Baghall Ranalagh. The remainder were declared Royal lands. In the years that followed, former O'Byrne territory was granted to Sir William Parsons, Sir John Hoey, Sir Henry Harrington and Sir Laurence Esmond, among others. Phelim continued his fight for the return of his lands and petitioned the King in 1623. A commission of inquiry was established on his behalf with the Crown ultimately finding the inquiry invalid. Upon Phelim's death, his sons Brian and Hugh, continued their father's endeavor. The former Gabhall Ranalagh clan was also changing hands.

Lieutenant-General James FitzThomas Butler, 1st Duke of Ormond, 1st Marquess of Ormond, 12th Earl of Ormond, 5th Earl of Ossory, 4th Viscount Thurles, 1st Baron Butler of Llanthony, 1st Earl of Brecknock, KG, PC (19 October 1610 - 21 July 1688) was an Anglo-Irish statesman and soldier, known as Earl of Ormond from 1634 to 1642 and Marquess of Ormond from 1642 to 1661. Following the failure of the senior line of the Butler family, he was the second of the Kilcash branch to inherit the earldom. His friend, the 1st Earl of Strafford, caused him to be appointed the commander of the Cavalier forces in Ireland. From 1641 to 1647, he led the Royal Irish Army fighting against the Irish Catholic Confederation. From 1649 to 1650 he was the leading commander of the Royalist forces in the fight against the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland. In the 1650s he lived in exile in Europe with King Charles II of England. Upon the restoration of Charles to the throne in 1660, Ormonde became a major figure in English and Irish politics, holding many high government offices.

By 1641, the O'Byrne holdings had been reduced from 75,000 to 20,000 acres with Oliver Cromwell dispossessing all the O'Byrnes of Gabhall Ranalagh in 1649. By the Trial of Edmund O'Reilly, Priest and Vicar-General of Dublin on 6 September 1654 for the murders and subsequent destruction of the Black Castle with his accomplice Edmund Duffe Birne for the murders. They were both found guilty with the priest gaining pardon years later and the disposition of Edmun duffe Birne's disposition unknown to this researcher.

The incident and massacre at the Black Castle is where we find important details about my Quin ancestors woven into the fabric of Confederate Ireland and the Confederation at Kilkenny where I possess innately a serious disdain for the lack of information related to my line.

Within the Irish Army List of 1689 we find the men of this inquest are all but convicted of corruption of blood and attainted by the Crown in a coordinated to commit genocide against my line.

**Sketch of Rocks and Castle**

by David Cox (1783-1859).

Watercolor on paper.

Source: Drawings of David Cox, Plate XXXVI.

Finberg, A. J. Drawings of David Cox. "Modern Master Draughtman" series. London: George Newnes, 1906; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.

