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A German visitor to Monaincha in 1591

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Introduction

In the year 1590 Ludolf von Münchhausen (+1640) set off on a journey through the Netherlands, England, Scotland and Scandinavia which also brought him to Ireland during the months of February and March of the following year. Münchhausen, born in 1570 in Apelern near Hameln, Lower Saxony into a landed family, spent some ten years of his youth travelling around Europe.

He noted down his experiences in a travel diary which is still extant in the possession of Freiherr von Münchhausen at Groß Vahlberg near Wolfenbüttel.¹ I propose here to give a discussion of the diary's contents, together with a translation of the parts relating to his visit to Ireland. Particular interest attaches to his account of his visit to Monaincha in Co. Tipperary.

After setting sail from Bristol on February 19, 1591, Münchhausen's boat was forced by a storm to shelter at Milfordhaven, before eventually arriving at Waterford two days later. Having enquired about places of interest Münchhausen left Waterford in the company of an interpreter, a guide and a boy to carry the baggage on March 2. Travelling north by boat the company reached Carrick-on-Suir, before proceeding by foot, *via* not yet fully identified places named Fidden and Fraglach, to Monaincha near Roscrea, which was reached on March 5.^{1A}

It is here that Münchhausen found his desired destination: *Lan nimneo, Oilean na mBeo* or *Insula viventium*, an island in a lake with the reputation that nobody who lived on it could die there. Half a mile distant from this place he found the dwelling of some hermits, one of whom affirmed that he had left the island at 100 years of age in order to be able to die.

Glad to find the Prior (who might have insisted on confession and "other such superstitious acts") absent, Münchhausen, who was himself a Lutheran, set off by boat for the island situated in a marshy lake. On the island itself he found a church and a small chapel, both in bad condition and roofless, set amongst some wild trees. He followed the example of his fellow pilgrims in walking around the island barefoot.

However, after one of the customary eight rounds, he decided to sit out the others. He noted the customs of the other visitors, describing how they crawled on their knees to the altars of both church and chapel. Finally, when they had successfully embraced a stone cross with their backs to it, their penitence was over.

Seeing that his elderly companion was unable to perform this task, Münchhausen helped him, so that he also might also be delivered from his sins. Finally, after generously contributing alms and receiving the blessing of the old hermit, everybody was free to leave what all agreed was the holiest pilgrimage in Ireland.

Münchhausen was, of course, the object of great curiosity among his fellow pilgrims. Not only had they never heard of Germany, but they also wondered what great sin he must have committed to be travelling so far to receive deliverance! Others thought him to be a holy man, and tried to kiss and touch him. Münchhausen, who was only in search of exciting experiences, never revealed that he did not belong to their "popish and superstitious" religion.

Sceptically, he recounted the stories connected with the site. Not only could nobody die on





The western portal at Monaincha – an early 19th century drawing.

the island; women could not even live on it. A stone visible in the water marked the site where once a woman drowned trying to reach the island. The timber from the island could be used against poisonous animals. Although there were no vermin in Ireland in any case, if this timber was used to draw a circle on the ground anywhere else, no poisonous animal could enter it.

Münchhausen was able to compare his own observations with the description of the island by Giraldus Cambrensis, which he quoted from the works of Abraham Ortelius published in 1584.² He paid special attention to Giraldus's assertion that no human or animal of the female sex could survive on the island. As Giraldus had written of two instead of the one island Münchhausen had seen in the lake, he was somewhat vexed.

Assuming, however, that Giraldus was speaking of the island he had visited, Münchhausen assured the reader that he had seen a pair of wild pigeons there, testimony enough to contradict Giraldus. Yet he was tempted to test the veracity of the claim further. A ship full of negroes, lately intercepted at sea, had landed in Ireland and he proposed to bring one of the negresses, dressed up in men's clothes, to the island. However, his guide and his interpreter, afraid of the danger he might bring to all of them, persuaded him to abandon his plan.

All in all, Münchhausen seems to have been disappointed with his visit to Monaincha. That, together with the thought of a long and cumbersome journey, made him decide to abandon his earlier intention of visiting another place of pilgrimage: St. Patrick's Purgatory. Instead he headed for Dublin *via* Kilkenny and took the boat to Holyhead.

