

Féasachán Nuachta

News Bulletin!

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Do Cum glóire Dé Agus Onóra na hÉireann



*Inscription on entrance of
the Irish College in Leuven*

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*Red Hugh O'Donnell 1st
Founder of Donegal Castle & Abbey*



Ó Domhnaill Abú!

Cumann Clann Dálaigh Uí Dhomhnaill - O'Donnell Clan Association

Founded at Easter 1954 and registered with Clans of Ireland

Tar éis céadta bliain de shuaimhneas agus deoraíocht, thairg Clann Uí Dhómhaill ar ais arís i nDún na nGall ar Casca 1954. Chun poibál domhanda an Chlann a chothú, cruthaíodh “Cumann Clann Uí Dhómhaill” in Éirinn i 1954 agus athnuadh é trí huairte as a chéile: 1989, 1997 agus i mí an Dherthimh 2024.

After centuries of dormancy and exile, the O'Donnell Clan revived at Easter 1954 in Donegal. To sustain the now-global Clan community, an “O'Donnell Clan Association” was created in Ireland in 1954 and renewed three successive times: 1989, 1997 and 2024.

Introduction

Seventy-three years after its first modern creation, and with the recent revival of the **O'Donnell Clan Association** (ODCA) now entering its third year, we are challenged to look boldly forward, both at home and abroad. In particular, 2025 and 2026 marked milestones in the ODCA's work with our membership in **Clans of Ireland** enduring, and a special partnership with it along with the **Irish College Leuven**, **Eneclann/the Irish Family History Centre** the **Genealogical Society of Ireland**, for the printing and distribution of the “*Memorialising Emigré Dignity – the Cultural Heritage of Saint Anthony's College Leuven*” book, launched at the **Royal Irish Academy** on 5 September 2025, as well the completion and initiation of other projects. Details of these can be found under the tabs “Clan Revival” and “Clan Association”, of this interim website where you can also find the membership application/renewal form <https://odomhnaill.com/clan-association>



Guests arriving for the launch of “*Memorialising Emigré Dignity*” in the Royal Irish Academy, Dawson Street, Dublin 2, on 5 September 2025, following a special viewing there of *An Cathach*, Ireland's oldest manuscript, the Psalter associated with St. Columba/ColmCille, which had served as the battle-book talisman of the O'Donnell dynasty for centuries, re-discovered in a monastery on the Continent in the 19th century.

PROGRESS SO FAR

The O'Donnell Clan Association (ODCA) enters its next year at a meaningful juncture. From the summer of 2025 to now, there have been a number of changes made and achievements attained. These achievements have included the successful completion and distribution of the *Memorialising Emigré Dignity* book project; contributing to a Best Practice Webinar organized by Clans of Ireland in February 2026; contributing, by describing the roles of the last O'Donnell Counts in France, to a French webinar on the last days of Napoleon; reporting on the historic donation of an "Asgard" rifle Mauser 71 (Prussian 1878) of 1916 Easter Rising fame, to the Irish Defence Forces; participating in the parade of clans through Stephen's Green, organized by Clans of Ireland (and inspired by our Rally in June 2024) and participating an EGM and in the Cultural Summit and AGM of Clans of Ireland on 11 April 2026, represented by our Registrar/Secretary, Patrick J. O'Donnell, as Frank stood in for the Standing Council of Irish Chiefs and Chieftains on behalf of The McGillicuddy of the Reeks, for the awarding of the annual Chiefs' Prize for best essay, co-sponsored by Clans of Ireland and the magazine History Ireland; and also commemorating the "Feast of Domhnall" (believed to have been an acolyte of St. Patrick) on the 26th April. During this period the ODCA Council met online, and made plans for the upcoming ODCA AGM in August.

Moving forward

The ODCA has grown from being a purely Donegal-based and driven clan body, albeit with inclusive global outreach and membership drawn from the diaspora, to a modern non-profit and charity-compliant association that draws Council leadership from representatives across Ireland and from the diaspora. Its governing Constitution (2024) is now consistent with regulatory requirements, and benefits from registration coverage by Clans of Ireland. With a renewed Council taking office at the August 2026 AGM, a growing membership now at 36 and rising, and new energy around digital outreach and heritage programming, the year ahead presents a genuine opportunity to build on existing foundations. Drawing on best practice from successful historic family/clan associations, **five priority areas** are proposed for September 2026 to August 2027; we welcome members' **volunteer spirit** and engage them in the areas where they believe they can make a valuable contribution to our community, wherever they are in the world:

1. Consolidate Governance and Refresh Leadership

The transition to a renewed Council team following the August 2026 AGM must be managed carefully to maintain momentum. New blood will be a boost to the organisation, as experienced members commit to supporting the new team. Well-run clan associations - such as the O'Brien, O'Dea, O'Dowd, Mannion, and McGrath clans invest heavily in onboarding new officers and codifying roles. ODCA's AGM should:

