

Research notes for a future piece.

The Faerie Queene, Book 1, Canto 1, 29, 30, 34. [Penguin Books, Ed. Thomas P. Roche...1978]

(This Canto first published 1590 AD ...time of the Desmond Wars in South Munster with Spenser residing in North Cork, Spenser close friends with Sir Walter Raleigh at Youghal)

An aged Sire, in long blacke weedes yclad,
His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray,
And by his belt his booke he hanging had...

...Silly old man, that lives in **hidden cell**,
Bidding his beades all day for his trespas...

A little lowly **Hermitage** it was,
Downe in a dale, hard by a **forests side**,
Far from resort of people, that did pas
In travell to and froe...
There was a **holy Chappall** edifyde,
Wherein the Hermite dewly wont to say
His holy things...
Thereby a Christall **stream** did gently play,
Which from a **sacred fountaine** welled forth alway.

[Elements: a lonely hermit, his beads, his hidden cell (Cill...above or below ground?) , his hermitage (Cluain) with a small (timber structure?) 'chapel' or outdoor altar, a holy well with a stream]. As part of the vernacular architectural assemblage of the immediate surroundings of a hermit's cell and lands (corrody?), was the hidden cell a prayer / bell cell or a tig faoi talamh?]

The Hermit and his environment ...given the commonality in the local South Munster landscape of Cills (monastic and hermit cells) and Cluains (Meadow Hermitage and small monasteries) across South Munster for many, many centuries as a traditional part of the rural and social landscape of Gaelic -and Norman- Ireland, as Spenser wrote parts of the poem in North Cork (under an old oak tree at Rinney townland overlooking the Blackwater River according to folklore), was his writing influenced by the Gaelic World he encountered in everyday life and how different (alien?) was it from the Elizabethan World View at the Royal Court in London in his day?

The Youghal locality and the Blackwater River : Other sources of folklore and mythological inspiration? Digging for a Context.

1. A medieval monastery....original cell founded by and when [See Rev. Samuel Hayman' s Youghal?] ?.....later monastery founded and condition of buildings and lands etc after Dissolution Act in earlier years of the 1500s. Slower decline in Ireland versus UK?...Confiscations and Report of the Henry 8th's Commissioners ..see Extent of Monastic Possessions Ireland re state of buildings etc (see Newport White, Irish Manuscripts Commission 1940s). Like so many other large monastic houses along the South Munster coast e.g. Rosscarbery and Timoleague, did the monastery develop a 'port' at Youghal and if so how old was it...was Pilmore (Puill Mór = Big Harbour) Harbour with the Womanagh River lying nearby westward along the coastline, now abandoned? Had there been Norman or Viking influence in creating a port?
2. With the arrival of the 'Anglo' Norman invasion and 12th century Church landscape reforms, what associations lay between the Templar Knight and the arrival of the Fleet of the Flemings at the mouth of the Blackwater River by Youghal? Rincrew Knights Templar Commandery established on hill overlooking the landscape at meeting of sea with River entrance...a short

distance inward along the river the island abbey of Molana with its causeway and the grave of Raymond Le Gros...onwards north along the Blackwater to the Lismore monastic house and then into the Fir Maighe peoples' lands and then along the river again, passing by Kilshannig with on its south side a Templar Commandery at Mourne Abbey by the great Donoughmore monastery of the Muscraighe people, then on towards Beal Áthat na hUalla (Ballyhooley) a 'fording place', at Rinney Spenser's second property overlooking the river and along a small tributary very close-by the significant and beautifully situated medieval abbey of Bridgetown. This is a landscape of many souterrains, of monastic souterrains, of prayer cells (Kilpadder, Cill Paidir)...of remnants of a semi-cenobitic monastic tradition as well as of one of later medieval times derived from a search to rediscovery the anchorite traditions of the early church...of Third Order sacrifices, of recluses and retirees, of abandoning humanity to live solely in the wilderness in the presence only of God....(see McAvoy's book Anchorite Traditions of Medieval Europe ...et alia....)

3. In Spenser's day what folklore, myths and stories existed among the local people, from the halls, their bards, conversationalists and minstrels, those of Gaelic/Norman lord and monastic abbot, to the *bothanaíocht agus Bealoideas* of the homes of the peasantry, to the scriptoria and scholae students still resident in decaying great monastic settings or still practicing centuries old religious lifestyles in small hermitages and little **lyra** style monasteries or convents/nunneries in remote hidden glens as curious Gaelic name places sometimes of already centuries old abandoned saintly local memories in field patterns and moss clad remnants of old drystone walls of insignificant stories forgotten, seen as insignificant, below the radar, of no great consequence as the macro social changes of the Reformation and an Elizabethan Conquest gradually spread across the Desmond landscape and as in time Boyle as Earl of Corke would open up this landscape of very dense and wide-ranging ancient oak/ deciduous forests [where, according to legend, a squirrel could travel from East Cork to South Kerry without needing to touch the ground!] to charcoal burning iron works, ship-building on the Bandon, new and initially model settlement patterns bringing their agriculture and industry...
4. Mmmmmmm.....'numb were the beadsman's fingers' ... [John Keats, Eve of Saint Agnes]
Mmmmmmm.....'by dapper Doulgas (his handbell) I will sing my psalms today in the stone cell'
...[from the Rule of Saint Adomnán of Iona].