

NORTH MAYO HISTORICAL JOURNAL

Vol. II, No. 3, 1989-90

MIGRATION FROM ULSTER TO COUNTY MAYO IN 1795- '96

By Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich.

(We are privileged and delighted to be enabled to publish the full text of a lecture delivered at Castlebar earlier this year by His Eminence, Cardinal O'Fiaich, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.)

"To hell or to Connacht" is a phrase usually associated in Irish tradition with Oliver Cromwell, but in the part of Ireland where I come from, it was used not so much in the mid-17th century as at the end of the 18th century. This article discusses the migration of some thousands of people from central Ulster to Connacht, most of them to the County Mayo area, during the second half of the 1790s and especially in 1796. We shall attempt to do four things:

- (1) Examine the background to their expulsion from the North;
- (2) Try to discover where they settled down hereabouts and how they were received;
- (3) Take a look at the various family names which figure on the lists of migrants, and
- (4) Consider what impact they had on the area in which they made their new homes.

(1) Background

Sectarian troubles did not begin in the North of Ireland at the end of the 18th century -- and unfortunately they didn't end at that time -- but the 1780s and 1790s brought them to a new pitch of ferocity which had never been equalled before and which has only rarely been equalled since. Paradoxically enough the easing of the Penal Laws in the 1780s brought competition between Catholics and Protestants for land and also an influx of linen weavers from North Connacht and great economic rivalry between Catholic and Protestant handweavers. In this atmosphere there developed the banding together, from the mid-1780s on, of some Protestants and some Catholics in separate violent groups, the Protestants in a society called the Peep o' Day boys and the Catholics in one known as the Defenders. The first group of Peep o' Day boys is found in the townland of Edenknappagh about three miles south-east of Armagh in 1785 and the first group of Defenders in Granemore five miles south of Armagh in 1786. The "Peep o' Day Boys" or "Break o' Day Boys" were so called because of their raids on Catholic homes at daybreak, ostensibly for arms (Catholics were now being allowed into some volunteer corps), but often bringing destruction of property as well. The Defenders were originally formed by Catholic men to protect their homes against these nightly raids but as they grew in strength they became more aggressive and ultimately went on the offensive. Isolated incidents between the two sides in County Armagh occurred from time to time during the late 1780s and early 1790s at fairs and markets, race meetings, public houses and wherever they met.

However, what really brought matters to a head and provoked a full-scale confrontation was an anti-papal sermon preached in the Protestant Church of Portadown by the Rector, Rev. George Maunsell, on 12th July, 1795. Some of the congregation decided to chastise the Papists on their way home and they wrecked a number of Catholic houses and gave some Catholics such a severe beating that two who had been innocently cutting turf on a nearby bog died as a result. Instead of cowing the Defenders this made them more aggressive and from July, 1795, they attacked many Protestant houses. Throughout August and September, constant attacks between the two sides took place and the local magistrates did scarcely anything to put the trouble down. The Defenders were very strongly condemned in a Pastoral Letter of Archbishop Troy of Dublin in August, 1795.

The climax came in September, 1795. On Friday, 18th September, the Defenders of Annaghmore, not far from Portadown, were attacked and routed by Peep o' Day Boys. The victors then began the systematic destruction of all Catholic houses in the area. Many were set on fire, all had their furniture and especially the weaving loom -- the source of their livelihood -- smashed, any valuables found were taken away.

A local magistrate hastily summoned a peace conference of four of the local Protestant gentry and three Catholic priests and the priests succeeded in persuading most of the Catholics to disperse. Thinking that their work was now completed the priests returned home also. But the Catholics had already sent for reinforcements from further afield, and fresh groups of Defenders, about 300 in all, arrived from Keady and Whitecross in South

Armagh (under a Captain McGarry, who was killed), and mainly from Ballygawley in South Tyrone on Sunday. They refused to be bound to the terms of the truce and insisted on attacking the Peep o' Day Boys (who were somewhat less in numbers), under the Wilsons of Dyan.

On Monday, 21st September, 1795, the "Battle of the Diamond" was fought. The fight took place at the Crossroads of the Diamond near Loughgall. The Protestants were well armed with muskets belonging to the Volunteers, who had been officially disbanded two years before, but many of whom had held on to their arms, while many of the Defenders had not firearms but were dependent on pikes and an assortment of farm implements.

