



Ó Dombhnaill Abú!

Cumann Clann Dálaigh - The O'Donnell Clan Association

Founded at Easter 1954 and registered with Clans of Ireland

Anniversaries: 70th & Donegal Castle & Abbey: 550th

Press release

6 June 2024

Historically, the O'Donnells were one of the most ancient and powerful clans in Ireland. The search for the burial place of Aodh Rua (Red Hugh O'Donnell) in Spain's old capital, Valladolid in 2020, sparked worldwide interest. The fallout after his death heralded a watershed in Irish history with the Flight of the Earls, the Plantations and the exile and emigration which followed.

But, that Aodh Rua was the second of the name and Donegal town hosts a magnificent bronze statue to an important royal ancestor, his great-great-grandfather, also Aodh Rua, and, nearby Donegal Castle and the Franciscan Abbey, represented his seat of power as King, in European royal courts. The Tír Chonaill (Tyrconnell) Kingdom, as it was then, spanned all of present-day Donegal and parts of Derry, Antrim, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Sligo and Mayo, about the size of Lebanon. After the *Flight of the Earls*, O'Donnells attained high office in many other countries throughout the following 400 years, especially in Austria, Argentina, Britain, Canada, France, Hungary, Spain and the USA.

The O'Donnell Clan Association (ODCA), formed in 1954, was kept alive in recent years by some stalwarts in Donegal. Now, a global network of O'Donnell heritage brings descendants together from around the world. On its 70th anniversary, the Clan brings also assembles together eleven others Gaelic Clans for a major parade in Donegal town this Saturday, led by a colour party from the Irish Defence Forces. St Naul's Pipe Band from Inver, will join, as will the Ambassadors of several countries that hosted Irish exiles in the past. Three O'Donnell children from different classes in St Francis' Primary School in Donegal will be among many participating and to whom was given the honour of carrying the O'Donnell Clan flag at the head of our Parade, escorted by local actors representing Aodh Rua and Nuala in period costume.

The event begins at 2pm on Saturday 8th June with a welcome address by ODCA chairman Amb. Francis M. O'Donnell to the assembly including Chiefs of other Clans ... *"the greatest such gathering in 400 years"*. Seamus O'Doherty, author, will guide a tour of the old Franciscan Abbey ruin and Ecumenical Prayers will be offered by Anglican and Roman Catholic clergy. At 4:15pm the Parade, led by a Defence Forces Colour Party, will form up at the Aodh Rua statue and march through the town to Donegal Castle.

On Sunday, at 11:30am, Very Rev. Fr James Gillespie will lead concelebrated Mass in St Patrick's Church of the Four Masters on this Feast of St Columba/Colmcille, remembering O'Donnells and kindred clansfolk worldwide who passed to their eternal reward. Several members of the Knights of Malta, in church mantles will also be in attendance. In accordance with an old Derry tradition for 'the day that's in it', oak leaves for wearing on the lapel will be distributed to attendees at the church door.

The afternoon programme will include a general meeting of members in Lough Eske Castle Hotel, to ratify the election of nominees to the new Clan Council and its proposed new Constitution, culminating in a grand, Gala Dinner at Lough Eske Castle, with a classic Irish Harp recital.

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The Interim Council will stand down on 9 June 2024, and be replaced by a newly elected Council. The current Council members are: Maria Angeles O'Donnell-Olson (Spain & USA); Frank Hannigan (Ireland); J. Hugh O'Donnell (Canada); Mary Louise O'Donnell (Ireland); John McCaffery (New Zealand); Seán O'Donnell (Ireland); Comdt. Brendan M. Rohan (Ireland), Amb. Francis M. O'Donnell (Ireland); Chair)