

been no masonry on the site or, so far as can be seen, in the later church, which could have come from a round-tower; on the other hand, all the stone of a collapsed tower could have been carted away for building elsewhere in the medieval period.

While it is useful to find such evidence for the likely position of the monastery, the complete absence of small finds of Early Christian date is puzzling. So too is the absence of structures of the period 1200-1500 when there was such activity on the larger church. If there was nobody living on the site following the demise of the monastery why was the church enlarged? And by whom? Perhaps we shall get nearer to solving some of these questions when a large area is opened up for further excavation in 1970.

1. Maire and Liam de Paor, **Early Christian Ireland**, 3rd ed., 1961, 51.
2. H. G. Leask and R. A. S. Macalister, *Liathmore-Mochoemog (Leigh), County Tipperary*, **P.R.I.A.**, 51 (1945—1948), 9.
3. **ibid.**, 8-14.
4. **ibid.**, 1-7.
5. **ibid.**, 3.
6. **ibid.**, Fig. 5.

The Faithful Norman

RICHARD PRENDERGAST

In view of the eight-hundredth anniversary of the coming of the Normans to Ireland (1169—1969), as the Very Rev. William Grattan-Flood has said, (1) a concise history of that event is very desirable. While I have no aspirations to providing such a concise account of the invasion in general, or even of any aspect of it, I do feel it would be a pity to let the eighth centenary of that historic occasion pass without making some mention of it in our local journal and without recognising that there are still some of Norman descent who feel their ancestral arrival and settlement in Ireland should be commemorated. While this alone is suf-

ficient reason for undertaking a brief sketch of the life and adventures of Maurice de Prendergast, one of the leaders of the first Norman contingent to set foot in Ireland, yet I feel certain that those reasons which endeared that same Maurice to the people of Ossory eight hundred years ago will endear him to the people of Kilkenny to-day, and I hope my humble efforts to retrace his steps will do justice to the Faithful Norman.

The name Prendergast is Flemish in origin (2) and the first on record to bear the name was one who accompanied William the Conqueror to England in 1066 and helped him to conquer that country for the Normans. Later a son of this de Prendergast settled in Pembrokeshire in Wales and built a castle in that parish which still bears the name Prendergast to this day.(3) Our story now converges on the son of this man who settled in Wales. Maurice by name, he was a man of good position when he determined to accompany Richard de Clare, Second Earl of Pembroke, on his famous expedition to Ireland. *Vir probus et strenuus* says Giraldus Cambrensis of him, "a lustie and hardie man borne about Milford in West Wales, in or about the province of Pembroke." "A right valiant captain and a gentleman born and bred in South Wales," say Holinshed in his reference to Maurice de Prendergast, who, leaving Milford Haven at the head of ten knights and sixty archers, landed in Bannow Bay on 2nd May, 1169, just one day after the first detachment of Norman invaders had touched its shores.(4)

In Ireland the Anglo-Normans were immediately greeted by Dermot McMurrough, King of Leinster, at whose invitation they had come. Three years previously Dermot had fled over the sea, feeling that further resistance to a determined alliance led by Tiernan O'Rourke, King of Breffni, was useless. One account describes the joyful scene at the creek of Baginbun :

When the king had come
To Bannow to his liegemen,
One by one he kissed them
and courteously saluted them.(5)

But Dermot was quickly done with courtesies and at



once set off for Wexford and thence to Ferns, making immediate use of his foreign force. At Ferns, King Dermot related how he wished to defeat his enemies in Ossory and Maurice de Prendergast was the baron who directed the attack. But the foreigners were as yet inexperienced and found stout resistance. When McMurrough took Maurice fully into his confidence, however, de Prendergast "shouted and invoked St. David" and with new-found zeal the foreigners overcame the natives of Ossory. Emboldened by this early success, the Norman barons decided to plunder Offelan, the territory of McKelan, which they easily subdued and returned to Ossory laden with spoils. Eventually the whole territory in and around Ossory was subdued.

After this initial success some of the Norman barons longed for home again and applied for permission to return to Wales. The foremost of these was Maurice de Prendergast, who set off towards Wexford with full two hundred of his company. King Dermot McMurrough was annoyed at this and sent a message to the mariners at Wexford to obstruct Prendergast's passage "so that he could not cross the sea." Maurice was afraid of these mariners, but so parleyed with them that the men of Wexford city also turned their backs on King Dermot. Prendergast immediately sent word to the King of Ossory stating that he would "come to him without deceit," if such was the will of Mac Donnchadh, the King of Ossory. Mac Donnchadh—

Was rejoiced at the news
And leaped to his feet with joy.
To the baron he straightway sent word
That he should immediately come to him;
Pay he would give him
Very rich and ample.(6)

So Maurice de Prendergast with a bigger force than before returned towards Ossory. He forced his way past Donnell Kavanagh, who, with 500 men, had opposed his passage, and reached Timolin(7) in safety. There Mac Donnchadh awaited him and thence all proceeded joyfully to Ossory. It was in this manner that Maurice de Prendergast ingrati-

ated himself with the people of Ossory and thus did he receive the name "Maurice of Ossory."

