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HARP PERSPECTIVES

A German visitor, an Irish harper and a Dublin boot-maker

The background to a tale told by Arthur O'Neill

SEÁN DONNELLY

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Welcome to *Harp Perspectives*, Cruit Éireann, Harp Ireland's online journal. One of our strategic aims is to establish thought leadership across the harp sector by building up a body of thinking about the harp and harping through a historical and contemporary lens.

Harp Perspectives is a conversation about harping and features key informants, harpers and non-harpers, sharing their authentic views and ideas. We believe that this combination of scholarly research and personal insights will highlight the harping legacy inherited from our tradition bearers and help forge a contemporary harping identity, secure in its understanding of its origin and how it wishes to evolve.

Our July edition features Seán Donnelly, one of our foremost commentators on early Irish harping and the music performed by the harpers. He paints vivid pictures of their travels and entertains us with countless anecdotes about their exploits. This piece talks about the well-known air 'Táimse im' chodladh'. In the coming months, we will be welcoming many other voices to the conversation and hope that they will broaden horizons and provide new perspectives on current and future harp directions.

Our thanks to each of our contributors for their willingness to add their voices. Their contributions will no doubt enrich our thinking.

Aibhlín McCrann and Eithne Benson
Editors
July 2021

A GERMAN VISITOR, AN IRISH HARPER, AND A DUBLIN BOOT-MAKER:

THE BACKGROUND TO A TALE TOLD BY ARTHUR O'NEILL

Seán Donnelly

One of the best-known stories in the memoirs of the harper Arthur O'Neill (c.1735–1816) is his account of how a young German nobleman he met at a gathering in Co. Roscommon succeeded in getting him to play the air 'Táim-se 'm Chodladh is ná Dúisigh Mé' or, in this case, 'Tá mé 'mo Chodladh 's ná Dúisigh mé':

> When I left the Counties of Cavan and Tyrone, I formed a notion of going to the County Roscommon to see my dear friend Hugh O'Neill, already mentioned. We met by appointment at a Mr. MacDonnell's of Knockranny in that county, who saw an immensity of the first company to be had. There was at this time, which was about thirty years ago, a patron or some kind of meeting, not unlike a fair held in that quarter, and Mr. MacDonnell's house was full of company when I met Hugh there. Among the rest of the guests there was a young nobleman from Germany named the Marquis of Devianne. I was curious to know the cause of his coming to Ireland and was informed that he fell in love with a beautiful young lady in his own country, but his parents not approving of the match they diverted his attention from it by sending him over to this Kingdom to take possession of an estate in the County of Roscommon, in right of his mother. From what I myself could guess, and from what an accomplished countryman of my own told me, he was one of the most finished and accomplished noblemen he ever met.
>
> Hugh and I played for a long time our very best things. But the Marquis was a loss how to call for the tune of 'Past one o'clock' or '*Tá mé 'mo chodladh 's ná dúisigh mé*', and when he perceived me going towards the hall door he followed me and told me he once heard a tune but could not recollect the name of it, but he said he had a man that made boots and shoes for him and that his name was Tommy MacCullough of Dublin. He spoke the name of Tommy MacCullough so broad and the words 'made boots for me' that I readily guessed it was 'Past one o'clock', which I went in and played for him; on which he seemed uncommonly happy and informed the company

> all round that it was his choice, etc. This young nobleman was afterwards afflicted with that ugly disease of the smallpox and Roderick O'Conor, the then nominal monarch of Connaght, invited the Marquis to his little palace at Clonalis, where notwithstanding every exertion of the faculty he died between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-three years of that disorder.[i]

O'Neill apparently dictated his memoirs in Belfast c.1808, so his statement that the gathering he described took place 'about thirty years ago' would suggest a date in the late 1770s. He was out by approximately a decade, as we shall see, and the gathering took place in the summer of 1769. He was also wrong in identifying the then O'Conor Don at Clonalis as 'Roderick': he was in fact Dominic (d.1795), who succeeded his father Daniel in March 1769.[ii]

