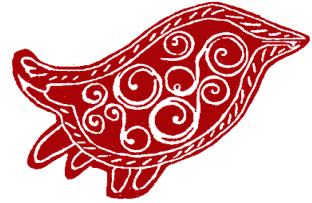


Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society



www.corkhist.ie

Title: New light on the history of St Mary's Priory, Rosscarbery

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Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, 2008, Vol. 113, page(s) 56-68

Published by the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society

Digital file created: March 13, 2019

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New light on the history of St Mary's Priory, Rosscarbery

By DIARMUID Ó RIAIN

Between the late eleventh and early thirteenth century, nine Irish Benedictine monasteries, henceforth Schottenklöster (singular Schottenkloster), were established in Germany. The movement began in the Bavarian town of Regensburg, before spreading across southern Germany from the mid-twelfth century onwards with the founding of daughter-houses at Würzburg, Nuremberg, Constance, Erfurt, Eichstätt, Vienna, Memmingen and Kelheim.¹ The steadfast commitment of the Schottenklöster communities to the principle of national exclusivity made the recruitment of novices difficult. Although some monks would have originally arrived at a particular Schottenkloster as pilgrims or otherwise of their own initiative, a more systematic approach to recruitment was necessary in order to ensure a steady flow of novices. This issue would have become increasingly pressing as the twelfth century wore on, and the number of Schottenklöster requiring fresh novices multiplied.

Two papal privileges, issued by Innocent IV to the abbot of the Regensburg mother-house in 1248, indicate the means by which the need for novices was met.² The first bull gave the abbot the right to delegate a representative to receive the vows of novices at the priories in Ireland subject to Regensburg. The second granted the abbot the right to visit priories and correct any wrongdoings for a period of three years. Priories located in Ireland would have afforded the Schottenkloster movement a valuable local presence and lessened the effects of the physical isolation of their monasteries in

Germany. This said, little is known about the nature of the activities carried out in the Irish priories. Presumably they served as preparatory schools for young novices, who would have been educated in the rule of St Benedict, as well as undergoing a more general formation. It would appear from the first 1248 papal bull that the practice in the early period of the Schottenkloster movement was for novices to make their vows after travelling from Ireland to the Regensburg motherhouse. However, because of the 'distance and dangerous road' between Ireland and Regensburg, a new procedure, whereby the abbot could empower the local prior or other representative to receive the vows of novices, while still in their Irish priories, was sanctioned by the pope.³ The new practice may have been in part prompted by the behaviour reported in the second 1248 bull, which alleged that several superiors and monks of the Irish priories were guilty of roaming about in the manner of *gyrovagi*, 'strollers/vagabonds', much to the detriment of the reputation of the Benedictine order and of their own souls.⁴ It was probably hoped that the profession of novices while still in Ireland, and a more rigorous enforcement of discipline in the priories, would engender a greater sense of commitment and make it less likely that they would stray from the path on the long journey to Germany.

The use of the plural form 'monasteries or priories' (*monasteria seu prioratus*) in the 1248 bulls has fuelled a good degree of debate concerning the location and chronology of the Schottenkloster priories in Ireland.⁵ However,



View of the church of St Mary's Priory, Rosscarbery, from the west

scholarly curiosity has scarcely been fully satisfied by the scant details which have otherwise emerged, with most attention focussed on Rosscarbery, Co. Cork, and Cashel, Co. Tipperary.⁶ From the early twelfth century onwards, the Schottenklöster were dominated by monks from the south of Ireland.⁷ Furthermore, not only did Munster host all the recorded fundraising visits by Regensburg abbots, the output of the various Schottenklöster scriptoria also revealed a lively concern with the political and ecclesiastical affairs of that region.⁸ It may be assumed that for many of these Munster monks the first point of contact with a Schottenkloster would have been the Benedictine priory of St Mary (*sancte Marie Rossensis ordinis sancti Benedicti*) at Rosscarbery in west Cork, which, in 1353, formally acknowledged its subjection to Philip, abbot of the Irish monastery at Würzburg.⁹ While we can be certain, therefore, that a Schottenkloster dependency had been established at Rosscarbery by the mid-fourteenth century, an earlier mention of a 'prior of Ross' in the papal taxation lists of

1302-6 may also refer to it.¹⁰ Indeed, the 1353 letter asserted that the rights of the Würzburg abbot in relation to Ross had existed since time immemorial.¹¹ The question to be discussed here is how much further back than the fourteenth century the presence of the priory in Ross can be traced.

* * *

The ruins of St Mary's priory (traditionally known as 'the Abbey') lie within a graveyard overlooking Rosscarbery Bay on the southern side of the village, some 200 metres to the south-west of St Fachtna's, the cathedral of the Church of Ireland diocese of Ross. The establishment of a priory within an existing settlement would have accorded well with the practice of the Schottenkloster monks in Germany, who invariably located their monasteries in emerging or established towns. The extent to which medieval Rosscarbery could be defined as urban is, of course, debatable, but it is at least clear that those who founded the priory were not interested in isolation.¹² An early

sixteenth-century description gives an idea of the urban character of Ross towards the end of the medieval period:

The town of Ross is situated on level ground near the ocean shore, in fertile country, especially for grain, surrounded by a wall and containing two gates and about two hundred houses. In its centre is a cathedral church.¹³

This is the earliest reference to a town-wall at Ross of which no trace appears to survive today; nor is the line of the wall readily discernible in the earliest maps of the town.¹⁴ The two gates mentioned in the account were most likely situated on the western and northern stretches of the wall, opening onto the main routes westwards and eastwards. These are shown as the roads to Baltimore and Clonakilty on a 1788 estate map, with the town bounded by water to the south and east.¹⁵ The coastal location of Ross would have eased communication between the communities of the Schottenklöster and their Irish outpost.¹⁶ Similarly, proximity to an episcopal see and, in particular, to the attendant centre of population would have facilitated the priory's recruitment of novices.