- *Adopt and communicate a refreshed vision statement that positions ODCA as an inclusive and vibrant global family, not a narrow lineage or local society.*
- *Review and finalise the Code of Conduct, ensuring it is fit for a diverse, international membership.*
- *Formalise all key roles per Council portfolio, including detailed deliverables, document key processes to reduce single-point dependencies.*
- *Exploring a flagship physical event — ideally in Donegal — to mark the 2027 Triennial Gathering, as we did in prior years and in 2024, consistent with the practice of leading Irish clan associations who anchor their identity in place, Donegal Castle being the most likely site.*

2. Grow and Engage Membership

Associations like Clan Ui Neill and the worldwide Burke Clan Society have expanded rapidly by making membership entry easy and by actively welcoming those with variant spellings of the name. Key actions which should be taken include:

- *Expand membership to wider constituencies who share O'Donnell ancestry encouraging admissions, of young people, with attractive projects celebrating shared heritage, within Donegal, all Ireland and beyond;*
- *Actively welcome those with variant name forms (Donnell, O'Donnell, Domhnall, Odon) as demonstrated by the recent admission of Marcus O'Donon (Scotland).*
- *Reach out to O'Donnell communities in Argentina, Australia, France, Peru, Sweden, and other countries where occurrence of the name is significant;*

- *Introduce a formal ‘welcome’ process for new members, including an onboarding communication from the President.*
- *Close the data gaps in the membership roll and establish a Stripe-based annual renewal workflow.*
- *Keep the membership fees where they are but offer more – for example a free Clan badge worth €20.*

3. Launch a Digital and Social Media Presence

Leading clan associations use Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, and increasingly TikTok to build community, share heritage content, and attract younger members. ODCA has a Facebook group and a forthcoming website domain - (odonnellclan.ie, under construction). This year will focus on:

- *Expand the Youtube and Facebook following, and establish new social media accounts with a content calendar focused on community events, heritage stories, historical milestones, art, music and member spotlights in new media: Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat; WeChat; etc;*
- *Publish at least four newsletters during the year: including one before AGM 2026 and a second before the year-end, followed by a Spring 2027 one prior to the 2027 Triennial Gathering.*
- *Maintain a regular posting rhythm online to sustain visibility between formal communications. Make Council members each responsible for producing at least one piece of content per quarter. Use regular Council meetings as the heartbeat for this activity.*
- *Develop an outreach communications strategy, to include the new ODCA website, with downloadable resources for schools on the ODCA website and calling on young people to be champions in families and communities in documenting family histories, like the National Schools Folklore Collection of the 1930s, now a UNESCO heritage;*

4. Advance Heritage Research and Cultural Programming

Heritage content is the lifeblood of successful family associations. The O’Brien Clan and Clan Fraser Society both publish substantive genealogical and historical material that gives members a reason to stay connected. ODCA should build towards its first periodical Journal (targeted for 2027) by:

- *Coordinating genealogical research in Donegal and elsewhere, with findings shared via the newsletter.*
- *Investigating the conference content that can be shared simply with members. Position ODCA as a fulcrum for historical information sharing.*
- *Creating content that members will want to buy, limited edition with member stories, historical content, genealogical content, diaspora stories etc. It should break even at least and be a collector’s item not unlike the County Donegal Historical Society’s Annual.*
- *Planning some musical/theatrical/artistic events for Culture Night (Oíche Chultúir) on Friday 18 September 2026.*
- *Establishing a conservation strategy, including for objects/art of historical interest, and to protect and extend archival material, with digitalisation of O’Donnell Clan records, genealogies and archives, in collaboration with the Lifford Heritage Centre, the Chief Herald, and the National Archives, and others;*

5. Secure External Recognition and Formal Partnerships

Successful associations build legitimacy through institutional recognition. ODCA comes under formal registration with Clans of Ireland to give the Association recognised standing and access to networking events and resources. This and other opportunities should be pursued with vigour:

- *Deepen the relationship with Clans of Ireland, with all options on the table, including, as previously discussed, placement of memorial plaques in collaboration with Clans of Ireland, for historic O’Donnell sites in Dublin Castle, Ardfert Cathedral, Raphoe Cathedral, ChristChurch Cathedral, San Pietro in Montorio, the Irish College in Leuven, on the Mølkerbastei in Vienna, at Petrovaradin in Vojvodina; and with the Fondation Napoléon at the tomb of the O’Donnell Counts in the cemetery of Père La Chaise in Paris;*
- *Promote the ODCA with relevant Government departments and county/municipal authorities; explore availability of grants for historic/heritage/cultural purposes; campaign for completing renovation of Donegal Castle, including the Jacobean wing, to serve as the principal archive for O’Donnell records and also as a Tyrconnell Heritage Centre, in cooperation with OPW/Heritage Ireland, Country Donegal Library, County Donegal Historical Society, Ballyshannon Museum, et al;*
- *Build connections with academic institutions and third level researchers in Ireland and globally to promote their work and support it.*

- *Position ourselves as a community of people with shared lineage, ensuring that we are attractive partners to all invested in O'Donnell and Donegal heritage.*
- *Deepen cooperation with historic clans that share the Tyrconnell heritage, as we did in 2024, and also with county historical societies, and cultural groups commemorating Red Hugh O'Donnell – sharing our passion for shared outcomes, keeping our shape and our commitment to governance.*
- *Launching sponsorship programmes designed to attract institutional and corporate partnerships, including from “digital giants”, supporting research, materials, and events, and including prizes for young researchers and a possible scholarship programme with academic institutions worldwide;*

These five priorities are deliberately focused and achievable for a volunteer-led association. Executing them well across the year will position ODCA strongly for its Triennial General Assembly in 2027 and lay the groundwork for a growing, engaged, and internationally connected O'Donnell family community. We need more active committee members to execute.

ODCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our big event this year is the Annual General Meeting of the ODCA. The AGM will be held online via zoom link at 7:00pm, Sunday, 30th August 2026. At this AGM, The President of the ODCA and all Council members who were co-opted to their positions by the Council since the last AGM will go for election.

The Agenda for the incoming AGM will include the resolution of a myriad of matters, namely:

- (a) The Adoption of the last meeting's minutes;*
- (b) The President's, Registrar's, and Treasurer's reports;*
- (c) A review of the ODCA Constitution;*
- (d) The elections for Council positions;*
- (e) A review of the ODCA Code of Conduct; and*
- (f) Any other business.*

Red Hugh O'Donnell fleeing over the Dublin Wicklow Mountains - Art piece

By Patrick J. O'Donnell



This art piece was created using the app *Procreate*, a digital art software that allows artists to draw and colour images on a mobile device with an apple pen or stylus. No AI was used in the making of this image.

*"Is there any other similar plot
of ground inside Ireland or
outside that can boast the
mortal remains of such an
illustrious company of Irish
soldiers and scholars?"*

**Fr Canice Mooney, OFM
(1911-1963)**

In May 2025, we received a letter from the office of the President of Ireland, formerly Michael D. Higgins, stating that he

"looks forward to seeing the finished booklet and would be delighted if you could send a copy to Áras an Uachtaráin upon its completion".

He also extends his

"very best wishes for the success of the booklet".



MEMORIALISING EMIGRÉ DIGNITY-THE STORY

Building on genealogical and historical research partnerships, our new book *"Memorialising Emigré Dignity"* was launched at the Royal Irish Academy on Friday 5 September 2025. It consists of a series of essays building on the first webinar of the Irish College Leuven back in October 2020 (with the Leuven Centre for Irish Studies - LCIS), which was co-organised with its CEO, David Grant, and the launch was co-sponsored by the O'Donnell Clan Association, Eneclann/the Irish Family History Centre, the Genealogical Society of Ireland, and Clans of Ireland, with an outstanding array of distinguished speakers. ODCA president Amb. Francis M. O'Donnell described the process of preparation and introduced the speakers, including a keynote address of former Taoiseach Ahern. This was complemented by the welcome addresses of the RIA Academy Librarian, Barbara McCormack and RIA Member and our co-author, Dr. M. Katharine Simms, and by our guest speakers: Prof. John McCafferty, Chair of the Irish Manuscripts Commission and Director of the Mícheál Ó Cléirigh Institute, UCD; Dr. Benjamin Hazard, School of History, UCD and Editor & Researcher, Irish Manuscripts Commission; Rev. Fr. Francis Cotter, STD, OFM, Dún Mhuire House of Studies, Killiney, Franciscan Historian & Theologian on "Franciscans of Today"; and Paul Manzor, CEO/Eneclann – Irish Family History Centre and Luke McInerney for Clans of Ireland (Foreword).

Our finale consisted of a wonderful harp recital by our Clan Council member, Dr. Mary Louise O'Donnell, her evening repertoire consisting of three pieces by Turlough O'Carolan, "Madam Maxwell" and "Carolan's Concerto", and most appropriately on the occasion, "Caoineadh Uí Dhomhnaill" the lament for The O'Donnell, being for Prince Red Hugh O'Donnell, aka Aodh Ruadh Ua Domhnaill, who died in Simancas in Spain in 1602, as well as two pieces by Thomas Moore, "The Last Rose of Summer" and "Believe me if all those endearing young charms..."

The Authors of the book include Count Douglas O'Donnell von Tyrconnell, Prof. Johan Verberckmoes, Prof. Fr. Mícheál MacCraith, OFM, and Baron Bernard Snoy et d'Oppuers, along with Dr. Katharine Simms, David Grant and Amb. Francis M. O'Donnell. We are so grateful to all for making this publication a truly collective success, and to our audience for the effort in travelling, some from America, England, Italy, and Serbia, or from Cork, Galway, Donegal and beyond, to join us on this occasion. We include in this our special thanks also to their Excellencies, Ambassador Nicolas Nihon of Belgium and Ambassador Pavel Vosalik of the Czech Republic, and Cristian Font Calderón, the Chargé d'Affaires/DCM of the Embassy of Spain, as well as their other colleagues attending from their embassies and the Instituto Cervantes. Ten copies of the book were gifted to our distinguished speakers and diplomats, and no less than another 24 were sold in situ. See our previous newsletter for more background, or the website: <https://odomhnaill.com/heritage>.