'Past One O'Clock [on a cold frosty Morning]' is the title given to '*Tá mé 'mo chodladh 's ná dúisigh mé*' in a number of early eighteenth-century sources.[iii] The equation of 'Tommy MacCullough Made Boots for Me' with '*Tá mé 'mo Chodladh 's ná Dúisigh mé*' has occasionally been seen as too neat to have been the spontaneous coining of a foreign visitor. But if the English was a pre-existing pun on the Irish which the 'Marquis of Devianne' had heard since his arrival in Ireland, he might be expected to have come out with it in front of the company to impress them with his cleverness. Instead, he spoke to O'Neill privately, his German accent helping the latter to understand what he wanted, and his subsequent delight at getting his meaning across also sounds genuine.

II

As O'Neill says himself, he arranged to meet 'my dear friend Hugh O'Neill … by appointment at a Mr. MacDonnell's of Knockranny' in the parish of Kilronan, Co. Roscommon. Kilronan is inextricably associated with Carolan, who looked forward to visiting '*Cnoc Raithnidhe na seód*'/'Precious Knockranny …' in one of his verses.[iv] He is buried in Kilronan Abbey, in the mortuary chapel of the MacDermotts Roe of Alderford, to whom he owed his education and, after being blinded, his training as a

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i Donal O'Sullivan, *Carolan: the life, times, and music of an Irish harper* (London: Routledge and Keegan-Paul, 2 vols, 1958), ii, pp. 153–4.

ii Burke, Sir [John] *Bernard, A genealogical and heraldic dictionary of the landed gentry of Great and Ireland* … 6th ed. (London: Harrison, 2 vols., 1882), ii, pp. 1187–8.

iii For example, Coffey, Charles, *The Beggar's Wedding: a new ballad opera* … (5th ed., J.D., 1733), p. 33.

iv O'Sullivan, *Carolan*, i, p. 49.

harper, his first harp, horse, and guide. That the two O'Neills met at MacDonnell's by 'appointment' could be taken to mean that Hugh had a professional engagement and wished to share it with Arthur. But Hugh may have been at the gathering in both a personal and a professional capacity, since he lived in Kilronan (if not in Knockranny itself) and was probably related to the host.

Like many other eighteenth-century Irish harpers, Hugh O'Neill is known only from Arthur O'Neill's memoirs. The latter described him as an excellent player from whom he acquired a good deal of music, who was born into a comfortable family with gentry connections in Foxfield, Co. Mayo. Foxfield here is assumed to be a slip for Foxford, which it might well be: Arthur O'Neill had just mentioned Foxfield, Fenagh, Co. Leitrim, birthplace of the harper Charles Fanning; but there is a Foxfield on the outskirts of Castlebar – now part of the town. After Hugh was blinded by smallpox at the age of seven, his parents had him taught the harp, his first teacher being a woman surnamed O'Shiel. He turned professional after his parents' early death – he was probably a younger with little to inherit – and his gentry background ensured that he did not lack patronage. Setting himself up as a grazier, he leased a farm and house on the Castle Tenison estate in Kilronan, the rent of which 'Mr. Tenison never demanded, in consequence of the uncommon respect he entertained for him.' (Castle Tenison became Kilronan Castle in 1860.) Hugh died at a comparatively early age and was, Arthur claimed, buried in Carolan's grave, and if he was, it would have been a further indication of the respect in which he was held, as the burial would have required the consent of the MacDermotts Roe.[v]

As to the circumstances of Hugh's death, he died from fever 'at a cousin's house named Ned MacDonnell near his own farm …', though 'in the absence of Mr. MacDonnell and his wife, who were away from home …'. The relationship would have been through his mother, who was a MacDonnell, and a 'cousin-german to the celebrated Count Taafe of Curran …'. Nicholas Taaffe (c.1677–1769), 6th viscount Taaffe of Corran, Co. Sligo, was a distinguished officer in the Austrian service.[vi] O'Neill seems to be a rarer surname in Mayo than MacDonnell. Most bearers of the latter surname are descendants of various lines of Scottish galloglasses settled in the county by the O'Connors and Burkes during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[vii]

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v O'Sullivan, *Carolan*, ii, p. 179.

vi O'Sullivan, *Carolan*, ii, pp. 179–80.

vii Ó Muraíle, Nollaig , 'Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbisigh and County Mayo', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, lviii (2006), pp. 11–13.