The present cathedral of Ross is thought to occupy the site of the early medieval monastery of Ros Ailithir, 'Promontory of the Pilgrim', an apt setting for the *perigrini* of the Schottenklöster. The church was founded according to tradition by Fachtna, a local-born saint, who is said to have died c.600.¹⁷ Various death-notice for abbots and *airchinnigh* (lay-abbots) during the period from the ninth to the eleventh centuries bear witness to the continued importance of Fachtna's church, though it is known to have suffered at the hands of the Norse at certain points.¹⁸ Ross's reputation for learning was already current at this time, but the church slipped from the historical record at the beginning of the twelfth century.¹⁹ The history of monastic life at Ross during the following two centuries, the period of most relevance to this paper, is practically undocumented.

A number of scholars, including James Coombes and Aubrey Gwynn, have proposed a twelfth-century date for the foundation of Ross priory.²⁰ However, up to now, the main basis for this early dating, an anonymous 1864 article, almost certainly penned by the Scottish bishop, Alexander Forbes, has been somewhat suspect.²¹ The article attributed the founding of the priory to one Nehemias Scotus, 'first a monk of St. James Wurzburg and then Bishop of Ross', but provided neither reference to a source nor a date for the events.²² A date was later supplied by Joseph P. Fuhrmann who, building (again without references) on the 1864 article, proposed 'about 1218' for its founding by Nehemias.²³ Fuhrmann's date appears to have rested on his identification of the founder with a certain 'Neemias', recorded as prior at Würzburg in 1208, and again, albeit without title, in 1218.²⁴ Unfortunately for this assertion, there is no other record of a bishop of Ross named Nehemias about 1218, and this led Coombes to search elsewhere for the elusive prelate, before arriving at a bishop of Cloyne of that name, who died, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, in 1149.²⁵

This latter Nehemias (otherwise Gilla na Náem Ua Muirchertaig) was certainly held in high esteem by the Irish monks in Germany. The author of *Visio Tnugdali*, written very probably in the Regensburg Schottenkloster c.1149, placed him in Paradise, in the rarefied company of St Patrick, Cellach, archbishop of Armagh, St Malachy, and the latter's brother Christian, bishop of Louth.²⁶ Marcus, the author of the *Visio*, appears to have been very familiar with Nehemias, to judge by the prologue of his text, where he promised 'some words' on the 'life and miracles' of the bishop.²⁷ For their part, Gwynn and Hadcock must have been influenced by the 1864 article when they suggested that Nehemias might have been a monk at Würzburg before taking over Cloyne diocese.²⁸ But while this view can be regarded as speculative, there are other Schottenkloster references

to a bishop named Nehemias, in the form of necrological entries. One of these, at 7 April in the necrology of the Schottenklöster, refers to: *Nehemias episcopus et monachus Hyberniae*.²⁹ The other, in an entry for the same date in the Wessobrunn calendar fragments, which were compiled in the Würzburg Schottenkloster, reads: *Nemias episcopus et monachus nostre congregationis*.³⁰ While these entries would suggest that a Schottenkloster monk named Nehemias served as a bishop in Ireland before or after his time in Germany, a clear connection between a prelate of that name and the priory at Ross has yet to be established.

This brings us back to the 1864 article written, very probably, by Alexander Forbes, the first scholar to comment on Nehemias. As previously stated, he provided no reference to his source, but this can now be shown to have lain in one of a number of manuscripts written in the seventeenth century by Scottish Benedictine monks at the Würzburg Schottenkloster.³¹ In the bibliography of his 1864 article, Forbes cited 'The Scots Monasteries in Germany. MSS. of the late James Dennistoun, of Dennistoun, in the Advocate's Library, Edinburgh'.³² The Dennistoun papers include one of two copies made in 1687 of a manuscript entitled *Indiculus Monasteriorum Scotorum Ordinis S. Benedicti extra Scotiam* (Catalogue of the Monasteries of the Scots outside Scotland), which had been penned by the Würzburg monk, James Brown, in 1655.³³ Included in the *Indiculus* are individual descriptions of twenty-eight medieval Scottish (actually Irish) monasteries across Europe, with the only one situated in Ireland in final position, viz. *Monasterium B. Mariæ Rossiae in Irlandia* (Monastery of the Blessed Virgin at Ross in Ireland). Although, judging by the corrections carried out by the author, this account was itself a preliminary draft, it was not the first history of Ross priory written by Brown. An earlier, more embryonic, account forms part of his *Germania Sancta, de Monasteriis Scotorum in Germania* (Holy Germany; of the Monasteries of the Scots

in Germany).³⁴ Dating to shortly before 1652, Brown's *Germania Sancta* provides the earliest known account of the foundation of Ross priory, as well as the first mention of Bishop Nehemias's involvement in the process.³⁵ The hitherto unpublished passage reads as follows in translation:³⁶

At Ross in Ireland, Nehemias the bishop of this same city of Ross, who was formerly a monk of the monastery of St James of the Scots [Irish] in Würzburg, founded a monastery for the Scots [Irish]. He built it in honour of the Blessed and Eternal Virgin Mary, at his own expense, after having been made a bishop. On resigning from the bishopric in infirm old age, having been made Prior there, he submitted himself and his monastery to the visitation, correction and confirmation of the abbot and monastery of St James of the Scots [Irish] in Würzburg. For a long time, the priors of that place remained under this same subjection and correction. This is revealed most clearly from original documents, and I will produce some documents below.