A contemporary ballad put it thus:

"Munster and Connacht's barbarous sons
Came armed with swords and
rusty guns, Half-pikes and daggers
drove in sticks, And many curious little
tricks."

The result, was, therefore, a foregone conclusion -- the Catholics were routed and left several dead on the battlefield. The smallest number of Catholic losses given by a contemporary writer is seventeen dead, two locals who were eyewitnesses place it at thirty dead and two slightly later writers place it as high as forty-eight, but this may include also those who died later from their wounds. All agree that not a single Peep o' Day Boy lost his life.

This glorified faction fight which has gone down in history as the Battle of the Diamond, was not without some influence on the whole course of Irish history:

Firstly, it marked the birth of the Orange Order. On the evening of the battle the victors assembled in James Sloan's public house in Loughgall, and decided to set up a permanent organisation on the lines of Freemasonry with passwords, lodges and so on to band themselves together. There had been a few isolated groups of this kind in the years before the Battle of the Diamond and even one over here in County Sligo as early as 1793 -- but it was only in 1795 that they were put on a united and permanent basis.

Secondly, it marked the beginning of a large-scale Influx of Catholics into the United Irishmen. This society had been largely Protestant since its foundation in 1791; now after the Battle of the Diamond the Defenders began to throng into it.

Hence the 1796 Ballad I've quoted has these lines: "There's men that are honest in every religion, Let's all be united, we never can fail. Religious dissensions will never prevail."

William MacNevin, probably the most notable Catholic from Connacht in the United Irishmen, wrote later: "To the Armagh persecution is the union of Irishmen most exceedingly indebted. The persons and properties of the wretched Catholics of that county were exposed to merciless attacks, and the courts of justice shut against them by

parliamentary barriers, they began to think they had no refuge but in joining the Union... increased by finding the Presbyterians of Belfast espouse their cause."

Thirdly: After the Battle of the Diamond, a sustained effort was made to drive the Catholics from that part of Ireland, and the movement spread from County Armagh into the adjoining counties as well. The cabins of the Catholics were placarded or, as it was termed at the time, papered or noticed with the words To Hell or Connaught and if the occupants did not abandon them at once, they were attacked at night by an armed mob. The "wreckers",- as the attackers came to be known in the long memory of the Catholics, met with scarcely any resistance. Twelve or fourteen houses were sometimes wrecked in a single night. Several Catholic chapels and Mass-houses were burned and the wrecking spread from County Armagh into the neighbouring areas of Tyrone and Down and even as far as County Derry. Henry Grattan in the Debate on the Insurrection Bill in February, 1796, refers to the Noticing of Catholic property as going one better than the traditional Cromwellian order: and he quotes one of the Notices --

"Go to Hell, Connaught will not receive you -- fire and faggot." Signed: Will Tresham and John Thrustout.

At the end of 1795 -- after the wrecking had gone on for three months, the Earl of Gosford, Governor of County Armagh, and the magistrates of the County met to consider the lawless state of their area. Apart from one individual they were all Protestants and three of them were clergymen of the Established Church who later became Bishops of the Church of Ireland. Lord Gosford's speech on this occasion provides a clear picture of what was going on:

"It is no secret that a persecution accompanied with all the circumstances of ferocious cruelty which have in all ages distinguished that dreadful calamity, is now raging in this county. Neither age nor sex nor even acknowledged innocence as to the late disturbances is sufficient to excite mercy, much less afford protection. The only crime which the wretched objects of this merciless persecution are charged with is a crime of easy proof. It is simply a profession of the Roman Catholic faith. A lawless banditti have constituted themselves judges of this new species of delinquency, and the sentence they have pronounced is equally concise and terrible: it is nothing less than a confiscation of all property and immediate banishment. where have we heard or in what history of human cruelties have we read of more than half the inhabitants of a populous country deprived at one blow of the means, as well as of the fruits of their industry and driven in the midst of an inclement winter to seek a shelter for themselves and their helpless families where chance may guide them? This is no exaggerated picture of the horrid scenes now acting in this county."