'Ned MacDonnell' was probably the Edward MacDonnell of Knockranny, a member of the local Catholic gentry, who gave evidence in the Roscommon Peerage Case heard in the Irish House of Lords in 1792 and again in 1793. At issue was the right of Patrick Dillon (1769–1816) of Knockranny to succeed as 11th earl of Roscommon, in particular whether he had been born in wedlock. He was the only son of John Dillon (1720–82), who was living in modest circumstances in Knockranny when he became tenth earl of Roscommon in 1770. As a Catholic, he did not seek to take his seat in the House of Lords, but apparently reared Patrick a Protestant in order that he might do so. Edward MacDonnell became involved in the case because he was married to Dillon's niece, and because Patrick's mother, Dillon's second wife, had been a maid in the MacDonnell household when he met her. (He had come to live with his niece after the death of his first wife.) The pair set up house together, and had at least two children before marrying. In 1792 Patrick failed to prove that he had been born after his parents' marriage. But the House of Lords reversed its decision in 1793, when new witnesses came forward to testify that his parents had been married in 1766 by Father Daniel Early, the parish priest of Kilronan.[viii]

Father Earley had officiated at Carolan's funeral in March 1738, and died at Knockranny in April 1774.[ix] A head of the MacDonnells, possibly Edward's father, is named in a four-verse poem in his praise, apparently composed between 1752 and 1771. A number of copies and translations are in the Bunting Manuscripts in Queen's University.[x] The priest's courtesy, affability, and zeal for religion are praised in the first two verses. In the third and fourth, the bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise is criticised for not enlarging his living. Then follow the names of some local gentry who would once have been in a position to lobby the bishop on his behalf, most of them now dead. Donal O'Sullivan identified two of those named as MacDermott Roe brothers who died in the 1750s, and the wife of one who had predeceased him. A third brother named lived until 1771, but had conformed to the Established Church. O'Sullivan was unable to identify '*Toirialach Chnuc Rainigh*'/'Turlough of Knockranny', or '*Díolanach is Mac Dónail breagh mór na h-Albain*'/'… Dillon and fine big MacDonnell of Scotland …'.

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viii McDermott Roe, Ken, 'Roscommon Peerage Trial' @ http://www.macdermotroe.com/Roscommon-PeerageTrial.html. Accessed 18 March 2021. Further details of the case are in Taylor, J. Sydney (ed.), *The Roscommon claim of peerage …* (Saunders and Benning, 1829).

ix Brady, John, (ed.), *Catholics and catholicism in the eighteenth-century press* (Catholic Record Society, 1965), p. 163.

x Moloney, Colette, (ed.), *The Irish music manuscripts of Edward Bunting* (1773–1843): an introduction and catalogue (Irish Traditional Music Archive, 2000), pp. 216, 279, 306.

He assumed that the latter two had also conformed to the Established Church, but it seems more likely that they had died.[xi] If so, Dillon could have been John Dillon's father, who died in 1745, and MacDonnell possibly Edward's father.[xii] A further indication of the MacDonnells' social position is that one of the O'Conors of Ballinagare [Belnagare], the family of Carolan's great patron, Charles O'Conor (1710–91), was said to have married 'a Miss Macdonnell of Knockranny, in the neighbourhood of Castle-Tennison.'[xiii]