This account gives a clear sequence of events: Nehemias was first a monk at the Würzburg Schottenkloster and later bishop of Ross. While serving as bishop, he founded the priory, which, upon resigning his see at an advanced age, he himself entered. At that point, having been made prior, he subjected the house to the visitation, correction and confirmation of the Würzburg abbot. The opening lines of the corresponding passage in the *Indiculus* make some slight alterations to the story, the most notable being the omission of any reference to Nehemias becoming prior of the monastery.³⁷ The 'original letters' referred to by Brown most probably comprised the previously mentioned, still surviving, letter written in 1353 to Abbot Philip of Würzburg and perhaps some other known correspondence.³⁸

The source of Brown's information on Nehemias is much less clear. The evidence of other sections of *Germania Sancta* suggests that he may have had materials available to him which are now lost.³⁹ However, whatever the

source, it cannot have been exhaustive in its detail, because in the *Indiculus* Brown conceded that he was left trawling in vain through Schottenkloster archives for clues as to the date of the foundation of the priory.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding the lack of direct evidence, Brown took the view, perhaps on the basis that the 1353 letter sent by the Ross community to Abbot Philip and other unnamed sources implied a connection of considerable antiquity between Ross and Würzburg, that Nehemias was in Würzburg in the twelfth century, during the abbacy of either Macarius or Christian, and that he might even have been identical with the bishop of the same name mentioned in St Bernard's Life of St Malachy of Armagh. All this is clear from the following passage in the *Indiculus*:⁴¹

But it seems probable that he was a student of either St Macarius, the first abbot, or Christian, the second abbot, because in the afore-mentioned letters it is mentioned that the brethren of that place reported to Philip, the abbot of Würzburg, who was visiting them, that they had read in documents and heard from their elders that these things just related had applied from time immemorial and that the monastery had always submitted itself to the visitation and correction of his predecessors. In his Life of St Malachy, St Bernard included a Bishop Nehemias among the bishops of Ireland, who, if he was our Nehemias, was a student and a monk of St Macarius, as may be gathered from the concurrence of time periods [*i.e.* their appearance at the same time].

Brown's frankness regarding his historical method is important, since those who later drew on the *Indiculus* elevated the results of his deliberations into fact, without reference to their genesis.⁴² Arguably, the reliability of his principal assertions regarding Nehemias and Ross finds support in the studiousness with which he determined the supplementary detail. Why should he have been so concerned with the minor details if it was all a mere fiction?⁴³ Unfortunately, the source of Brown's information has since disappeared, leaving his questions regarding the identity of Nehemias

and the date of the founding of Ross still unanswered.⁴⁴ However, as noted by him, the 1353 letter indeed suggests that Ross priory was already long established and this, along with the reference to a prior in 1302 and (should they refer to Ross) the papal bulls of 1248, would push the existence of the priory back into the first half of the thirteenth century.

* * *

A consideration of the general history of the Schottenkloster movement lends support to the argument that the founding of the priory dates even further back, to the twelfth century. The great expansion of the Irish Benedictines on the Continent occurred in the half-century between the mid-1130s and 1180s, during which time all seven daughter-abbey were established, with the final major foundation occurring at Vienna in 1155.⁴⁵ Since the supply of novices from Ireland would have been of prime concern during this period, it may be assumed that the requisite organisational framework would already have been put in place. Arguably, therefore, it may be inferred from circumstantial evidence of this kind that *noster Nehemias* (our Nehemias) should be sought in the record of the mid-twelfth century, rather than, as Fuhrmann suggested, 'about 1218' or even later.⁴⁶ The question now is: would this early date be compatible with what is known of the history of Ross diocese?

The first bishop of Ross known by name (Nechtan Mac Nechtain) is twice mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters, in the list of those who died in 1160 and, by way of retroduplication, in the list for 1085.⁴⁷ A second bishop, Benedict by name, witnessed Diarmuid Mac Carthaig's 1174 charter for Gill Abbey in Cork.⁴⁸ Having been integrated into the diocese of Cork at Rathbrasil in 1111, Ross was elevated to a diocese in its own right at the synod of Kells in 1152.⁴⁹ The claims of Ross to a bishopric are likely to have been kept alive in the period between the two synods, as appears

also to have been the case in Cloyne, which had been similarly subsumed by Cork at Rathbrassil. The only named bishop of Cloyne during this period, the previously mentioned Nehemias (Gilla na Náem Ua Muirchertaig), died in 1149.⁵⁰ As already stated, he is described as bishop of Cloyne in both the *Visio Tnugdali* and St Bernard's Life of Malachy.⁵¹

Although Cloyne and Ross would officially have been part of the diocese of Cork at the time of Nehemias's *floruit*, there is no evidence to suggest that he ever held the see of Ross. Furthermore, it is *a priori* unlikely that he should have been involved in founding a priory in a place with its own independent claims to a bishopric. Against this, Nehemias's death-notice refers to him as 'noble bishop of the south of Ireland', which would suggest that his influence, if not jurisdiction, extended beyond the confines of Cloyne. In the prologue of the *Visio*, Marcus, as we have seen, speaks of Nehemias as of a saint, before going on to place him alongside the celebrated reformers, Cellach, Malachy, and Christian. It may be, therefore, that Nehemias would have had sufficient stature to found a monastery outside his own area, as Malachy himself had done. Indeed, an involvement in the Irish reform movement, as might be inferred from the *Visio*, would have made such a course of events more likely.