Monaincha's history

Münchhausen's rendering of the Irish *Oilean na mbeo* as *Lan nimneo, id est Insula viventium* (p. 228), is phonetically correct. This island in *Loch Cre*, in the vicinity of Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, is now commonly referred to as Monaincha (*Moin na hInse*). The history of the island, which was known formerly as *Inis Loch Chre*, stretches back for a considerable time. The church on it, reputedly founded by St Cronan of Roscrea (*Ros Cre*), is also connected with St. Cainnech of Aghaboe, who, according to his Life, returned repeatedly to the island to lead the life of a hermit. He is also reputed to have completed a manuscript there containing the four gospels, the *Glass Kannechi*, which, according to the author of his Life, was still there in his day.³

During the eighth and ninth centuries the island seems to have attained a prominent position in the movement of the *Ceili De*; the obit of the anchorite and scribe Hilarius/Elair is recorded for the year 807 (AU). It is quite possible that the island church may have formed part of the network which existed between the churches of Terryglass, Tallaght and Finglas.⁴ There is little, however, in what is known of the history of the island in earlier times to prepare us for the status it had achieved in the twelfth century.

While little remains from an earlier period, the ruins visible today bear testimony to a good deal of building activity in the second half of the twelfth century. At this time, following the take-over of the island by Augustinian canons, the larger church was rebuilt in Hiberno-Romanesque style, the smaller chapel being left in the possession of the Culdees.⁵

Nowadays the scene has changed considerably. Some two centuries ago the lake was drained and what, even in Münchhausen's day, was an island accessible only by boat is now a circular mound in a bog, easily reached by foot. The description given by Ledwich shortly before the draining took place also refers to a smaller island connected to the larger one by a causeway and containing the abbot's house.⁶ It may well be that this was the second island referred to by Giraldus Cambrensis, which Münchhausen failed to discover.

Giraldus Cambrensis

As has already been pointed out, Münchhausen referred to Giraldus Cambrensis, quoting an edition by Abraham Ortelius which had been published shortly before he set out on his journey. Unfortunately, he did not indicate whether he had been able to consult Ortelius prior to coming to Ireland or whether it was in Waterford that he had had access to it.

Giraldus Cambrensis wrote his *Topographia Hibernica* after visiting Ireland in 1185-6, including chapters in it based either on his own observations or on other written or oral sources.⁷ In a number of chapters Giraldus explored the reasons for the absence of poisonous animals in Ireland, giving also an account of various antidotes to snake-bites and poison. The second part of his treatise, concerning the Wonders and Miracles of Ireland, included a series of tales about lakes and wells, including one on "Two islands in one of which no one dies; into the other no animal of the female sex can go".⁸

There is a lake in the north of Munster which contains two islands, one rather large and the other rather small. The larger has a church venerated from the earliest times. The smaller has a chapel cared for most devotedly by a few celibates called 'heaven-worshippers' or 'godworshippers'.

No woman or animal of the female sex could ever enter the larger island without dying immediately. This has been proved many times by instances of dogs and cats and other animals of the female sex. When brought there often to make a trial, they immediately died.



A remarkable thing about the birds there is that, while the males settle on the bushes everywhere throughout the island, the females fly over and leave their mates there and, as if they were fully conscious of its peculiar power, avoid the island like a plague.

In the smaller island no one ever died or could die a natural death. Accordingly it is called the island of the living. Nevertheless the inhabitants sometimes suffer mortal sickness and endure the agony almost to their last gasp. When there is no hope left; when they feel that they have not a spark of life left; when as the strength decreases they are eventually so distressed that they prefer to die in death than drag out a life of death, they get themselves finally transported in a boat to the larger island, and, as soon as they touch ground there, they give up the ghost.

We may assume that Giraldus's poetic imagination and his desire to entertain his audience at Oxford were responsible for some of the more exuberant parts of this account. In substance, however, we can recognize both traces of the known historical record of the site as well as Münchhausen's observations on it.

The "heaven-worshippers" clearly refer to the survival into Giraldus's time of a community of the *Ceili De*, attested there since the eighth century. By Münchhausen's time their place may have been taken by the group of hermits whom he encountered. A still flourishing monastic community is also indicated by Münchhausen's reference to the Prior, who was absent during his pilgrimage.