III

Though Arthur O'Neil said that the 'Marquis of Devianne' was German, his title sounds French. He was also identified as French in a newspaper controversy on the descent of extant branches of the O'Con(n)ors from Sir Hugh O'Conor Don (c.1547–1632) of Ballintobber, Co Roscommon.[xiv] One of those involved was Roderick O'Connor (1794–1868) of Miltown, Tulsk, grandfather, incidentally, of the artist Roderic O'Conor (1860–1940). He identified the marquis as a grandson of Roger (Roderick) O'Connor of 'Corrasduna' (now either Corrastoonabeg or Corrastoonamore) near Ballymoe, a son of Bryan Roe, Sir Hugh's fourth son. Having fought for James II in the War of the Two Kings, 1689–91, Roger followed him to France, where he became a colonel in the Irish Brigade, dying at Douai in 1730. He was accompanied by his wife and three of his daughters, while two younger daughters were left behind. Also left behind was his son, Owen (d.1766), who was being fostered by family followers in the traditional manner. Owen's three sons were claimed to have been the ancestors of the O'Connors of Miltown, of Ballycahir [Bellacagher] – later Dundermott – and Willsbrook, all near Ballymoe.[xv]

In France two of the three O'Connor daughters became nuns. The third 'married Louis, Marquess de Vienne, and their son, when twenty-two years of age, came over to become acquainted with his Irish relatives, when he died of the small-pox at Miltown, the seat

xi O'Sullivan, *Carolan*, ii, pp. 104–5.

xii McDermott Roe, 'Roscommon Peerage Trial'. Accessed 18 March 2021.

xiii [Anon.], *The recollections of Skeffington Gibbon, from 1796 to the present year, 1829; being an epitome of the lives and characters of the nobility and gentry of Roscommon …* (Joseph Blundell, 1829), p. 163.

xiv The correspondence was republished in O'Coñor, Roderick, *Memoir of a controversy respecting the name borne the O'Connors of Ballintobber, the title of Don …* (John Falconer, 1857), and [Anon.], *Review of Mr. O'Coñor's work, entitled "Memoir of a Controversy respecting the name borne by the O'Connors of Ballintobber." By a member of the Belanagare family* (James Duffy, 1859).

xv Burke, *Landed gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, ii, pp. 1188–9.

of his cousin, Thomas O'Connor, Esq.'[xvi] The marquis was 'interred in Ballintubber, near the crumbling ruins of the old castle, once the residence of his royal ancestors.'[xvii] Thomas O'Connor of Miltown was Owen O'Connor's son, Roderick O'Connor's grandfather. This account appears to be independent of Arthur O'Neill's, as the only available version of the latter, a summary Edward Bunting published in 1840, omitted the cause of the marquis's death.[xviii]

The evidence, then, would point to Arthur O'Neill's being mistaken about the marquis's being German. But Roderick O'Connor's tracing of the marquis's family connections with Co. Roscommon, though impressively-detailed, turns out to have been mistaken – if not consciously bogus. The historian Alan Moran, drawing mainly on Continental sources, recently established that the marquis was a grandson of Lieutenant-general John James Devenish (c.1669–1739), Marquis Devenish d'Athlone. He was born near Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, and had a long and fascinating career in the Austrian service, to which he transferred in 1705, having been a colonel in army of the Elector of Bavaria. He rose to be one of the most senior officers in the Austrian Netherlands, a region roughly corresponding to the modern states of Belgium and Luxembourg. It had passed from Spanish to Austrian control under the Peace of Utrecht, 1713–15. Devenish's career culminated in his appointment as governor of Courtrai, an important city in southern Flanders, close to the French border, in 1719, and in his being ennobled as the Marquis Devenish d'Athlone in 1735.[xix]

The Devenish family were Dublin merchants, Old English Catholics, and had settled in Athlone, Co. Westmeath, in the early 1600s. They were transplanted to near Strokestown under the Cromwellian regime, but regained much of the Athlone property after the Restoration (1660), while retaining the Strokestown lands. However, the aristocratic nature of the officer corps in eighteenth-century armies, meant that Devenish preferred to emphasise his mother's links to Gaelic nobility and royalty. She was Eleanor O'Connor Roe from Cloonfree, Co. Roscommon, who was also related to

xvi D'Alton, John, *Illustrations, historical and genealogical of King James's Irish Army List …* (privately printed, 2 vols, 1855; 2nd, enlarged ed., 1860), I, pp. 140–2.