Brown's description of Nehemias as bishop of Ross is, however, not the only reason to doubt that his namesake in Cloyne was intended. In the *Visio*, Marcus stated that Nehemias died 'still in his episcopal chair', which does not tally with Brown's claim that the bishop resigned his see before entering the priory.⁵² It is also difficult to reconcile Nehemias's recorded year of death with the time his namesake is said to have spent as a monk in the Würzburg Schottenkloster. This was probably not founded until 1138, eleven years before the death of Nehemias of Cloyne.⁵³ Clearly, in those circumstances, if there was only one Nehemias, and despite the fact that both Brown and Mar-

cus attributed great age to him, neither his sojourn at Würzburg nor his time in Cloyne could have been particularly long. It may be, therefore, that Brown's source was silent on where Nehemias had served as a monk, and that he again simply based his findings on an awareness of the later, well-documented, affiliation of Ross to Würzburg.⁵⁴ Indeed, the subjection of Ross to Würzburg *ab initio* would itself be somewhat anachronistic since Regensburg was the *de facto* mother-house of the Schottenklöster in the first centuries of their existence.

One other twelfth-century figure comes into question as the Nehemias recorded in the Schottenkloster and Wessobrunn necrologies and by extension in Brown's *Germania Sancta*. In addition to the mistaken obit of Nechtan Mac Nechtain, the AFM 1085 entry states that 'Gilla-na-naemh Laighen, noble Bishop of Gleann-da-locha, and afterwards head of the monks of Wirzburg, died on the seventh of the Ides of April'.⁵⁵ As pointed out by Francis John Byrne, the latter obit is also entered under the incorrect year, as it relates to one Gilla na Náem Laignech, bishop of Glendalough, who attended the Synod of Kells in 1152.⁵⁶ Remarkably, the date of death given in the annals tallies exactly with that attributed to Nehemias in the two necrologies. If the details concerning Gilla na Náem Laignech provided in the entry are correct save for the year of death, the necrological entries must also refer to him. Alternatively, the compilers of AFM may not only have erred in relation to the year of death, but also confused two contemporary, eponymous bishops of Cloyne and Glendalough.⁵⁷ The known links between Nehemias of Cloyne and the Irish monks in Germany and the strength of the Schottenkloster links with Munster would support this latter possibility.⁵⁸ Even should Gilla na Náem Laignech have been a Schottenkloster monk, the likelihood of a Glendalough bishop founding a priory at Rosscarbery appears remote. Furthermore, the possibility that two Irish prelates bearing the same name were

active in the Schottenklöster movement in the same period is difficult to imagine, but, of course, cannot be ruled out. The claim of the AFM obit, whether it refers to Nehemias of Glendalough or of Cloyne, that the relevant bishop served as head of the monks of Würzburg after leaving his see again contradicts the sequence of events outlined in the *Germania Sancta*.⁵⁹

Clearly, despite the emergence of the *Germania Sancta* and *Indiculus* as new sources of information, many of the same questions remain. While it is evident that Forbes's account of Nehemias was not a 'Phantasieprodukt', as previously suspected, the same doubts could now be passed on to Brown.⁶⁰ Even assuming that there was a direct source behind Brown's account, the identity of his Nehemias is still uncertain. The most likely candidate for the role, Nehemias of Cloyne, died in 1149, and a date before this for the establishment of the priory in Ross would fit neatly into the chronology of the Schottenkloster movement as a whole. In that scenario, Bishop Nehemias, formerly a Schottenkloster monk, would then have responded to requests from his former brethren in Germany by helping to found a monastery at Ross, with the specific purpose of attracting fresh novices to the movement. Furthermore, this would have happened within the Regensburg abbacy of Christian Mac Carthaig (c. 1133-1155), a close relative of the ruling family in South Munster, who played an integral role in the expansion of the Schottenklöster, and who made two recorded visits to Ireland during his tenure.⁶¹ Finally, a foundation date for the priory in the 1140s would also be compatible, as I now propose to show, with the ecclesiastical and secular political conditions which prevailed in West Cork at that time.

* * *

The diocese of Ross occupies a narrow strip of south-west Cork, the bulk of its territory hugging

the coastline from Timoleague westward to Kilcoe, with the remaining outlying parishes situated on the Beara peninsula. Its extent was essentially commensurate with the lands of the Corca Loígde, the leading family of which, Uí Etersceóil (O'Driscolls), provided kings throughout the twelfth century.⁶² This family was closely associated with Fachtna's monastery at Ross, one of their number being credited with having erected the main church there, known as *Teampall Mór Fachtna*.⁶³ As was the case across Ireland, local political realities determined the make-up of the Cork dioceses. The incorporation of Corca Loígde into the diocese of Cork at Rathbrasil reflected the greater strength at the time of the Uí Echach or Eoganacht Raithlinn, traditional rulers of south Cork.⁶⁴ Relations between the Corca Loígde and the other dynasty at the beginning of the twelfth century were by no means amicable, as is shown by the plundering of Ross by the Uí Echach in 1102.⁶⁵

Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair's division of Munster between the northern Uí Briain and the southern Meic Carthaig in 1118 occasioned wide-reaching changes in the political landscape of South Munster. As the Meic Carthaig sought to extend their power, both the Uí Echach and the Corca Loígde allied themselves to the new power-block. Thus, according to one set of annals, both provided naval support to Cormac Mac Carthaig on campaigns undertaken against Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair in 1132 and 1134.⁶⁶ The military involvement of the Corca Loígde had already resulted in Ross becoming a target for Ua Conchobair, with an attack on South Munster beginning there in 1131.⁶⁷ The alliance with the Meic Carthaig would have ensured that, while the Corca Loígde had to endure some encroachment, their allies were none the less beholden to them.⁶⁸ Furthermore, because of the strategic need to accommodate the Corca Loígde, the earlier pretensions of the Uí Echach to dominance over them would no longer have been

sustainable, and the creation of the diocese of Ross at the expense of Cork in 1152 arguably recognised this new *status quo*.⁶⁹