Bishop Patrick

Forming part of the writings of Bishop Patrick of Dublin (1074-1084) is a collection of 26 wonders, most of which, according to the author's announcement of his intention to omit places and locations for the sake of brevity, can only be identified with the help of other sources.¹⁰ Monaincha, which is numbered 21 in the list, is described as follows in the translation by Gwynn:

Of a very wonderful island

There is also in our country a small wonderful island, Which is shunned by all female birds, nor will they approach it:

They are unable to touch its holy ground or its boughs: but birds of male sex visit it.

Here in this strange division birds follow the ways of men.

No sinner can die there or there be buried, but those only who lawfully may rise by their merits to Heaven, as is often proved by many examples.

Gwynn's discussion shows that, apart from Bishop Patrick's verses and Giraldus's account, other versions of tales on miraculous places were available in Ireland. The Norse version of the "Wonders of Ireland", although only surviving in a chapter of the "Kongs Skuggsjo" (*Speculum Regale*) and written in the middle of the thirteenth century, may well go back to an earlier source.

Surprisingly, although Patrick's diocesan see at Dublin was still essentially an Anglo-Norse city, he does not seem to have used this text. Instead, there are indications that his source may have been an Old Irish text and his *De mirabilibus* an attempt to translate this into Latin verse. Included in the miscellaneous contents of the Book of Ballymote, which was compiled c. 1400 in Connacht, is an Irish version of the "Wonders of Ireland", of which 34 are listed.

Monaincha, which is listed thirty-first, is described in Todd's translation:¹¹

The island of Loch Cre, in the territory of Eile. No female bird, or female animal, whether beast or man, dare enter upon it. And no sinner can die on it, and no power can bury him on it.

None of the three witnesses to the *mirabilia* are identical; they all contain material differing from the others. Giraldus himself gives us no indication as to his sources for this chapter, stating only that he had not relied on any written material.¹²

What becomes obvious, however, is that he seems to have misunderstood his source in regard to Monaincha. Both the Irish version and Bishop Patrick's rendering stress that no sinner can die or be buried on the island, suggesting that those who had come on pilgrimage and completed their penance were not sinners any more and could thus theoretically live and die on the island. Although none of the witnesses mention the pilgrimage to Monaincha, which at Münchhausen's time was still so greatly thought of, we can assume that the description of Monaincha actually reflects the practice of pilgrimage. Giraldus's description on the other hand may have derived from a more general interpretation of the name *Inis na mbeo* or *Insula viventium*.

The pilgrimage

There are no early records of pilgrimages to Monaincha, just as there are very few to other sites in Ireland. References in the annals to Irish pilgrimages have been collected by Harbison,¹³ but these can be misleading. They mainly record the death of a well-known person at a certain monastery "in his pilgrimage", meaning that he had retreated there before his death. Thus, the death of Maelpadraig Ua Drugain, chief lector of Ardmacha, who died on his pilgrimage at the island of Loch Cre, is mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters for the year 1138.



Monaincha as it is today. (Photo: copyright Frank Burgess).

References to organised pilgrimages, late and rare as they are, can be gleaned from other sources. We can assume that fair-days, held on the feast-day of the local saint, were the culmination of pilgrimages there. As Monaincha could not lay claim to a founder saint as such, other days may have been chosen for pilgrimages. A Papal decree of c. 1607 mentions St Michael's Day and Palm Sunday as the days on which indulgences could be gained in Monaincha.

Other contemporary documents testify to the popularity of the pilgrimage and also to the often ensuing abuses.¹⁴ It may be that Monaincha had already established itself long before this as one of the "four main pilgrimage sites" in Ireland, a claim which was put forward in one of the Irish Lives of St Kevin of Glendalough. These are, apart from Glendalough in Leinster, St. Patrick's Purgatory in Ulster, Croagh Patrick in Connacht and *Inis na mBeo* in Munster, thus naming one main site for every province.¹⁵

Münchhausen assured us that at his time the pilgrimage to Monaincha was considered to be the holiest in Ireland. Unfortunately, he cannot have benefited very much from his experience. On leaving the island, for instance, he prayed to God and asked his forgiveness for having joined in superstitious rituals.

His disenchantment was not only confined to Monaincha; his general remarks about Ireland were less than flattering. While many of his comments were based on the opinions already expressed by Giraldus Cambrensis four centuries before, he added his own observations in confirmation of them. Had his journey taken place in summer rather than during February/March and Lent, he might have warmed more to the country. However, although he appears to have been in a hurry leaving, his account is still of great interest in that it provides us with a glimpse of an outsider's view of Ireland at a time just prior to the break-up of the Gaelic order.