xvii O'Conor, Roderick, *A historical and genealogical memoirs of the O'Connors, kings of Connaught, and their descendants …* (McGlashan and Gill/Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1861), p. 66.

xviii Bunting, Edward , *The ancient music of Ireland …* (Hodges & Smith, 1840), intro., p. 95.

xix Moran, Alan, 'Devenish d'Athlone: an extraordinary soldier-of-fortune', *The Irish Sword*, xxii, no. 130 (Winter, 2020), pp. 393–429.

the O'Briens of Thomond through her own mother, a daughter of 'Lord Thomond'.[xx] Her father was head of the O'Connors Roe, one of the two major lines into which the O'Connors split in the 1380s, as a result of a war over the kingship of Connacht between two cousins, Turlough *Ruadh* and Turlough Donn – ancestor of the O'Con(n)ors Don.[xxi] The last representative of this family in the direct male line, Peter O'Connor of Toomona House, Ogulla, died in the late 1830s.[xxii]

As to Devenish's grandson, he was Leopold-Joseph de Partz (1745–69), the son of his daughter, Marguerite, and Jean-Paul de Partz (d.1758), lord of the manor of Viane in Flanders, who were married in 1744. Leopold-Joseph was ennobled in September 1768 by the Empress Maria-Theresa as the Marquis de Partz-Devenish, and his mother granted him power-of-attorney over her entire estate the same year. The estate included an inheritance from her father in Ireland, which is obviously what brought him to Roscommon the next year, as Arthur O'Neill recalled. Continental sources also agree that Leopold-Joseph died of smallpox and was interred in Ballintobber, giving his date of death as 27 July 1769.[xxiii]

Since Leopold-Joseph would have been an Austrian subject, Arthur O'Neill would not have been too far out in calling him German. Like most people of his background, he is likely to have spoken several languages, and German may have been his primary one. On the other hand, Roderick's O'Connor's identification of him as French was possibility deliberate, so as to make him a grandson of Colonel Roger O'Connor of Corrastoona and, after all, his title does look French. Whether this was so, this reference is at least evidence that the marquis's untimely death on his visit to Roscommon was still remembered in the 1850s.

IV

Leopold-Joseph's request to Arthur O'Neill to play 'Tá mé 'mo Chodladh 's ná Dúisigh mé' suggests that he had heard the piece before, and possibly that he was interested

xx Moran, Alan, 'Devenish d'Athlone: an extraordinary soldier-of-fortune', *The Irish Sword*, xxii, no. 130 (Winter, 2020), p. 395.

xxi Nicholls, Kenneth, *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland* (2nd ed., Lilliput Press, 2003), pp. 174–5.

xxii 'Estate: O'Conor (Toomona)', NUIG Landed Estates Database @ http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=1662. Accessed 22 March 2021.

xxiii Moran, 'Devenish d'Athlone', pp. 427–8;

in harp music and Irish culture in general. That he heard the tune since his arrival in Ireland is most likely, but there is a slight possibility that he had occasionally encountered the Irish harp at home. There was a thriving Irish community in Flanders under both Spanish and Austrian rule. It would have been mainly military, religious, and intellectual in the earlier period, but a strong mercantile element came to the fore in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as the Penal Laws in Ireland excluded Catholics from business. Members of this merchant community often remained consciously Irish, a prime example being the immensely-successful William Archdeacon (c.1685–1759) of Cork who lived in Bruges. In a family-portrait of himself, his wife, Elenora Francois Scharre (d.1766), and their three children, Archdeacon is depicted playing an Irish harp of the large low-headed type, with the Archdeacon coat-of-arms carved on the fore-pillar.[xxiv] The coat-of-arms, which also appears in the genealogy that Archdeacon lodged in the City Archives, Bruges, would imply that he came of a gentry background. His being able to play the harp would also hint at such a background as, on an amateur level, it tended to be an upper-class rather than a popular accomplishment.[xxv]