While the ability of the Corca Loígde to 'punch above their weight' at this time would have contributed to their success at the synod of Kells, a reassertion of the importance of Ross as an ecclesiastical centre would also have been necessary.⁷⁰ It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the establishment of a priory at Rosscarbery might have formed part of the campaign to secure diocesan status. At a time when the Irish church was being brought into line with the continental model, to embrace Benedictine monasticism, the dominant European form, would have represented a strong statement of commitment to ecclesiastical reform and reinvigoration. How a new priory would have been accommodated within the existing monastic structures at Ross is another matter. Given the proximity of St Mary's to the site of the earlier church of Ross, it is not impossible that the Benedictine house was established under the auspices of the existing foundation. This arrangement is attested for a number of Irish churches, which, during the twelfth century, found room within their own confines, or adjacent to them, for Augustinian priories.⁷¹ In some cases, the newly founded priories supplied candidates for the local see on a regular basis, thus apparently supplanting to some extent the older churches. It appears more likely that the new priory would have taken the place of the ailing or already defunct establishment, or simply outlived it, after some years of co-existence. An annalistic reference to the 'community of Ross' in 1102 marks the final unambiguous reference to monastic activity at Ross in the twelfth century, while the death of Conchobar Ua Etersceóil, king of Corca Loígde, may have occurred in the church a year later.⁷² Through its involvement in the quest for episcopal status, Fachtna's church could conceivably have shed some of its traditional activities, leaving them open to the new-

ly established priory. In that way, the vestiges of the famous 'school of Ross' could also have passed to the Schottenkloster priory.⁷³

As was the case with the German Schottenklöster, local figures would have played an integral role in the establishment of the priory. The sanction of the local bishop would have been required, as would the support of the Uí Etersceóil patrons of Ross, who in turn would have enjoyed greater prestige by their association with it. Furthermore, given the possibility that a Benedictine priory had been newly founded by the Meic Carthaig at Cashel, a similar undertaking at Ross could also have been a means of strengthening relations with the overlords of South Munster. Once founded, the priory remained the only monastic establishment in Rosscarbery throughout the later medieval period. Moreover, although the centre of Uí Etersceóil power later moved further west to the area about Baltimore, the priory retained its strong association with the family in the period 1300 to 1500.⁷⁴ Interestingly, three of the four benefices appropriate to the priory in 1302-6 were located in the deanery of 'Corkyghteragh' to the west of Ross, an area coextensive with the territories of Collymore and Collybeg, strongholds of the Uí Etersceóil in the later medieval period.⁷⁵

* * *

In sum, therefore, while the historical record does not allow any definite determination as to the chronology of the Benedictine presence in Rosscarbery, it is argued in this paper that the weight of circumstantial evidence points to a twelfth-century foundation date. The evidence in question consists not only of the circumstances surrounding the claim that Nehemias founded the priory, for which hitherto unpublished sources have been used, but also the general history of the Schottenkloster movement in Germany, and the influences, both secular and ecclesiastical, at work on the emergence of Ross as a diocesan see.⁷⁶

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 On the history of the Irish Benedictines in Germany, see L. Hammermayer, 'Die irischen Benediktiner-"Schottenklöster" in Deutschland und ihr institutioneller Zusammenschluß vom 12.-16. Jahrhundert', *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige* 87 (1976) 249-339; H. Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster: Irische Benediktinerkonvente im hochmittelalterlichen Deutschland* (Paderborn, 1995); D. Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Benedictine Monasteries on the Continent', in M. Browne and C. Ó Clabaigh (ed.), *The Irish Benedictines* (Dublin, 2005) 25-63.
- 2 M.P. Sheehy (ed.), *Pontificia Hibernica*, ii (Dublin, 1965) 146-8.
- 3 Sheehy, *Pontificia Hibernica*, ii, 146-7: *propter locorum distantiam et viarum discrimina*.
- 4 Ibid. 147: *quod nonnulli prepositi et monachi monasteriorum seu prioratum ordinis sancti Benedicti in Ibernia . . . campum discurrere velud girovagi*.
- 5 See Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Benedictine Monasteries', 58-63; eadem, 'Das Nekrolog der irischen Schottenklöster', *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg* 26 (1992) 21-7; J. Coombes, 'The Benedictine Priory of Ross', *JCHAS* 73 (1968) 153-4; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 282-7; A. Gwynn, 'The Continuity of the Irish Tradition at Würzburg', in *Herbipolis Jubilans Würzburger Diözesangesichtsblätter* 14/15 (1952-3) 72-3; A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland* (London, 1970) 102-5, 107-8.
- 6 On the issue of a Benedictine priory at Cashel, see Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Benedictine Monasteries', 59-61; eadem, 'Das Nekrolog', 21-7; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 283-4; Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 104-5.
- 7 The author of the late twelfth-century *Vita Mariani* (I. Bollandus and G. Henschenius, *Acta Sanctorum*, Februarii ii (Antwerp, 1658) 368, an account of the life of the founding father of the Irish community in Regensburg and the fortunes of the Schottenklöster up to that point, records that the early twelfth-century Abbot Dominus was the first to hail from the south of Ireland, his predecessors, including Marianus, having been drawn from northern stock: *in eodem loco septem Abbates viri venerabiles, eiusdem sancti viri Mariani digni successores, de eadem gente Borealis Hiberniae finibus surrexerunt. Quorum erat vltimus vir celebris . . . Domnus nomine, qui a parte Australis Hiberniae primus extiterat*.
- 8 D. Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Cashel and Germany: The Documentary Evidence', in D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (ed.), *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century* (Dublin, 2006) 176-217; Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Benedictine Monasteries', 52-6; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 277-82.
- 9 This letter is printed in full in an appendix to J. Coombes, 'The Benedictine Priory of Ross', *JCHAS* 73 (1968) 152-60. Coombes's article remains the only study devoted entirely to the priory at Rosscarbery. It is also discussed in Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Benedictine Monasteries', 58-9; eadem, 'Das Nekrolog', 22-4; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 283-7; Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 107-8.
- 10 H.S. Sweetman (ed.), *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland: 1302-1307* (London, 1886) 278.
- 11 Coombes, 'The Benedictine Priory', 159: *ab antiquis retroactis temporibus quorum memoris hominum non existit*.
- 12 B.J. Graham, 'The Definition and Classification of Medieval Irish Towns', *Irish Geography* 21 (1988) 28, tentatively classifies later medieval Rosscarbery as an ecclesiastical town on the basis of its episcopal status alone. The evidence of a lost charter of incorporation granted by King John hints at urban status: G. Bennett, *The History of Bandon and the Principal Towns in the West Riding of the County Cork* (Cork, 1869) 395. Ross provides the stage for a number of important political events during the course of the twelfth century, which suggests that the settlement was already then of substance in both secular and ecclesiastical spheres.
- 13 A. Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum . . . usque ad Paulum III. 1216-1547* (Rome, 1864) 529: *est Rossensis civitas posita in planitie secus oceanui litus, agro fertili, praesertim frumento, cincto muro, habens duas portas et casas fere ducentas. In eius medio est ecclesia Cathedralis*. This account forms part of a submission to a consistorial enquiry.
- 14 In 1571, Meredith Hanmer attributed the construction of the town wall to a 'lady of that country', adding that 'now according to the fruits of warre,