Münchhausen's diary – a translation

f 285 On the morning of February 21 we saw Ireland; we cruised by it for some time (*f 286*) on the right hand side until we came to a white tower. There we sailed into the river and, as we met with a favourable tide, we arrived at Waterford shortly after midday. I am not certain, but I think that the distance between Bristol and Waterford is about 220 English miles. The cost for the passage was 5 Shillings.

In Waterford I stayed with a German woman from Cologne. Here, as in the rest of the town, no shields or weapons were hanging out.

22 February in Waterford, I enquired about Ireland, her cities and wondrous places.

Waterford is situated in a good location, as it has a good river (the city lies ten miles from the sea) which allows large ships to sail into town. If the country were rich enough (as other countries are), this could be a noble merchant city. Even now ships are leaving for Spain and France carrying fish, mostly herring, caught widely here and cow hides which are the mainstay and asset of the country. In return, the ships bring wine, iron and other items. (The harbours are easily navigable and do not need experienced pilots.) Waterford is the noblest of all merchant cities in Ireland, it is here that the richest merchants live. If a merchant or other gentleman owns one thousand pounds, which rarely happens in Ireland, he is considered to be an immensely rich man. The houses at Waterford, as in the other Irish cities, even though they are built in stone, are common rustic buildings.

Cities in Ireland, Waterford included, are surrounded by walls. Here, as in other Irish towns, there had been monasteries which are now destroyed to a large degree. The churches now

belong to the reformed religion, but the people surprisingly still (*f* 287) cling to the popish religion into which they are born. The mind of the people as they themselves are very much given to superstition. Lent, which was just taking place, is here, and also in England, observed by not eating meat.

The island of Ireland is actually a wonderful and good country. It has all kinds of meat, fish and birds, not merely enough for its needs, but also for admiration and abundance. In Ireland there are falcons and eagles, but Giraldus Cambrensis errs, because it also has partridges, pheasants and goats. Ireland abounds in salmon and other fish, just as in venison, various ducks and different birds, also otters and martens.

The Irish oysters contain pearls, some of which I saw and bought for little money. However, they are not very clear and not of good quality.

The country is very fertile, and even though there are hills, mountains and valleys everywhere, there are also some fine plains. It is a great pity that such beautiful countryside should lie unused, covered by wild grass and shrubs. Most of the land stays uncultivated; because of the laziness and ignorance of the people there is neither plowing nor sowing. Compared to other countries Ireland is a very poor country, yet it is also known that mining is possible; it is not undertaken because of the natives are lazy and inflexible. Possibly they don't want to know or else they fear that the English crown would grudge them their wealth, because, even though they are poor, they are very much inclined towards rebellion.

The country's wealth consists of cattle, i.e. cows and sheep and what derives from them, such as calves, milk, butter, etc., which can be got anywhere.

(*f* 288) Ireland, though very hostile towards the English, is subject to the crown of England and is governed by its law and order. Yet the queen of England has yearly more expenses than income from it. The churches, where services are conducted in English, are of the reformed religion. The country people, however, do not take part in these, but rather adhere to their superstitious popish beliefs.

The country consists of many mountains and valleys, but also of bogs and is very wet under the feet. During winter, it is not very cold, nor is it hot in summer. It is coldest during February and March, but the cold is not as severe as in England or even less as in Germany.

The people are dirty, uncouth and lazy. They have brains enough for roguery, but are ignorant of arts and the more subtle craftsmanship. They delight in idleness, they are no good for work; rather than cultivate their fields they stay at home and rest around their fires, barely dressed. I myself have seen how seven people have dragged at one piece of timber without hardly moving it. I would have been well able to move it on my own.

I have seen them digging their fields, covered in their Irish blankets as protection against the cold wind. Although the fields are not tilled with the same effort as at home, they still produce plenty of corn. What a splendid country this could be if the people that live in other places were living here! (*f* 289) They do not need to make hay as they leave the cattle out in summer and winter. They burn the straw, although there is more than enough timber. Their clothing and food is filthy, the butter full of dirt and hair, as they never strain it. The farmers' jugs and other implements are never cleaned and are full of grime. They wear their shirts and other linen for more than a quarter of the year before they wash them. The Irish women carry ample linen cloths around their heads, they would be very pretty if they were clean and dressed differently. The men in the country don't wear hats. Boys can run like horses all day long. Two things I encountered in the Irish country houses: a pretty maid and also a pretty wind, sometimes also a nice horse.