The King of Ossory, with the aid of de Prendergast, advanced into O'More's territory in Leix.⁽⁸⁾ Maurice forced O'More to submit and give hostages, but was afterwards himself obliged to retire from Leix on the arrival of King Dermot and the English, whose assistance O'More had secretly implored. The men of Ossory were much discontented at this set-back, having to hire and pay a band of foreigners, apparently to no advantage. As a result, among them were found traitors who—

. . . accordingly began to plot
 One in front, another behind.
 They resolve to betray Maurice
 And to part his treasure among them :
 For their gold and silver
 They resolved to murder these men.⁽⁹⁾

The traitors approached Mac Donnchadh and disclosed their plan.

Meanwhile, Maurice of Ossory came unawares to beseech licence from the King of Ossory to return to Wales. Mac Donnchadh realised the imminent danger to Maurice's life and regretfully gave his consent. Maurice decided to set off towards Waterford, but was forewarned of the plans made by the traitors to waylay him on the journey. So he immediately sent word to Mac Donnchadh that he would remain in his service a while longer and intercede for him with the English. This satisfying news was spread throughout Ossory and the traitors returned home from the pass where they were in ambush. However—

In the night when they were asleep
 Maurice then sent word
 By a private page
 That all the barons should take horse
 Archers, squires and sergeants
 Both small and great . . .⁽¹⁰⁾

and by means of the resultant midnight march they all escaped safely to Waterford, whence they embarked for Wales "safe and sound, joyous and glad."

There might have ended the associations of Maurice

de Prendergast with Ireland had he not met Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke (i.e. Strongbow) after his return to his family and friends in Wales. Richard de Clare apparently persuaded Maurice to return to Ireland and try his fortune there once more. It would seem that Strongbow promised Maurice a sizeable portion of land in Ireland if he returned⁽¹¹⁾ and as we have an account of him back on Irish soil early in 1171, it seems fair to assume that he returned at the same time as Strongbow himself set foot in Ireland, landing at Waterford on 23 August 1170. Waterford was captured by Strongbow for Dermot McMurrough, who was now pleased to fulfil his part of the bargain—Dermot's daughter Aoife was given in marriage to the earl, and the treaty, according to which Strongbow was to succeed Dermot as King of Leinster, was confirmed.⁽¹²⁾

King Dermot McMurrough died on 1 May 1171. Shortly afterwards the Norsemen⁽¹³⁾, led by Hasculf, made an assault on Dublin, which had been taken from them by the Normans less than a year previously. Rory O'Connor, High King of Ireland, advanced to the aid of the Norsemen, as did many Irish Chiefs, all now making common cause against the Normans. Dublin was quickly surrounded and the besieged grew desperate for want of provisions. Strongbow sent Archbishop Laurence O'Toole with Maurice de Prendergast to the High King offering terms of fealty. Rory was quite confident, however, and replied boldly in the negative. The Normans decided to make a surprise attack. O'Connor little expected this move and was taken unawares. The Irish and Norse besiegers are quickly dispersed. Dublin is successfully defended by the Normans and Strongbow duly declares himself King of Leinster.

About this time that incident which is "well calculated to win our admiration" presented itself, the same incident which has won for Maurice de Prendergast an immortal name in Irish history. I can do no better here than recount the incident as recorded by A. M. Sullivan in **The Story of Ireland**⁽¹⁴⁾ :

"Maurice de Prendergast was deputed by Earl Strongbow as envoy to Mac Giolla Padraig, Prince of Ossory (i.e. Mac Donnchadh), charged to invite him to a conference

in the Norman camp. Prendergast undertook to prevail upon the Ossorian prince to comply, on receiving from Strongbow a solemn pledge that good faith would be observed towards the Irish chief, and that he should be free and safe coming and returning. Relying on this pledge, Prendergast bore the invitation to Mac Giolla Padraig and prevailed upon him to accompany him to the Earl. Understanding, however, during the conference, that treachery was about to be used towards Mac Giolla Padraig, he rushed into Strongbow's presence and swore by the cross of his shield that no man there that day should dare lay hands on the King of Ossory. And well kept he his word! Out of the camp, when the conference ended, rode the Irish chief, and by his side, good sword in hand, that glorious type of honour and chivalry, Prendergast, ever since named in Irish tradition and history as the Faithful Norman—faithful among the faithless we might truly say! Scrupulously did he redeem his word to the Irish prince. He not only conducted him safely back to his own camp, but encountering on the way a force belonging to Strongbow's ally, O'Brien, returning from a foray in Ossory, he attacked and defeated them. That night the Faithful Norman remained, as the chronicler has it, 'in the woods,' the guest of the Irish chief, and next day returned to the Irish lines. This truly pleasing episode—this little oasis of chivalrous honour in the midst of a trackless expanse of treacherous and ruthless warfare, has been made the subject of a short poem by Mr Aubrey de Vere, in his **Lyrical Chronicle of Ireland** :

THE FAITHFUL NORMAN

Praise to the valiant and faithful foe!
 Give us noble foes, not the friend who lies!
 We dread the drugged cup, not the open blow:
 We dread the old hate in the new disguise.