among the Carties, O Driscals, and other septs, scarce can the old foundation be seene'; *Ancient Irish Histories: The Chronicle of Ireland, Collected by Meredith Hanmer . . . in the Year 1571* (Dublin, 1809) 118. The wall is not discernible on the Down Survey Map, and Charles Smith, who visited Ross in the mid-eighteenth century, makes no mention of surviving remains, contenting himself with repeating the above quotation from Hanmer: C. Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork*, I (Dublin, 1774) 257. See also A. Thomas, *The Walled Towns of Ireland*, ii (Dublin, 1992) 237. For a very sceptical approach to the evidence for a medieval town wall, see M. Tobin, 'Was Rosscarbery a Walled Town?', *Rosscarbery Past and Present 2004*, 81-9. Many of Tobin's criticisms are valid, but his outright dismissal of the consistorial evidence as a reliable source does not appear justified.

15 A Survey of the Estate of Sir John Freke Baronet in the County of Cork by Thomas Sherrard, 1787-1788, National Library of Ireland, 21 F 105 (17).

16 Rosscarbery Harbour appears to have been navigable for ships during the medieval period, but had become too shallow by the seventeenth century: Smith, *Ancient and Present State*, I, 261. On the Down Survey map the harbour is said to be 'not passable for ships but for boats'. The Schottenkloster priory, situated on the hillside on the south side of Ross, would have stood out prominently for those approaching from the sea.

17 P. Ó Riain, 'Fachtna of Rosscarbery', *Rosscarbery Past and Present 1999*, 7-16.

18 AI 924, 990; C.A. Webster, *The Diocese of Ross and its Ancient Churches* (Dublin, 1932), 258-63.

19 K. Meyer, *The Triads of Ireland*, Royal Irish Academy Todd Lecture Series 13 (Dublin, 1906) 3 §17.

20 Coombes, 'The Benedictine Priory', 153-4; Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 107.

21 [A.P. Forbes], 'Scottish Religious Houses Abroad', *The Edinburgh Review* 119 (1864) 168-202. For the attribution to Forbes, see M. Dilworth, 'Marianus Scotus: Scribe and Monastic Founder', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 10 (1965) 125-48, at 134.

22 [Forbes], *Scottish Religious Houses Abroad*, 174.

23 J.P. Fuhrmann, *Irish Medieval Monasteries on the Continent* (Washington, 1927) 104.

24 M. Wieland, 'Das Schottenkloster zu St. Jakob in Würzburg', *Archiv des historischen Vereins von Unterfranken und Aschaffenburg* 16 (1863) 146, 150; Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Das Nekrolog', 22. As Ó Riain-Raedel points out, judging by the number of entries in the necrology, Nehemias was a popular choice of name for Schottenkloster monks.

25 Coombes, *The Benedictine Priory of Ross*, 153.

26 J.-M. Picard and Y. de Pontfarcy, *Vision of Tnugdál* (Dublin, 1989) 155.

27 *Ibid.* 82.

28 Gwynn and Hadcock *Medieval Religious Houses*, 107.

29 Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Das Nekrolog', 63.

30 D. Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Aspects of the Promotion of Irish Saints Cults in Medieval Germany', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 39 (1982) 220-34, at 229-30; A. Dold, 'Wessobrunner Kalendarblätter irischen Ursprungs', *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 58 (1962) 11-33, at 23.

31 The Irish monastery at Würzburg passed into the hands of German monks at the end of the fifteenth century. Just short of a hundred years later, Scottish Benedictines were able to enforce their spurious claims to the Würzburg Schottenkloster, as they had previously succeeded in doing at the defunct Irish monasteries in both Regensburg and Erfurt. See M. Dilworth, *The Scots in Franconia* (Edinburgh, 1974) 18-40.

32 [Forbes], 'Scottish Religious Houses Abroad', 168.

33 M. Dilworth, "'Germania Christiana': a Seventeenth-Century Trilogy", *The Innes Review* 18 (1967) 118-40, at 138. The other 1687 copy is in the Würzburg Universitätsbibliothek (M.ch.q. 49/2). The shelf-mark of the original *Indiculus* is M.ch.q. 49/1. The microfilm copy of M.ch.q. 49/2 (= Microfilm P2974) in the National Library of Ireland is incorrectly titled M.ch.q. 49/1.