The Irish love each other dearly, but hate foreigners. They divorce their wives easily. Often women have to give birth alone and then have to walk for miles afterwards. (*f* 290)

2 March: At Waterford I hired an interpreter, a guide and also a boy to carry our luggage and took the boat as far as *Carroa* [Carrick-on-Suir], 12 Irish miles. Note that the Irish mile is somewhat bigger than the English.

Carrick belongs to the Duke of Ormond who owns large amounts of land around here. He has a house here and in Kilkenny, both are considered beautiful castles by the people.

3 March: on foot through *Fidden*, ten Irish miles. Then stayed the night at *Fraglach*, six Irish miles.

4 March: heading north, 13 Irish miles. We spent the night in the house of an Irish nobleman or squire. Their houses are built usually in the form of a tower surrounded by a wall. Yet they do not live in those but keep them as a fortress. Nearby they keep a house, badly built unlike our farm-houses, where they light a fire in the middle. Right on top is seated the man of the house with his wife, around them the servants according to their rank. After dinner, everyone looks for a bale of straw to sleep on. Every nobleman is obliged to host and supply with food and drink everybody; otherwise they will burn his dwelling and all he possesses in return. In Ireland everybody is considered a nobleman if he has enough cattle and land to live on, money they don't possess at all. I have wondered about their boorishness and coarseness; the nobleman in the house had taken off his pants and socks, stood against the fire and lifted his shirt and everybody could see his behind. (f 291)

At meal-time, they threw a rough, dirty plank across the table, and some herring, bread, a handful of leeks and some salt (which looked as if it was coarse gravel) were put on it. Through my interpreter they asked me many foolish questions during the meal. Then we all drank from a mug. At the end everybody was given water to wash his feet, this seems to be a courtesy in this country. When it was time to sleep, a blanket was thrown over some straw, the host and his wife lay down first, then myself and my guide together with the others and covered ourselves with our coats. This is the treatment by an Irish nobleman.

For riding their horses they use neither stirrup, nor boot nor spurs, but are dressed in a mail-coat, with a shield over their arm and a long spike (similar to the spear of our soldiers) in front of their saddle. Their servant runs some ten or twenty paces behind. The servants wear helmets and carry a broad sword at their sides; their body otherwise remains bare.

5 March: another four miles northwards to the island which was the purpose of this trip. It is called by the Irish *Lan nimneó*, that means *Insula viventium* (Island of the Living). The prior lives half a mile from the island; some old brothers are living nearby. An old hermit, lying in bed, was administering absolution to those who wanted to visit the island. Through my interpreter I asked him whether everything I had heard about this Island of Life was true (although I had little doubts or else I would not have undertaken the journey). (f 292) Thus I wanted to know (in order to be prepared for the sceptics elsewhere) how one could be sure that nobody is able to die on the island. The old man gave me to understand that he himself had been living there for 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 (thus he counted the years one by one) 70, 80, 90, 100 and more years, without being able to die. Likewise, none of his brethren was able to die and when they were tired of life, they, just as he did himself, did not go there anymore so that they could die. I left the hermit and was glad that the prior of this place was absent, and I could escape from having to take part in confessions and other superstitious acts.

Then two friars brought my companions and me across in a small old boat. When arriving at the Island of the Living, it is the custom of the pilgrims to take off their shoes and socks and do eight times the rounds of the island. It was obvious that not many had done this lately. It was not easy to go around the island in bare feet, and, after I had done one round at my own pace in order to explore the place, I lay down under the tree and let the others complete their

devotions. That involved eight times around the church, afterwards they crawled on their knees to the altar of the small chapel and then of the big church. *f* 293 Whoever, after all this, was able to embrace the stone cross with his back to it (actually an easy task), was without sin and his penance was over. Whoever was not able to do it, had not done penance enough. My companion, who was old and crooked, was not able to bring his arms around the cross and was therefore obliged to do more penance. However, as I was tired of it all and although he belonged to the popish belief, I helped him to stretch around his arms and in this adventurous way he was relieved of all his sins.