St. Anthony's College, Leuven, occupies a central place in the history of Irish exile, Catholic scholarship, and the formation of a transnational Irish identity. Founded in 1607 by Irish Franciscans, including Florence Conry and Hugh MacCaghwell, it emerged after the Flight of the Earls, when the collapse of the Gaelic order forced nobles, clerics, soldiers, and scholars to seek refuge on the Continent. Leuven was not simply a seminary for priests returning to the Irish mission. It became a sanctuary of memory and a workshop of historical consciousness, where defeat and displacement were transformed into religious, intellectual, and cultural continuity.

The college gave institutional form to exile. Through links with the Spanish Netherlands, Habsburg authority, and wider Catholic Europe, it offered Irish émigrés shelter, patronage, education, and status. Yet its importance lay in more than survival. Leuven helped translate older identities based on lordship, lineage, and regional allegiance into a broader idea of Irishness. This identity remained Catholic, but it also became increasingly national and diasporic. Shared displacement encouraged Irish exiles to imagine themselves not merely as members of particular families or territories, but as part of a single historical community.

The Franciscan intellectual project was crucial to this process. At Leuven, Irish friars preserved manuscripts, promoted the Irish language, supported historical writing, and participated in European theological and scholarly networks. Figures associated with the wider Franciscan tradition, including Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and his collaborators, did not simply conserve a threatened Gaelic past. They reorganised that inheritance for a Catholic community dispersed across Ireland and Europe. Their work shows how scholarship, devotion, and political memory reinforced one another. Leuven's achievement was therefore double: it protected Irish cultural materials while recasting them within the learned institutions of early modern Europe.

Burial and commemoration also shaped the college's meaning. St Anthony's was a place where Irish friars, nobles, soldiers, and patrons were laid to rest, turning foreign soil into sacred ground for diasporic memory. The O'Donnell connection was especially significant. The burial of Donal Óg O'Donnell, nephew of Red Hugh O'Donnell, and the presence of other figures linked to the O'Donnell network, reveal how kinship, religion, and patronage converged at Leuven. These graves were not merely private memorials. They expressed an effort to preserve dignity after political defeat, maintaining genealogy, honour, and Catholic identity through remembrance.

At the same time, Leuven was never only an aristocratic archive. Its community included scholars, clergy, benefactors, and continental allies whose relationships reveal the interdependence of Ireland and Europe. Irish exiles depended on local hospitality and international patronage, while European religious and political networks absorbed the Irish colleges into their own institutional life. This reciprocity complicates any simple division between homeland and diaspora. Leuven was Irish because it preserved Irish language, memory, and religious purpose; it was European because those purposes could be sustained only through continental structures of learning, diplomacy, and devotion.

The college's legacy also challenges insular accounts of Irish history. Irish political culture, manuscript scholarship, clerical formation, and concepts of communal dignity developed through sustained contact with Spain, the Habsburg Netherlands, Rome, Prague, and other centres of Catholic Europe. Leuven was not a passive refuge but an active producer of Irish historical imagination. It helped move identity from narrower categories of Gael and Gall toward a wider sense of Éireannach: Irishness understood as belonging to a land, a tradition, and a moral community rather than to blood or tribe alone.

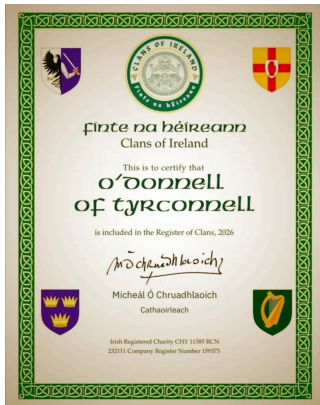
Modern commemoration of Leuven, including the launch of *Memorialising Emigré Dignity*, forms part of this continuing history. Such events do more than recall the past; they reinterpret it for the present. The emphasis on manuscripts, graves, language, music, ritual, and inherited memory expands preservation beyond buildings and archives to include intangible cultural heritage. Yet commemoration also requires critical care. It can illuminate continuity, but it can also smooth over conflict and contingency. Leuven should therefore be understood neither as a romantic relic nor as a simple nationalist symbol, but as a complex institution where religion, scholarship, exile, and patronage converged.

St Anthony's College, Leuven, was one of the most consequential Irish institutions on the European continent. Its significance lay not only in clerical training or textual preservation, but in its power to transform exile into a durable cultural project. Through Franciscan scholarship, noble memory, burial practice, and international exchange, Leuven helped shape an Irishness that was diasporic yet rooted, Catholic yet historically expansive, and European without losing local memory. To study Leuven is to study a crucial chapter in the making of Irish historical self-understanding: a sanctuary of memory and a workshop of the Irish nation in exile.