34 Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.ch.q. 54 (= NLI Microfilm P2974).

35 Cf. Dilworth, "'Germania Christiana'", 129-30.

36 M.ch.q. 54, f. 19r: *Rossia in Hibernia monasterium pro Scotis fundavit Nehemias episcopus eiusdem ciuitatis Rossensis, qui prius fuit monachus monasterii S. Iacobi Scotorum Herbipoli, postea factus Episcopus, illud in honorem B. Mariae semper Virginis propriis sumptibus aedificauit, et in decrepita aetate resignans episcopatum factus est ibidem Prior, se suumque monasterium visitationi, correctioni et confirmationi Abbatis et monasterii S. Iacobi Scotorum Herbipoli submisit. Longo tempore priores illius loci sub eadem subiectione et correctione manserunt. Hac ex litteris originalibus clarissime patet et unas litteras inferius producam.*

37 The text, which is otherwise very similar to that of the earlier account, reads: *Rossia in prouincia Cassillensi in Irlandia, monasterium in honorem B. Mariae semper Virginis gaudens titulo Prioratus pro monachis Scotis aedificavit vir sanctissimus Dominus Nehemias Scotus Episcopus Rossensis, prius monachus monasterii S. Iacobi Scotorum Herbipoli, qui inde cum Abbatis sui permissione in Hiberniam profectus, et illic Episcopus Rossensis creatus nominatum monasterium construxit, postea senio et laboribus confectis, Episcopatum resignavit, et monasterium ingressus cum quibusdam fratribus religiose vixit, ac se suosque successores Abbati monasterii Sancti Iacobi Scotorum Herbipoli ad visitandum, corrigendum ac huiusmodi superioritatis actus exercendos necnon totum monasterium cum omni iure nominato monasterio Herbipolensi subiecit, ut patet in diversis visitationum litteris: Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.ch.q. 49/1, f. 45v.*

38 In the *Indiculus*, Brown explicitly refers to the letter sent to Abbot Phillip; see n. 41 below.

39 In the final section of his *Germania Sancta* (ff. 21-35), entitled *De viris illustribus*, Brown provided otherwise unrecorded surnames of a number of well-known twelfth-century Schottenkloster figures.

40 M.ch.q. 49/1, f. 46r: *Quo tempore hic venerabilis episcopus vixerat, et quo anno fundaverat hoc monasterium ex monumentis nostris clare non inveni* (What time the venerable bishop lived, and in what year he founded the monastery, I could not find out clearly from our documents).

41 M.ch.q. 49/1, f. 46r: *probabile tamen videtur illum fuisse discipulum Sancti Macharii primi Abbatis vel Christiani secundi Abbatis, quia in citatis litteris*

habetur, quod fratres illius loci Philippo Abbati Herbipolensi illos visitanti retulerunt, ex litteris vidisse et a senioribus audiuisset haec modo narrata tempore immemoriali contigisse, et monasterium illud semper se submisisset visitationi et correctioni eius praedecessorum. Sanctus Bernardus in vita Sancti Malachiae inter Episcopos Hiberniae ponit Nehemiam Episcopum, qui si fuerat noster Nehemias, discipulus et monachus Sancti Macharii fuit, ut ex convenientia temporis colligitur.

42 Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.ch. 49/2 (= NLI Microfilm P2830) and M.ch.o. 23, f. 70 (= NLI Microfilm P2974): *Huius Nehemiae meminit S. Bernardus in vita Malachiae inter episcopos Hiberniae.* M.ch. 49/2 is a 1687 version of the *Indiculus* written by the Scottish monk Alan Chisholm, while M.ch.o. 23 is a 1691 copy of the 1687 version in a different hand: Dilworth, “Germania Christiana”, 138-9.

43 Although unlikely, it is not possible to rule out completely the construction of an educated fiction on Brown’s part, based on deductions made from the Nehemias entry in the necrology, then housed in Würzburg, and the references to Nehemias in *Visio Tnugdali*.

44 Perhaps Brown’s information on Nehemias comprised merely a necrological entry, which related the essential details of him having been both a bishop and a Schottenkloster monk as well as the founder of St Mary’s in Ross. In part 3 of *Germania Sancta*, Brown refers to entries in an otherwise unknown necrology, which may also have been the source of the twelfth-century surnames that he provides in the same section.

45 See Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 153-243; Ó Riain-Raedel, ‘Irish Benedictine Monasteries’, 42-51.

46 Fuhrmann, *Irish Medieval Monasteries*, 104.

47 AFM *sub annis*; T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, F.J. Byrne (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, ix (Oxford, 1984) 305, 307. This is just one of a number of incorrect entries for the year 1085; *ibid.*, 313, 315, 318, 320.

48 M.T. Flanagan, *Irish Royal Charters Texts and Contents* (Oxford, 2005) [334] §10; E. Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork from the Earliest Times to the Reformation* (Shannon, 1972) 95-6. The Bishop Ua Cearbhaill of Ros, whose death in 1168 is recorded in AFM, almost certainly held the see of

Roscrea rather than Rosscarbery (AFM *sub anno*; Moody-Martin-Byrne, *A New History of Ireland*, ix, 305). The choice of the name Benedict by an Irish bishop is unusual, and could indicate a Benedictine presence at Ross by 1174: Coombes, 'The Benedictine Priory', 154.

49 H.J. Lawlor, 'A Fresh Authority for the Synod of Kells, 1152', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 36C (1922) 16-22, at 18. There is no bishop of Ross among the Kells attendees listed by Geoffrey Keating: P.S. Dinneen (ed.), *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating D.D.*, iii, Irish Texts Society 9 (London, 1908) 317.