After contributing to the collection (this they actually take, although there is usually not much money in circulation in wild Ireland), and receiving the blessing of the old hermit, everybody is free to go his own way. *f* 293 The Irish think a lot about this island, *Lanimmeo*, and believe that there is no pilgrimage holier than this one. This was confirmed to me by my interpreter who had personally heard from a man who had murdered and robbed. He had been desperate, half mad and ready to go into the wilderness until somebody advised him to go to the island. From then on he had a clean conscience, knowing that God had forgiven his sins. People are also convinced that nobody could die or ever had died on the island.

Also, women could not enter the island and they showed me a stone into which a woman had been turned who disobeyed the law. When she attempted to take the boat to the island, she drowned and was turned into the stone they were able to show to me. When I pretended to these Irish people that my devotion had brought me all the way from Germany to this island, they bestowed great honour on me and kissed my hands and body. Instead of probably robbing me, they accompanied me for a couple of miles and showed me the way. They did not know where Germany was, only having heard of Spain, England, Flanders and France, so I could tell them that the journey home would take me more than a year. Some of them wondered what great sin I had committed to have travelled such a distance, while others thought me to be a holy man in any case. One of them, to whom I had pretended that I had committed incest with my sister, told me that even if I had slept with the Holy Virgin, all my sins would now be forgiven.

The island is surrounded for about ten miles by bog and only a few passable ways lead to it. It is very small, apart from wild trees, it possesses a church and a chapel, both of them ruined and roofless. The surrounding water is not very wide, mainly swampy and home to ducks and swans. In the water there is a stone, roughly an elbow high, which they claim to be the inobedient woman.

They claim that the wood from the island protects against poisonous animals. Though there are no venomous animals in Ireland, if you draw a circle around you with a piece of this wood anywhere else, no poisonous animal is able to enter it.

Sylvester Cyraldus [*sic*] Cambrensis, whose words are quoted by Ortelius in his *Theatrum*, is wrong when he states: "There is a lake in northern Munster, which contains two islands: one big one and a smaller one. The bigger island has a church, the smaller a chapel" etc. *f* 295. There are not two islands, but only one, although there are many pieces of bog and tufts of earth nearby. I do not believe that nobody can die on the island. However, it is quite plausible that nobody died on it since there is nobody living on it. It can be believed or not that a hermit who had lived there to an old age, until he did not want to live any more, left the island voluntarily and then died.

Giraldus mentions two islands while there is only one; therefore I do not know which one he means when he claims that no animal of the female sex can live on it. However, if he means the one with the church on in, and so the locals seem to think, I do not believe him. For I have seen with my own eyes a pair of wild pigeons in the church, the walls of which were also covered with a quite astonishing amount of birds' excrement. I would have liked to make an experiment

with the female sheep or dog mentioned by Giraldus. Indeed, there happened to be a ship full of negroes in Ireland, which had been intercepted at sea, at this time. I was willing to buy one of the negresses and bring her to the island in man's clothes, but my guide and interpreter would not allow it for fear of the danger we might draw on ourselves. We had enough to do to get through this superstitious crowd.

I prayed to God to thank him and also to ask his forgiveness for having, as much as my conscience allowed me, joined into their superstitious behaviour. For some reason we returned by some other vicious swampy way, another six Irish miles. We stayed overnight with some nobleman.

When I travelled to Ireland I had intended also to visit St Patrick's Purgatory, but since the way was long and arduous, and since I had seen the futility of the island Lanineo, I changed my mind. *f 296*

March 6: I travelled thirteen Irish miles south and spent the night in a poor farmhouse.

7 March: Kilkenny, three Irish miles. I rested here today and also on March 8th.

While I was in Kilkenny, a villain had been sentenced to death and all the women were running through the streets crying and shouting. They clapped their hands and made such pitiful noises that the whole town was full of their commotion. I wondered what it was all about since it seemed to me that it could not have been any worse if the whole of the country had been betrayed. It seems to be their custom to mourn their dead by this crying without actually shedding any tears and by shouting: "Dil, dil, dil, dil - Ho, ho, ho!"

It was the day the court was sitting at Kilkenny, as it does in all parts of Ireland four or more times a year. Justice is administered strictly in Ireland, since the people are naturally inclined to be wild and devious.