John-James Devenish could well have known Archdeacon, as they were contemporaries, and he too seems to have promoted aspects of Irish culture in the Austrian Netherlands. When the Co. Clare poet, genealogist, and scribe, Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín (c.1680–1755), published an Irish grammar at Louvain [Leuven] in 1728, he dedicated it to Devenish. MacCruitín enjoyed the patronage of various branches of the O'Briens of Thomond, and it may have been Devenish's connection to the O'Briens through his mother that brought him into touch with the poet.[xxvi] Mac Cruitín was certainly cultivating O'Brien connections on the Continent at this period, as he served briefly, between October 1728 and August 1729, in the Clare Regiment of the Irish Brigade, then commanded by Charles O'Brien, sixth viscount Clare. (Contrary to Thomas Davis's famous song, 'Clare's Dragoons', the regiment was an infantry one.) A poem Mac Cruitín composed for the Christmas 1728 celebrations in the regiment is found in a number of Irish manuscripts, usually with a superscription

xxiv Lyons, Mary Ann, and O'Connor, Thomas, *Strangers to citizens: the Irish in Europe, 1600– 1800* (The National Library of Ireland, 2008), pp. 105–6.

xxv Edward MacLysaght, *Irish life in the seventeenth century* (2nd, enlarged ed., Cork University Press/B.H. Blackwell, 1950), p. 35.

xxvi Moran, 'Devenish d'Athlone', pp. 393–4; Morley, Vincent, *An crann ós coill: Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín, c.1680–1755* (Coiscéim, 1995), pp. 95–100.

stating that it had been composed in Flanders.[xxvii]

Devenish later had an interesting connection with Irish harping, when he presented an accomplished young player, almost certainly a relative of his, to the governor's court at Brussels, as was reported in the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* on 17 August 1736:

> 'Brussels, 7 August. Mr. Michael O'Connor, a young Irish gentleman recently arrived here, was presented to the archduchess by the Marquis Devenish, lieutenant-general in the Imperial armies. He had the honour of playing this evening for her serene highness and a great many of the court on a small Irish harp, which he did with such charm and skill that the archduchess, in token of her satisfaction, presented him with a fine gold medal of considerable value.'[xxviii]

The Archduchess Maria-Elisabeth (1680–1741) had ruled the Austrian Netherlands since 1725 on behalf of her brother, the Archduke Charles III of Austria (also, confusingly, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V). Considered to have been a firm but fair ruler, the archduchess was a highly cultured woman who spoke several languages, and who encouraged the patronage of the arts and music at her court.[xxix] Michael O'Connor, then, would have had a highly sophisticated audience for his recital, which the archduchess certainly appreciated.

The description of O'Connor as a 'gentleman' implies that he was not a professional musician. He was almost certainly one of the numerous Irish relatives who came to visit Devenish, usually seeking his patronage, and for many of whom he obtained commissions in the Austrian forces. O'Connor's status, and Devenish's pride in his O'Connor Roe ancestry on his mother's side, raises the possibility that he was the Michael O'Connor, gentleman, of Toomona House, Tulsk, recorded in the Elphin Census of 1749. He was the then head of the O'Connor Roe lineage and was grandfather of the Peter O'Connor previously mentioned.[xxx]

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xxvii Morley, Vincent, 'Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín: file Gaeilge in arm na Fraince / Hugh MacCurtin: an Irish poet in the French army', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr*, viii (1993), pp. 39–58.

xxviii Moran, 'Devenish d'Athlone', p. 393.

xxix 'Archduchess Maria Elisabeth – the Emperor's representative' @ https://www.habsburger.net/en/chapter/archduchess-maria-elisabeth-emperors-representative. Accessed 3 April.

xxx Legg, Marie-Louise, (ed.), *The census of Elphin 1749 with a statistical analysis by Brian Gurrin*, (Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1994), p. 17.