The booklet is available to order [HERE](#):

<https://familyhistory.ie/product/memorialising-emigre-dignity-the-cultural-heritage-of-st-anthonys-college-leuven-plus-postage-packaging/>

**Embers sparking a new fire? –
The AGM and the Cultural
Summit of the Clans of Ireland**



CLANS OF IRELAND – AND THE STANDING COUNCIL OF IRISH CHIEFS & CHIEFTAINS

*The ODCA membership in Clans of Ireland was renewed again this year, and ODCA was represented by Francis M. O'Donnell, President of the O'Donnell Clan Association (ODCA), and Patrick J. O'Donnell, Secretary and Registrar of the ODCA, at its **Cultural Summit and Annual General Meeting** in Dublin on 11 April 2026. Francis also represented **The Standing Council of Irish Chiefs and Chieftains (SCICC)** (*Buanchomhairle Thaoisigh Éireann*) (hereditary) in his capacity as Delegate of the SCICC. The summit took place at the St. Stephen's Green Club in Dublin, with the procession of the Clans beginning at the entrance to the club and leaving for St Stephen's Green Park.*



The Standing Council of Irish Chiefs and Chieftains (*Buanchomhairle Thaoisigh Éireann*) was founded in 1991 to unite hereditary claimants of Gaelic nobility titles, known as *Chiefs of the Name*, recognized by Ireland's *Chief Herald*. On October 5, 1991, sixteen of nineteen claimant chiefs were received by President Mary Robinson at *Áras an Uachtaráin*, marking a historic gathering to form the council, the first of its kind since the 1601 Battle of Kinsale. Maguire of Fermanagh was elected chairman, and Denis The O'Connor Don of Roscommon deputy chairman. The council aimed to promote Gaelic heritage, protect chiefly titles from misuse, and educate the public on their historical roles. It also established the annual history prize with Trinity College Dublin, later also involving Clans of Ireland. In 1999, the *Chief Herald of Ireland*, the constitutional legitimacy of all or some of whose practices was in doubt, notwithstanding the National Cultural Institutions Act of 1997, and prompted also by a scandal fraudulent claims (notably “MacCarthy Mór”, whose title was later debunked as a hoax) was advised at his request, by the Attorney General, that “*there is not, and never was, any statutory or legal basis for the practice of granting courtesy recognition as chief of the name*”, and in these circumstances, the Chief Herald then decided, that the practice of granting courtesy recognition as Chief of the Name should be discontinued, and accordingly ceased recognising any new Chiefs of the Name, and halted succession publications in *Iris Oifigiúil* (the official gazette of the State). Recognition was not intended to confer, confirm or imply any rights in law, or any special status or title of nobility or of honour. It was also held that it would be inappropriate if a decision made by the Genealogical Office/Chief Herald in the past in relation to courtesy recognition were henceforth to be relied on as the sole basis for use of any particular chiefly designation. The recognition of those previously gazetted was not however withdrawn. Notwithstanding these challenges, by 2006, Dr. Hugo Ricciardi O'Neill chaired the Standing Council, which continued limited activities, including the annual history prize. Subsequent chairs were Major-General David Nial Creagh, The O'Morchoe (1928–2019), succeeded by the late Conor Myles John, The O'Brien, 18th Baron Inchiquin (1943–2023), who served as chairman at two points, and was a founding member in 1991. Upon his demise, Donough, *The McGillycuddy of the Reeks* took over, until the present.

More details here: <https://odomhnaill.com/clans-chieftancies>

See Youtube record of the Clans of Ireland Cultural Summit 2026:

<https://youtu.be/1zDPLbdVsPU?si=eZxfq4azyWkbI8v0>

Other News - Articles from the Members

In honour of a selection of our Irish Canadian Ancestors who made major contributions in the military, religious and engineering communities across Canada.

by John Hugh O'Donnell

We are Constance and John Hugh O'Donnell, sister and brother, raised in Quebec City and currently residing in Carp, Ontario. We are members of the O'Donnell Clan Association. We indeed have very deep roots on our paternal side going back six generations, if not earlier, since we are still doing research. Our records show a Patrick O'Donnell who fought in the war of 1775 in the invasion of Quebec by the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. The latter were defeated in the battle in December of that year. Patrick was granted lands along with Thomas Hackett who later married the widow of Patrick, Mary McDonald. Some of these properties remained in our family until 1960 and were strategically located in old Quebec. The paternal side that we outline below was through marriage and birth descendants of this lineage where Hugh O'Donnell in 1839 married Mary Adelaide d'Arche, grandchild of the Thomas Hackett/Mary MacDonald marriage.



Four Generations of O'Donnells

And now for their achievements on the paternal side, 4th generation. Hugh O'Donnell, born 1811, his mother Anne Kilkenny and two sisters immigrated to New York in 1835 from Ballymote Co. Sligo. Hugh got hired and worked for a prominent engineering company in Poughkeepsie that won a contract to do the public works in Quebec City. Hugh was assigned to the contract and took up residence in Quebec with the city engineering department. He was responsible for the laying of the first 48-inch water main and during excavation his team thought they had discovered the remains of Samuel de Champlain. This got media attention for a number of years but was eventually discarded. Hugh went on to be head of the water works department of Quebec City until his death in 1871.