50 AFM *sub anno*.

51 Picard and de Pontfarcy, *Visio Tnugdali*, 110, 155; H.J. Lawlor, *St Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of St Malachy of Armagh*, Translations of Christian Literature, Series 5 (London, 1920) 88-9. Bernard possibly acquired his information on Nehemias directly from Marcus: Picard and de Pontfarcy, *Visio Tnugdali*, 27-8.

52 Ibid. 110. The description of Nehemias in the *Schottenklöster* necrology as *monachus Hyberniae*, 'monk of / in Ireland', leaves open the possibility that the bishop served as a monk in Ireland, presumably in a Schottenkloster dependency, after his term as bishop.

53 Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 165-180; Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Benedictine Monasteries', 42-5; Gwynn, 'The Continuity of the Irish Tradition at Würzburg', 64-5.

54 If the source was a necrological entry, it could have described Nehemias merely as *monachus nostre congregationis*, 'a monk of our congregation', as is the case in the Wessobrunn fragments: see n. 30 above.

55 AFM *sub anno*.

56 Dinneen (ed.), *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, iii, 317; Moody-Martin-Byrne, *A New History of Ireland*, ix, 313.

57 D. Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Kings and Bishops in the memoria of the German Schottenklöster', in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter, *Irland und Europa* (Stuttgart, 1984) 392-3.

58 The vast majority of the Irish bishops named in the *Schottenklöster* necrology appear to have occupied Munster sees, with none hailing from Leinster;

Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Irish Kings and Bishops', 392-7; eadem, 'Das Nekrolog', 89-90.

59 There is no Nehemias recorded as abbot or head (*cenn*) of the Würzburg monastery in the twelfth century. The AFM entry does at least connect the Nehemias in question with Würzburg as opposed to Regensburg or any other Schottenkloster, which is in keeping with the Brown narrative and could potentially inform a reading of the necrological entries. Whether Brown and the AFM compilers had access to a common or related source can only be speculated upon.

60 Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 284 (n. 96).

61 Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 277-82; Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Cashel and Germany', 204-12.

62 D. Ó Murchadha, *Family Names of County Cork* (Dún Laoghaire, 1985) 175-85.

63 J. O'Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society* (Dublin, 1849) 11.

64 Webster, *The Diocese of Ross*, 262-3.

65 AI 1102; ALC 1102.

66 MIA 1132: 'A hosting on land by Cormac son of Mac Carthaigh and the nobles of Leath Mogha . . . Uí Eachach and Corca Laoighde, and the fleet of Leath Mogha [came] by sea to meet them, and they demolished the castle of Bun Gaillimhe and plundered and burned the town'; cf. *ibid.* 1134.

67 ATig. 1131: 'A fleet (led) by Hua Conchobair to Ross Ailithri, till they reached Desmond, and ravaged it mightily'.

68 In line with provisions of the Rental of Cong, which grant land and rights to the monastery of Cong in Cormac's 'patrimony of Beara', H.A. Jeffries, 'The Early Years and the Career of Cormac Mac Carthy, *JCHAS* 88 (1983) 81-99, at 92, argued that Cormac Mac Carthaigh wrested control of Beara from the Uí Eterscéoil between 1128 and 1131. While parishes on the Beara peninsula did form part of the diocese of Ross as recognised in 1152, Ó Murchadha, 'Gill Abbey and the Rental of Cong', *JCHAS* 90 (1985) 31-45, at 40-1, has shown that Cormac Mac Carthaigh was in no position to grant lands in Beara in the twelfth century.

69 Furthermore, Uí Briain influence in Cork, which had probably conferred benefits upon the diocese in 1111, no longer existed at the time of the Kells synod:

- A. Gwynn, *The Irish Church in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Dublin, 1992) 184, 234-9.
- 70 F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (London, 1973) 180.
- 71 Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 146-52; A. MacDonald, 'Reicléis in the Irish Annals to AD 1200', *Peritia* 13 (1999) 259-75.
- 72 *AI sub annis*.
- 73 K. Meyer, *The Triads of Ireland*, Royal Irish Academy Todd Lecture Series 13 (Dublin, 1906) 3 §17. In the post-conquest Life of Mochaomhóg, after describing an episode involving Fachtna, the author says of Ross: *ubi semper manet magnum studium scholarium* (C. Plummer, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1910; repr. 1968) ii, 165 §4; Ó Riain, 'Fachtna of Rosscarbery'). Perhaps, he had the Benedictine priory as well as the earlier monastery in mind. In what may be a rare glimpse into the life of an Irish Schottenkloster priory, the work of translating a Latin medical treatise into Irish was completed at Ross in 1414, having been begun at Kilbrittain: C. Coakley, 'Kilbrittain Castle', *JCHAS* 26 (1920) 18-23. Cf. P. Ó Fiannachta, *Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge Choláiste Phádraig Má Nuad*, vi (Má Nuad, 1969) 70 (5a).
- 74 Cornelius and Odo Ua Etersceóil were successive priors of Ross between 1469 and 1490, while the mother of Philip, Abbot of Würzburg in the mid-fourteenth century, seems also to have been a member of the family: Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Das Nekrolog', 23; Coombes, 'The Benedictine Priory', 156-7.
- 75 Webster, *The Diocese of Ross*, 265-86; J.T. Collins, 'The O'Heas of South-West Cork', *JCHAS* 51 (1946) 97-107, at 99.
- 76 This study is based on research undertaken in the School of Archaeology at University College Dublin towards a doctoral thesis on the history and architecture of the Irish Benedictine monasteries in Germany. I would like to acknowledge the receipt of scholarships from both the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences in respect of this research. I also wish to thank Dr Jason Harris of the Department of History at UCC for examining my transcription and translation of the Latin passages and for helpfully suggesting some modifications.