Another Northern peer, who was very annoyed by the expulsions, was Lord Moira. When he returned to his seat in County Down in October, 1796, he discovered that 91 persons "were obliged to fly from the persecution which has raged with unrelenting fury in this neighbourhood since September, 1795" -- he forwarded a list of the names to Dublin Castle, drawn up by Fr. Kelly, P.P. of Tullylish, and endorsed by Rev. Charles Hamilton, Vicar of Tullylish (Gilford). A considerable number of the names on Lord Moira's list, as expelled from Tullylish, appear on James Cuffe's list as settling down in Ballina and Foxford.

It is true, of course, that some of the victims were granted compensation for their losses. At the Armagh Spring Assizes of 1796, 150 persons were awarded damages for losses incurred and slightly over £2,000 was paid to them. But this was only a small fraction of those who had suffered so far and the expulsions continued during a great part of 1796. From County Armagh the wrecking had spread into County Down. A magistrate of that County wrote in June, 1796:

"The wreckers are again at work. Last night they wrecked and destroyed eight houses. These fellows disgrace the revered name of Orange by taking it to themselves. My list of houses burned or wrecked in this County since the Assizes amounts to 58."

As might be expected there were widely different estimates of the number who suffered. Some reports claimed that about 7,000 persons were driven out of County Armagh alone. John Philpot Curran raised the matter in the Irish House of Commons and mentioned 1,400 families. A number of local gentry on the other hand tried to play down the number of those expelled and one of them put the figure as low as 200 families or 1,000 individuals. This was certainly too low. As we'll see later the documents on the number of refugees who arrived in County Mayo alone suggest that at least 4/5,000 were expelled from the North.

(II) Where Did They Settle? And How Received?

While a number of refugees made their way to Scotland or to the United States, the vast majority of those who remained in Ireland headed west. The *Freeman's Journal* on 13th May, 1796, reported: "Very considerable progress is made in the plan for forming a settlement at Connemara in the County of Galway for the fugitive Roman Catholic inhabitants who have been obliged to submit to expulsion from the North of Ireland." The new colony was in fact on the estate of the Martins of Ballinahinch Castle, and the *Dublin Evening Post* on the 27th August, 1796, reported that: "A single gentleman (Col. Martin of the County of Galway), has given asylum to more than 1,000 souls on his own estate, all peaceable, inoffensive and living by the labour of their hands. This is the

enormity which the religious and civil magistrates of Armagh wink at on the score of conscience."

Also in County Galway, local tradition records that a Catholic landowner in East Galway, Thomas Burke of Marblehill, hospitably received a number of the northern refugees; and their descendants still reside around there in the parishes of Woodford and Ballinakill -- locally known as the Oultachs -- McCabes, McEneaneys, Maguires, McBrides and O'Donnells. A similar tradition persists in Connemara about Oultachs who settled in Roundstone and the townland of Errisbeg -- Boltons and McCullaghs and Shiels -- whose ancestors are said to have crossed Lough Conn by curragh. Other Northern names in Roundstone are Grimes, Morrow, Dundass, Lavery and McCahill. There is still a townland called Coogla (Cuige Uladh) and the northerners are known as Na hUltaigh. The original McCulla was a nai|or and the other six original Ultaigh were all weavers. There are also groups known as Na hUltaigh in County Tipperary and County Limerick.

But among the western counties, County Mayo received the lion's share of the northern refugees. Why? One could think of various factors. Lord Altamont of Westport, who could certainly not be accused of any sympathy with the Catholic cause, wrote in July, 1796:

"The emigration from the Northern counties to these parts still continues and I consider it the more alarming because the extent of it does not seem to be understood nor the causes to have been sufficiently investigated by the Government. All the unhappy sufferers that I have seen have been in various ways deprived of the principal part of their subsistence; and though, from the cheapness of provisions here, they have been able to hold out in tolerable comfort hitherto, with the little means they brought with them, these must soon be exhausted. An idea has gone abroad that the persecutions in the North have been fomented by Government, and however diabolical and absurd such a measure would be for any purpose of politics, it has gained belief and has disaffected a great body of the Catholics of every rank throughout the Kingdom."

On 19th June, 1796, Lord Altamont's brother, Denis Browne, reported to Dublin Castle that he had already submitted a petition on behalf of 400 immigrants; and now another 390 families, i.e. between 1,500 and 2,000 people, more had arrived.