My Great-Grandparents

His son Hugh followed in the same career path and was one of the “early appointed land surveyors of Quebec in 1877. He was also a Dominion Land Surveyor which took him to practice in many parts of Canada, being at one time resident engineer on construction of the North – Shore Railway (now the CPR) and also surveyor of the line between Montreal and Halifax via Quebec. He later occupied the position of City Surveyor and Assistant City Engineer for 25 years”. (1). In our possession we have the original survey instruments that were used by both these gentlemen and copies of early surveys. Constance, being the executor of the estates, has denoted on the paternal side all the family records, antique furniture and jewelry to the Museum of History in Gatineau. Now to the maternal side. Thomas O'Donnell and Johanna Daly arrived in Toronto in 1882 along with their four children immigrating from Camp, Co. Kerry. One was our grandmother, Matilda O'Donnell. Among her brothers was “Thomas, who later was ordained a priest in 1899 in the Archdiocese of Toronto and served at St Anne's parish. He had great financial deftness and the Vatican appointed him President of the Catholic Church Extension Society of Canada in 1916. In the next seven years he fundraised for 90 separate churches, many of which were constructed in the remote areas of the Canadian West. He was also editor of *The Catholic Register*. In 1923 Thomas O'Donnell (right) was consecrated Bishop of Victoria, a position that he held for five years. He was then appointed Archbishop of Halifax, having established a reputation as a builder: eight new parishes established, three Catholic schools, and an infirmary. He died in 1936.” (2) Both of these families had large families and many went on to establish prominent careers as lawyers, engineers, nurses and business people in Canadian Society. May they RIP. Amen.



Ref 1: Annuaire de la Corporation Des [Arpenteurs-Géomètres de la Province de Québec 1918, page 51](#)

Ref 2: Every Popish Person: The Story of Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia and the Church of Halifax 1604 – 1984, pages 190 -195

German adventure in Donegal by Nicolai Hartmann

My name is Nicolai and I was introduced to the O'Donnell Clan Association by Patrick D'Donnell, who recently joined the Council as Secretary. Patrick and I met during our LL.M. studies at Trinity in September last year.

When he first mentioned that he was part of a clan, I found this immediately very interesting, as I hadn't been very familiar with the concept of a clan until then. Historically speaking, there were certainly family groups in continental Europe with similar structures to clans. However, the political and social influence that Scottish and Irish clans continued to wield, even after the start of the modern era, was unrivalled. During a trip to Donegal with two German friends in May, I was able to experience first-hand how this influence continues to be present today. In particular, during our visit to Donegal town, we kept coming across all sorts of references to the O'Donnell Clan. From classic information signs about the town's history, to the names of various shops, and finally to Donegal Castle – the name O'Donnell appeared everywhere. This may not seem like anything special to long-standing members of the clan who may even bear the name O'Donnell themselves. However, for us, it offered the chance to forge a personal connection with the Donegal region and Irish history. In my view, the O'Donnell Clan does more than simply help to strengthen family ties. It can also give outsiders a unique insight into Ireland, as it did for me. It is precisely these kinds of insights that make studying abroad so valuable.

I would like to thank the O'Donnell family and Patrick for that!

A Family that golfs together makes a difference in their Community by Linda Plock

On 26 June, 2026 the 33rd annual "O'Donnell and Friends Open Golf Tournament" was held in the Toad valley Golf Course located in Des Moines, Iowa. What started as a family reunion in 1994 has become a major fundraiser for the charities of the greater Des Moines, Iowa area. Dan and Dee O'Donnell, their 10 children along with spouses, grandchildren and great grandchildren sponsored and participated in this event since it started. Dan and Dee have since passed away but their legacy of giving to those in need is continued every last Friday in June. They have raised about 2 million dollars for local charities. In 2017 they also started a scholarship fund for graduating high school seniors actively involved in their community.

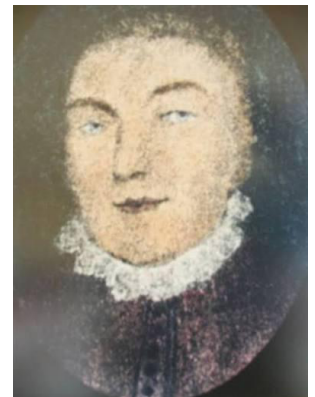
Another avid O'Donnell golfer who lived in Frankfort, Illinois, David Patrick O'Donnell, was a hard-working young engineer who passed away from a construction accident in Chicago. His memory will be honored by his family in its "2nd Annual Golf Outing" at the Green County Country Club on 26 September, 2026. Proceeds of the event will go to a scholarship for a graduating senior in their local high school and also to charities concerning bereavement and children in crisis.

Remembering our Priestly kin: The O'Donnells of the Clergy by Patrick O'Donnell

As evidenced by history, a good number of individuals who have borne the surname of O'Donnell have achieved highly important ecclesiastical offices. It is worth remembering those O'Donnells who have held—and who continue to hold—the eminent title of bishops in the Roman Catholic Church as well as their good deeds as important members of the clergy.