If Michael O'Connor was indeed the head of the O'Connor Roe lineage, then playing the harp would not have been an unusual accomplishment for a man of his background, as was already seen. Arthur O'Neill named an occasional upper-class amateur whose playing impressed him in his memoirs. Andrew O'Rourke of Creevy, Co. Leitrim, for instance, was an accomplished gentleman who composed songs in Irish, English, and Latin, and 'played very handsomely on the harp.' Charles O'Conor of Ballinagare, who was taught by Carolan and various other professional players, was also an excellent player. O'Neill was also impressed by a gentleman player he heard in Killarney, Co. Kerry, during his first tour of Ireland at a Christmas 'Milesian entertainment' supposedly hosted by Lord Kenmare. 'The gentleman who represented "O'Connor Kerry" after dinner took my harp and to my astonishment he played a few tunes in the first style I ever heard in my life by a gentleman of fortune.'[xxxi]

The Lord Kenmare in O'Neill's time would have been Thomas Browne (1726–95), fourth viscount Kenmare. John James Devenish was certain to have known his grandfather, Nicholas (d. 1720), the second viscount, who settled in Ghent after being outlawed as a Jacobite. Another attainted Jacobite peer glimpsed in the second viscount's correspondence found playing the harp a consolation in his exile. In a letter from Hamburg on 24 April 1717, the anonymous writer discussed Kenmare's proposed visit to that city. He described his own reclusive habits, living in a small house two miles from Hamburg in an isolated copse close to the River Elbe, and casting a cynical eye on the world. For consolation, he added that '… I have in my cellor a sober bottle of old hock with my poor harp …'.[xxxii] The writer has been identified as Donough MacCarthy (1668–1734), fourth earl of Clancarty. He had escaped from the Tower of London in 1694, but was imprisoned again in 1698 when he returned to London, but was eventually released and allowed to go into exile again.[xxxiii]

Charles O'Conor, incidentally, is bound to have known Michael O'Connor Roe, and it may be significant that he copied into one of his diaries 'a well-turned poem of six quatrains' in praise of his mother, Mary O'Rourke, which is subscribed "Michél Ó Conchubhair cct. 1728". Donal O'Sullivan tentatively suggested that the author of the poem was the man for whom Carolan composed two pieces entitled 'Michael O'Connor', the subject of which he was unable to identify. He noted that the forename 'Michael'

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xxxi O'Sullivan, *Carolan*, i, pp. 60–62; ii, pp. 148, 165, 166, 172–3.

xxxii MacLysaght, Edward (ed.), *The Kenmare manuscripts* (Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1942), p. 13.

xxxiii Ó Tuama, Seán, *Filí faoi sceimhle* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1978), pp. 109, 195.

does not appear in the pedigrees of the O'Conors of Ballinagare, of Clonalis, and of the O'Connors of Offaly, the families of that surname with which Carolan is most strongly associated.[xxxiv] He probably overlooked the O'Connors Roe because not so much information on the family was available. Michael O'Connor Roe would have been well placed to be the subject of these tunes. He was alive in Carolan's lifetime and belonged to an important Gaelic-Irish family seated in what is justifiably called 'Carolan Country'. And while it will never be known if he was the man whose playing so impressed the Archduchess Maria-Elizabeth in Brussels in 1736, it would be nice to think that he was.

Seán Donnelly

Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Seán Donnelly has written widely on the history of piping and harping in Ireland, and on the history of Irish music in general, including Irish dancing, subjects on which he has also lectured. Early connections between Irish and Scottish piping remain a particular interest, as does the history of the Irish harp in England and in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Having first learnt the Highland pipes, he later took up the uilleann pipes, joining Na Píobairí Uilleann, where his growing interest in research was encouraged by Breandán Breathnach, the founder and chairman, a major collector of Irish music and an outstanding authority on the subject. His interest in the history of harping developed from his research in general, and he is especially intrigued by the reaction of outsiders to the Irish harp in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As well as publications devoted to music, Seán's articles have appeared in academic, local history, and military history journals, and occasionally online.

xxxiv O'Sullivan, *Carolan*, ii, pp. 75–6.