9 March: from Kilkenny through *Leistin* [Leinster], ten Irish miles and then a further ride of fourteen Irish miles.

10 March: another twenty-four miles to Dublin. I had to pay the servant, who ran with the horse and also brought it back again, sixteen pence per day, not including the fodder.

In Dublin I stayed for the sake of speaking German with Peter von Heren, a shoemaker from Brügge.

Dublin is the capital of Ireland. Some three miles from it is the sea, but only small ships can sail up as far as the city.

This is the most beautiful and (*f 297*) noble of all places in Ireland. For a beginning, the city is surrounded by fertile fields and not mountains as most of the other places in Ireland. Also, the people here are less boorish and uncivilized since this part of the country has been given to the English by the Queen of England. Little Irish is spoken; there are even some people here who cannot speak Irish at all. The houses, too, are built more graceful than in other parts of the country. All commodities needed by the people for their needs and pleasures are available here. In the castle of Dublin they keep the whole of Ireland's ammunition and what else belongs to it. It is the residence of the Governor, whom they call *Melord* [My lord] Debitt, in summer he sometimes lives in a castle, some half a mile from the city. His office lasts for the year and the Queen is entitled to shorten or prolong it according to her wishes. There are also a chancellor and twelve councillors. Here in Dublin, the legal calendar is the same as in England, because the whole country is bound to English law. (*f 298*)

20 March, a Saturday: I took the boat at Dublin, but since I did not possess an English passport, I had to steal myself out of the country. After I booked a large cabin in one of the bigger ships, I let those who usually come to inspect pass by, and then let myself be brought out on a smaller boat to my ship. And thus I left Ireland.

FOOTNOTES

1. I would like to extend my thanks to Dr Andreas von Breitenbuch, a direct descendant of Münchhausen, for making a transcript and translation of the original text available to me, and also to Mr Pat Nolan, Kilkenny for forwarding the text to the editor.
- 1A. It has been suggested that Fidden is Fiddown, which would be on or close to the route taken in 1591. – Editor, *THJ*.
2. Abraham Ortelius (1584), *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. Opus nunc tertio ab ipso Auctore recognitum...* (Antwerp).
3. Gleeson (1962), pp. 52-60; Heist (1995), p. 196. The Life of Cronan does not mention the island, but only the lake and in its vicinity, the church of *Sean Ros*, seemingly the predecessor of the monastery at Roscrea, Heist (1985), pp. 277, 279. According to his Life, St. Molua spent some time on the island, Heist (1985), p. 144. All three Lives are contained in the *Codex Salmanticensis*.
4. A. Gwynn in D. Gleeson (1962), pp. 40-3, 54-6.
5. A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock (1970), pp. 41, 187-8; P. Harbison (1991), pp. 131-3; D. Gleeson (1962), pp. 57-60.
6. E. Ledwich (1804), p. 114; see also P. Harbison (1991), p. 131.
7. J. F. Dimock (1867), *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera Vol. V*, London, Rolls Series, pp. 3-201; cf. the English translation by J. J. O'Meara (1982), *Gerald of Wales: The History and Topography of Ireland*.
8. I quote chapter 37 from the translation by O'Meara (1982), p. 60.
9. A. Gwynn in D. Gleeson (1965), pp. 59-60 draws attention to the references to Monaincha in papal taxation documents, which first refer to a *prior de insula* in 1306-7.
10. A. Gwynn (1955), p. 67; for the discussion of other text witnesses and Bishop Patrick's possible sources, see pp. 126-131.
11. J. H. Todd (1848), pp. 216-7. Todd prints the *Mirabilia* as an appendix to his edition of the Irish Version of the *Historia Britonum* of Nennius. The extract from the Book of Ballymote can be found on f.140b of Royal Irish Academy MS 23, p. 12.
12. J. F. Dimock (1867), pp. 8-9. In the preceding chapter 1 he refers in his description of Ireland on classical writers before him, in the third he intends to use the Irish chronicles. It may be of interest to note that Gwynn draws attention to the fact that the Norse version seems to be relying on an oral Old Irish source, A. Gwynn (1955), p. 129.
13. P. Harbison, 1991, pp. 51-4.
14. P. Harbison, 1991, p. 53.
15. Ch. Plummer, 1968, Vol. I, p. 161; Vol. II, p. 156. There is no mention of these in the (earlier) Latin Lives of St Kevin.

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