On 5th November, 1796, Denis Browne, commented in a further letter:

"I have the honour of enclosing the names of the immigrants from the North of Ireland now resident on Lord Altamont's estate and in the neighbourhood of Castlebar... The emigration from the North continues; every day families arrive here with the wreck of their properties."

He enclosed a list of 950 people who had settled in the neighbourhood of Castlebar, adding significantly: "That is short of the numbers about here." Unfortunately that list

hasn't yet turned up. In all Denis Browne forwarded five surviving lists containing 1,074 names in all. Over 500 were from County Tyrone and 100 from County Armagh.

At the end of the same month, when the exodus had now been proceeding unchecked for over a year, Lord Altamont wrote:

"I am assured and I have no reason to doubt the truth of it, that near 4,000 of those unhappy fugitives have sought shelter in the County of Mayo and a number that I cannot take on me to compute, in other parts of the province of Connaught."

(Some of those heading for Mayo in fact settled down in Leitrim and Sligo -- for instance, Wood-Martin's *History of County Sligo* mentions many settlers in that county).

Lord Altamont not only received the refugees hospitably but was prepared to put up a generous sum of money to provide houses for them. One hundred and one petitioners in the Westport area signed an appeal to Lord Lieutenant Camden on 27th June, 1796.

"The most humble petition of the underwritten and undermentioned emigrants from the North of Ireland on their own behalf and that of several hundred others:

"... they have been forced to fly from their respective holdings and habitations in the Counties of Armagh, Tyrone and Londonderry, in consequence of a persecution carried against them on account of their religion, being of the Roman Catholic persuasion... Your petitioners have since their arrival been severally employed procuring and erecting temporary huts for themselves and families. Your petitioners therefore look forward to the approach of winter with great uneasiness and anxiety, having no fixed residence nor houses to protect themselves and families from the inclemency of the weather... They pray Your Excellency will be graciously pleased to extend to them immediate relief and assistance."

Lord Altamont sent a very generous covering letter on the same date (27th June, 1796), in which he offered to pay £1,000, provided £2,000 were added from public funds, towards building houses "for those unhappy sufferers who have been obliged to fly from their own homes and have taken refuge on my estate -- houses to rent -- free for ever." We don't know what the Government response was.

Most of the Connaught gentry at first had an attitude of benign willingness to help, linked with a certain nervousness about the great numbers of these Northerners and some doubts as to what way they would jump in case of a French Invasion. But before the end of 1796, which was to see a French fleet at Bantry Bay, Denis Browne was convinced that the Ulstermen were very anti-government and were making Connaught anti-government as well. By November, 1796, he was writing to Dublin Castle... "No circumstance that has happened in Ireland for a hundred years past has gone so

decidedly to separate the mind of this country from the Government as this unfortunate and untimely business."

A ballad of 1796, now in the S.P.O., Dublin, bore out this view that some of the Northern migrants were heading towards rebellion:

A lamentable story dear people I'll tell you,
That happened in Armagh this very last year,
The landlords combined, with others they joined,
To plunder and rob us of all we held dear.
For as we were Catholics they vowed to oppress us,
Because at elections we had not a vote,
But by St. Patrick, as we can't get justice,
Before a year passes we'll alter their note.

For those refugees who settled in North Mayo around Ballina and Crossmolina, we have very interesting information together with long lists of names contained in a letter written by Captain James Cuffe, of Deel Castle, Crossmolina, on 22nd December, 1796:

"I have the honour to send you the names of the Northerners now living at Ballina, Crossmolina and Foxford in the County of Mayo. These people are all of the Roman Catholic religion and almost all of them are from County Armagh and are weavers. There are some of them who are carmen and earn their bread by a horse and the Irish car which they hire out at so much a day; some few shoemakers there are among them and there are three or four carpenters. I went myself to Ballina and examined the people resident there very closely. I found them all decent, well-behaved men and much more intelligent than the natives of the place. They all produced certificates of their good conduct from the gentlemen of the country they came from. Three or four of them had been plundered and as many more had been noticed. The others honestly owned to me that they had not been injured or persecuted but had left their country of their own free will. As far as I can judge from what they told me, the cause of their emigration. ..that the Peep o' Day boys (with whom they under the name of Defenders, had been in a constant state of warfare for about thirty years), have lately become too powerful for them and they, therefore, thought they would be happier in any other country. Many of them owned to me candidly that they had been in fault at the beginning... They all declared that they had never taken the Defender's Oath or that of the United Irishmen and to a man they offered to take the Oath of Allegiance."