Bishop James Louis O'Donel (1737-1811)

As the first Catholic Bishop of Newfoundland and the one who established the Church in that nascent colony, James Louis O'Donnell played an instrumental role in the religious history of Canada. After serving as a teacher of Theology in Prague, O'Donel was sent to the New World to minister to Irish migrants. He gained the respect and admiration of his diocesans, despite his tenure as bishop running concurrently with periods of political upheaval, rebellions, and insubordinate priests. During these difficult times, O'Donel is said to have taken the role of a mediator who sought to avoid and temper conflict. Notwithstanding his efforts to serve the needs of his diocesans while remaining amicable to both the governing British authorities and the Protestants of Newfoundland, O'Donel's neutral attitude to Britain had led to accusations of him being a "Castle Catholic" who was overly deferential to the English Government at Ireland's expense. However, his stance has since been seen as an example of the gospel teaching: "Render under Caesar that which is Caesar's", which instructs persons to balance and separate one's spiritual duties from their civic obligations.





Archbishop & Cardinal Patrick O'Donnell (1956-1927)

Archbishop Patrick O'Donnell hailed from the small town of Glenties in Co. Donegal and was born into a family which claimed descent from the O'Donnells of Tyrconnell. Ordained a priest in 1880, he became a prominent scholar of both theology and canon law. In 1888, he received the appointment of bishop, which made him the youngest bishop in the world at the time. Towards the end of his life, he rose to the position of Archbishop of Armagh in 1922 before becoming Cardinal in 1924. It was he who presided over the re-opening of the Irish College Leuven in 1927, shortly before he passed unto his eternal repose. A collateral descendant is the ODCA outgoing president, Francis M. O'Donnell, who steered the Leuven commemorative booklet, *Memorialising Emigré Dignity*.

Archbishop Thomas O'Donnell (1874-1936)

Archbishop Thomas O'Donnell was born in Tralee Co. Kerry. He and his family emigrated to Toronto when Thomas was only eight years old. He was ordained in 1899 and became well-known for saving numerous Catholic newspapers, priests and parishes from bankruptcy and destitution. In 1916, Thomas also became the President of the Catholic Church Extension Society of Canada which oversaw fund-raising for the building of new churches in struggling parishes. He was appointed as Bishop of the Diocese of Victoria in 1923 before becoming the Archbishop of Halifax eight years later. One of his most notable achievements during his tenure as Archbishop was the construction of many new religious amenities, including eight parish churches; three schools; and several rectories. St Mary's Church in Camp, County Kerry, is celebrating its 200th year anniversary on July 25th. From Carp in Ontario, Canada, his collateral descendants, Constance and John Hugh O'Donnell, are providing the following for permanent display: his coat of arms, his beretta, blessed gloves, and skull cap, and an account of his ministry in Canada, along with pictures of his cousins. The Archbishop was well known in the parish during his frequent visits.



Father Thomas Joseph O'Donnell (1876-1949)

Fr. Thomas J. O'Donnell was born to Irish parents in Buninyong, Australia. Ordained in 1907, he became a curate at Latrobe, Tasmania. Transferred to Stanley in 1909, he was energetic in promoting the Catholic religion, building churches and discussing local issues. Fr. Thomas was arrested in 1919 for 'traitorous language' due to his explicit statements opposing British rule over Ireland, and he was imprisoned in London. After release, he soon returned to Tasmania, and he was appointed archdeacon in 1944. In Latrobe, Fr. Thomas also helped found sport clubs and was a board member for numerous local hospitals.

Bishop Ralph Bernard O'Donnell (1969-Present)

Ralph Bernard O'Donnell is the current bishop of Jefferson City in Missouri. Newly consecrated in October 2025 by Pope Leo XIV, the Rev. O'Donnell had previously taught at Conception Seminary College and, after that, served as executive director for the **Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops**. He now continues his vocation as the spiritual head of the Jefferson City Diocese.



Other News

Remembering the Armada, Sligo, 17-20 September 2026

The annual commemoration honouring the sailors and soldiers of the Spanish Armada who died in the ship-wrecks of 1588 will be held this Autumn in Streedagh Strand in Co. Sligo. It will feature historical talks and musical sessions at local pubs. A beach pageant will also be held at the wreck site. Find out more: <https://spanisharmadaireland.com/>

Funeral re-enactment for Red Hugh O'Donnell, Valladolid, Spain, 25-26 September 2026

The re-enactment of the royal funeral of the Irish prince Red Hugh O'Donnell will take place in Valladolid, Spain, on 25-26 September, 2026. Organized by Hispano-Irish, this event commemorates the 1602 state funeral granted by King Philip III with historical parades, Irish music, and conferences. Find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/maria.nolan.779/posts/26981355308212363/>

Earagail Arts Festival, Donegal, 10-25 July 2026

The 39th festival of world class performances in music, circus, dance, theatre, visual arts and spoken word from Ireland and around the globe. Hosted in circus tents, castles and churches, on beaches and streets across County Donegal from Malin to Donegal Town, it brings an extensive 2 weeks of events for everyone at Donegal's premier summer festival. Find out more: <https://eaf.ie/2026-events/>