To Ossory's King they had pledged their word:
 He stood in their camp, and their pledge they broke;
 Then Maurice the Norman upraised his sword,
 The cross on its hilt he kiss'd, and spoke.

“ So long as this sword or this arm hath might,
I swear by the cross which is lord of all,
By the faith and honour of noble and knight
Who touches you, Prince, by this hand shall fall ! ”

So side by side through the throng they pass'd,
And Eire gave praise to the just and true.
Brave foe! the past truth heals at last:
There is room in the great heart of Eire for you.

It is nigh 700 years since the Faithful Norman linked the name of Prendergast to honour and chivalry on Irish soil. Those who have read that truly remarkable work, Prendergast's **Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland**, will conclude that the spirit of Maurice is still to be found amongst some of those who bear his name.”

For many years after this incident the Faithful Norman remained true to Strongbow and King Henry of England. In a spirit of loyalty he dutifully went to aid his King in 1173 when war broke out in England.⁽¹⁵⁾ Again, in 1175, he, with other Anglo-Norman barons, was summoned by King Henry II to report to England to support the King against Robert, Earl of Essex, who was then in rebellion. One report stated that de Prendergast, with Maurice Fitz-Stephen, brought the fractious earl a prisoner to the King in Normandy.⁽¹⁶⁾ About this same time Maurice de Prendergast granted his castle and estate in Pembrokeshire to the Knights of St John of Jerusalem⁽¹⁷⁾ and returned with his family and followers to take up permanent abode in Ireland. At the subinfeudation of Leinster we learn . . .

To Maurice de Prendergast
The valiant earl Richard
Had already given Fernegenal
And in the Council confirmed it . . .
Ten fiefs he gave him on this condition
For this service often knights. ⁽¹⁸⁾

This territory⁽¹⁹⁾, which was probably long promised to Maurice de Prendergast, was a portion of Dermot McMurrough's own kingdom, separated from the town of Wexford by the river Slaney. It was here that the Prendergast fam-

ily made its first settlement on Irish soil. The Faithful Norman himself joined the Knights of St John of Jerusalem in his later years. He became Master of the Hospital of Kilmainham⁽²⁰⁾, their chief house in Ireland, and it seems most probable that he died, holding that distinguished knightly office, in 1205.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- (1) Grattan-Flood, **History of Hooke Parish**, p.3.
- (2) cf. Prendergast, John P.: **The Journal of the Kilkenny and South East of Ireland Arch. Soc.** 1864-66, pp. 143-7.
- (3) cf. Prendergast, Standish: **Notes on the Prendergast Family, collected and copied for John P. Prendergast by his Kinsman and obliged friend, Gort, 1879**, p. 4. (This manuscript is in the King's Inns Library, Dublin, and was uncatalogued when I last had occasion to consult it).
- (4) cf. Orpen, G. H.: **Ireland Under The Normans 1169—1216**, Vol I (Oxford 1911) p. 145f.
- (5) Orpen, G. H.: **The Song of Dermot and the Earl** (Oxford 1892), lines 477 ff. The **Song** is a literal translation of an old French poem. It is essentially laudatory and gives a more heightened and enthusiastic description than one might expect from the plain prosaic records and bald statements of the native annals or even from the fuller writings of Giraldus Cambrensis. For a historical criticism of **The Song** cf. **Irish Historical Studies** Vol. I, No. 1 (March 1938) pp. 4—20.
- (6) *ibid.* lines 1096 ff.
- (7) Teach-Mholing, now St. Mullins, Co. Carlow.
- (8) At the time of the Norman Invasion of Ireland we find much inter-tribal warfare among the Irish themselves and various groupings and alliances were formed on a more or less temporary basis for purposes of defence or conquest. We thus find the Normans taking sides with the Irish, and in this particular instance being beaten by an alliance of Irish and Norman forces.
- (9) Orpen: **The Song of Dermot and the Earl**, ls. 1211 ff. *ibid.*, ls. 1356 ff.
- (9) Orpen: **The Song of Dermot and the Earl**, ls. 1211 ff.
- (10) *ibid.* ls. 1356 ff.
- (11) Orpen: **Ireland Under The Normans**, Vol. I, p. 189.
- (12) cf. *ibid.* p. 197.
- (13) It is well to remember that the Battle of Clontarf (1014) did not rid Ireland of "the foreigners" from Scandinavia. The Norsemen remained as before in possession of the walled city of Dublin and of the seaboard towns which they had created on the East and South coasts, e.g., Wexford and Waterford. After Clontarf, however, the Norsemen were content to contain themselves in their towns until driven out by the advent of the Normans.
- (14) Sullivan: **The Story of Ireland** (Dublin 1867) pp. 119 ff.
- (15) Orpen: **The Song of Dermot and the Earl**, ls. 2938 ff.
- (16) Prendergast: **Notes on the Prendergast Family**, p. 15.
- (17) Rait, R.S.: **The Story of an Irish Property** (Oxford 1908), ch. 4.
- (18) Orpen: **The Song of Dermot and the Earl**, ls. 3070 ff.
- (19) Fearann na gCenél: cf. *ibid.*, p. 304.
- (20) Rait: *op. cit.*