

## The Pilgrim's Account : Aghabullogue

### ***[Attempting a Geography of Memory through re-gaelicising the names of townlands]***

Say, in the early 12th century, a time at the cusp of major changes on the horizon for the 'Celtic' church in South Munster, a pilgrim from elsewhere in Ireland, or abroad, visited Aghabullogue and Donoughmore (Donaghmore) to worship at the shrines of Saints Olan and Lachteen (a relic of whom was preserved in a reliquary imitating a human arm...*see several images of this online*), and participate in the ritual 'patterns' and festivities associated with the annual commemoration days for these early local saints.

What might he or she have reported about the landscape of the places known as Aghabullogue and Donoughmore if asked to speak about such memories upon returning home? Using my attempts at translating townland names, which at that time may have been nothing more than referencing names of individual local places rather than specifically defined land units, and given that townland sub-denominations and field names of that time are largely forgotten and their place memories and stories (***dindshenchas***) lost, I have tried, in the following description, to create a sense of what such a pilgrim's account might have said about the natural and social topographies of the land area of this monastic demesne known as Aghabullogue. [How accurate or inaccurate my translations are I don't know. I have used Fr. Dinneen's Dictionary and [logainm.ie](http://logainm.ie) as sources.]

## **A Fictional Narrative based on the names of town-land places in the Parish of Aghabullogue, Muskerry, Cork:**

*I remember... There was farmland there which was a long slender **farran** of land. There were little garden fields bounded by stone walls. There was a field known as the field of stinging or torment... perhaps it was a briary field of penance for a hermit on a Good Friday. There was a field with an orchard near a woodland. There was also a woodland called the Red Wood. There was a ploughland which was associated with someone called **Brain** or was it **Brian**? There was a field of the cross or was it a scaffold? There was a mill and there was a winnowing place for the annual **meithel** at harvest time. There was a fording place by a river where buying and selling took place. It seemed to be a prominent place of the district. There was a hill between two rivers and a nice piece of open land between two rivers. This was a viewing place for the surrounding landscape and a place to view the wonder of God's creation in this locality. There were two places known for their mountain plants and these were of interest because pennyworth grew at one of them. Local people were very aware of the wealth of edible plants in the locality and were such plants grew in abundance be they scattered seeds roamed wild and once cultivated in garden plots called **garraí** for herbal / medicinal and culinary use by the monastery and its demesne's people.*

*There was a rock named for someone called **Tomás** but it was unclear if this was the place of a hermit or not. There were two hermitage places I noted, one was abandoned*

and ruined. They called it a **cluain maoile**. The southern part of this land area also had a specific name which was **cluain dóithe** referring to a 'burnt-out' hermitage place which seemed to reference a conflict event some centuries earlier; one which took place close-by the inter-section of some ramparts, a place called the **Péicín** which means a marker place where the gabion walls - made of earth and stone - of a fortification's ramparts meet. I had a strange sense of unease there even though the place of the **Péicín** was spoken about as a beautiful valley with a gentle stream [see Aghabullogue folklore records at [duchas.ie](http://duchas.ie)]. The other hermitage place was named for someone known as **MacBroic** but I could not get any details as to how his name was acquired. Did he belong to a family or clan called **MacBroic (son of Broic)** who were tenants or **manaig** workers at the Donoughmore demesne, or was his father or ancestor called **Broic**, or was he as a child (an orphan?) presented by a local village or hamlet to the monastery as someone for them to raise?

There was a **cahir** enclosure used as a harvest store depot and also for other goods in safe keeping either for the monastic semi-cenobitic community of the outlying localities spread across the hills and valley living independently or in small groups of six or so heads (**seisúir ceann** i.e. six persons ). They also gathered at this place for weekend religious services; perhaps the **Laragh (Láithreach )** of a **Laura** (Greek style monastery / hermitage). There was a ravine or ridge overlooked from somewhere. There was also a hill associated with the storage of a community's food supply; a **dangan** place perhaps, but I don't know if it had any **fiteccs (faoi teach** buildings ...under-houses, cellars,

residences) used for storage; or one of them perhaps repurposed and roofed for use as a caretaker / sentinel's residence for the monastery's cellarer ( as in St. Benedict's Rule). There was a glen with some stone ruins in it. There was a place where there was a cluster of little **lios**es or **dúns** (**duiníní**). You could still see the outlines of them. No one knew if they had been used as residence enclosures (monastic?) or if some were cattle pens attached to such residence spaces. I can't remember if any of these **lios**es were conjoined; something I remember from an excursion to the North East and towards Cashel of the Kings where there was such a place - adjoining a garth, called Cush near **Slieve Reagh** of the Galtee Mountains and of the Harps of Cliu, and of ArdPatrick monastery, a place where an ancestral pagan cemetery was brought to Christ.

I'm told that a few miles northward of Donoughmore - and part of its monastic lands, lying near the **Abha Mór** (Blackwater River) and on the foothills of the Boggeragh Mountains is a place called **Bárr an Abha Rann**(?) [Barrahaurin] where there is a similar large cluster of enclosures some with **fiteccs** in them. This is a place long known for its abundant apple orchards...much loved by the monastery cider maker and remembered in the legend of St. **Mochuda** (founder of the **Lios Mór** monastery in **Déise** lands) and Princess (as well as hermit foundress of a convent) St. **Flanait** of **Fir Maighe**.

Finally, there was a place in Aghabullogue remembered for the cell of the Anglo-Saxon prince, and saint, known as **Béiriceart** (Berihert) who is said to have founded a great Saxon style monastery north of the **Abha Mór** at a **Tulach** (a

hillock i.e. Tullylease) by the eastern foothills of the Mullockareirke (Hill of the View?) Mountains, a place once known as **Tuatha Saxon** (the Saxon petty kingdom). His sisters resided at another religious centre further west along the **Abha Mór** where there was a **drishane** for penance with a **cúile** settlement place (a shepherd's cell enclosure, a Benedictine / Byzantine entity not unfamiliar in Southern Italy?), overlooked by the ancient ceremonial site and tribal gathering place know as **Dá Chích Anann** (the Paps of Anu) to the east of which lies **Mushera** Mountain where John the hermit brother of **Béiriceart** once roamed and where the place of his well is still remembered. If the same person did **Béiriceart** once come to Ireland in the wake of the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD with a large contingent of Saxon 'monks', and under the direction of expansionist King Ecgfrith of Northumbria attack the lordship of County Meath, before seeking to bring Roman Christianity to the Celtic monastery of Donaghmore in Muskerry? Were both objectives in play? Or was he at Donoughmore before Whitby? Or was it at a much later time after the dust of Whitby - and of Culdees in revolt, had settled, if **Tuatha Saxon** and **Domhnach Mór** (Donoughmore) were reconciled, that **Béiriceart** acquired a retirement cell at Aghabullogue in proximity to what would later become the abandoned **cluain** lands known as **Cluain Maoile** (Clonmoyle)?

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### **Note:**

**Clondo** (as on a Downe Survey Parish Map of the mid-17th century AD...see [downsurvey.tcd.ie](http://downsurvey.tcd.ie)) **Cluain** (hermitage meadow) **Dóithe** ('burnt-out') = a portion of **Cluain**

(meadow hermitage) **Maoile** ('ruined, abandoned') =  
**Clonmoyle.**

**Péicín (Peake)** the gabion ramparts in the locality of  
**Cluain Doithe** = the 'burnt out' souterrain at found at  
**Peake** circa 1755 AD and its contents of human skeletons  
as well as a wooden box and its comb.