National Heritage Week – Heritage at Risk, 15 - 23 August 2026

National Heritage Week celebrates Ireland's cultural, built and natural heritage. It brings together volunteers, community groups and heritage enthusiasts to share their experience, knowledge culture and practices. The theme for National Heritage Week, *Heritage at Risk*, and is also the theme for over 40 European countries. The theme will invite us to look inwardly at our culture, understand how its survival is being challenged and what we can do to preserve it. As National Heritage Week is part of the European Heritage Days network, Ireland along with other countries collectively decide the theme. Starting off small with a limited number of events, it has grown under the Heritage Council to be an island-wide event celebrating all aspects of our built, natural and cultural heritage. Find out more here: <https://www.heritageweek.ie>

Dublin Festival of History - 26 September to 11 October 2026

The Dublin Festival of History will run to the Big Weekend at the Round Room at the Mansion House, from Saturday 27 September to Sunday 28 September. The Dublin Festival of History is an annual free festival, brought to you by Dublin City Council, and organised by Dublin City Libraries, in partnership with the Dublin City Council Culture Company. Read more about it here: <https://dublinfestivalofhistory.ie/>

The Midnight Run, is an annual 60km event held in January commemorating the escape of Red Hugh O'Donnell and others from captivity. It retraces their route through Kimmage, and into County Wicklow, typically at midnight. On January 6, 1592, Art O'Neill, Henry O'Neill, and Red Hugh O'Donnell broke out of Dublin Castle and made their way on foot, heading towards Glenmalur in the Wicklow Mountains. Unfortunately, Art O'Neill succumbed to hypothermia during the escape. It is organized by the Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team, with rescue teams available if needed.

Chief Justice Donal O'Donnell awarded honorary doctorate from UCD

In September 2025, eminent jurist and Irish Chief Justice, Donal O'Donnell, was awarded an honorary doctorate from University College Dublin (UCD) for his contributions to the legal profession. Hailing from Belfast, he studied law in UCD and was elevated to the Supreme Court in 2010, becoming Chief Justice of the same in October 2021. Since he became a judge, Chief Justice O'Donnell has been instrumental to developing the Constitutional jurisprudence of the Irish Courts, having issued key judgments on matters ranging from the constitutional limitations on Executive power in the government to the fair trial of citizens accused of crimes.

Irish Lives Remembered

See Issue no 64 of the *Irish Lives Remembered* series produced by the Irish Family History Centre in Dublin: <https://epicchq.com/genealogy/irish-lives-remembered/>

Obituary – Brigid McCaffery, RIP

see : <https://odomhnaill.com/clan-association>

The O'Donnell Clan Association extends its most sincere condolences and deeply regrets the sudden unexpected death on Tuesday, 2 July 2026, of Donegal genealogist Brigid Mary Clare McCaffery. Brigid, aged 68, was laid to rest in Auckland New Zealand on Wednesday, 8 July. Brigid was the sister of our Council member, John McCaffery, with whom she created and managed the Facebook genealogy page "The O'Donnells of Glassagh", and the generation of DNA-based research on their McCaffery /O'Donnell connections, families and ancestors (O'Dougherty /Doherty, McGlynn, O'Conner, Buckley, Hanrahan, Martin, Ward). Brigid helped establish their Ancestry.au huge site with over 6,000 family connections. In particular, with Eunan O'Donnell, and aided by the late Rupert Coughlan's genealogical research on the Donnell's of Glassagh /Glashaghin, they established the link to the Larkfield O'Donnells with Conn of Glassagh, being the brother of Hugh of Larkfield. May the blessing of Our Lord be upon her.

As John says: *"Brigid was an Irish genealogy genius able to solve, DNA, links, individuals, families and I could never keep up with her speed or expertise. Our Ancestry acc is always chocka block full of requests and replies from all around the world especially the USA where we have located many O'Ds who migrated and their families linking to Donegal"*

Right: John McCaffery with his late sister, Brigid.



Stay tuned!

Many events have taken place in 2025-2026, and we hope to capture more of these in the future. You can find out more on Facebook/Meta: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/412725392858883>

Membership application or renewal for 2026-2027

For new ordinary and associate membership or renewal, please use the new form and the payment options indicated. It can be downloaded on the Clan Association webpage (scroll down, after Constitution): <https://odomhnaill.com/clan-association>

The Cathach, 2026

The Royal Irish Academy at 19 Dawson Street is displaying the Cathach for viewing up to 4:30pm on 18 December. See first-hand our oldest extant Irish manuscript,

[The Cathach of St Columba](#)

And its history as the Battle Book of the O'Donnells of Tyrconnell.

O'Donnell Clan Association – Council Members

President	Francis Martin O'Donnell
Vice-President	Maria Angeles O'Donnell-Olson
Secretary/Registrar	Patrick John O'Donnell
Treasurer	Frank Hannigan
Funding/Outreach	John McCaffery
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