(III) Family Names

Of those who travelled from the North to County Mayo many names have been brought to light through the researches of two men -- Patrick Tohall and Patrick Hogan -- whose results have been published in *Seanchas Ardmhacha 1958 & 1979*. So far 8 lists have turned up, i.e. the 1,074 names on Denis Browne's five lists, Lord Altamont's list with 116 names (including the 101 petitioners above), and James Cuffe's two lists with 59 and 108 names, i.e. a total of 1,357, of whom only a few didn't come from Ulster.

It may be interesting for County Mayo readers to learn more of the names the immigrants bore, as the descendants of some of them are probably still to be found hereabouts.

The vast majority of those who settled down in the Castlebar area came from North County Armagh and East Tyrone. They included five McDonnell families with 31 members in all, John McKan, Pt. McKeon with five in the household, Michael McMahan with two, John McKeal with ten in the household (perhaps one of the Connacht weavers who had moved into County Armagh in the previous generation), six Grahams from Armagh city, five Donohues from the parish of Kilmore between Armagh and Portadown, families of Kenny, Mitchell and McLoughlin from the same parish, Bernard Daly and children from Tartaraghan in the parish of Loughgall.

From East Tyrone in the diocese of Armagh, Castlebar received five Brannigans, five Berrans, eleven Henrys, thirteen Mulligans, four O'Neills -- all from the parish of Ardboe, along the West shore of Lough Neagh; families of Donoghue, Harte, Mahon and Mallon from the parish of Derryloran (i.e. Cookstown); eight McKennies and six Corrs from Clonoe, Francis Donnelly from Pomeroy and a Brady family from Tullyniskin near Dungannon.

Castlebar also received eight families from the parish of Longfield near Omagh in the diocese of Derry, including a Hughes, a Mulligan and a Shannon family, three McGrath families and two Mellon families. It received nine families from the parish of Dromore in County Tyrone and diocese of Clogher, three Doherty families, two McEvas, a Donnelly family, a Hogan family, a McGuire family and Francis McUnshan with a household of nine. Nowadays he'd probably call himself Nugent. From South Derry it received John Lagan from Desertmartin and John Cudden from Ardtrea.

The long list of 101 names from Westport contains many Northern names still in Co. Mayo. Diamond (Ballina), Tunney and Muldoon (Westport), Devaney (Castlebar and elsewhere), and so on.

Those who settled in the Ballina area were nearly all from North Armagh. They included four families of Maguinness from the townland of Crossmacahilly near Lurgan, three families of Lennons and two families of Cunninghams from the townland of Drumgor,

five families of Dorans from the townland of Moyraverty (now in Craigavon), two families of Rooneys from Tamnafiglassan; McCanns, McGarveys, Burns, Morgans, Devins and McOns, all from the parish of Shankill (which is the official name of the parish in which the town of Lurgan is situated), McCrorys, O'Neills, Carrs, Coyles, McVeighs, Hanlons, Hursons and Dullaghans.

Those who settled in Crossmolina included four families of Toal or O'Toole, Quinns, McDonnells, O'Neills, Geatons, Hendricks and McDaid's; those who made Foxford their home included McGuinnesses, McConvilles, Devlins, Cunninghams, McCanns, McNeeses and Brannagans. Newport received Owen Conlon with a household of 10; Philip Doyle (3), Ed McCray (8), Hugh McGeoghan (7), Danl. McShinnador (now anglicised Skeffington, 3); Patk. Devlin (9), Arthur McGurla (5), Hugh McTague (10), Laur. Tonney, Pat Corrigan (9), Michael Garrity and Thos. Flynn, all from East and South Tyrone.

I have listed only those who settled in and around the main towns of Mayo but many refugees also settled in the towns or areas of Louisburgh, Ballaghaderreen and Ballinrobe. There is no mention of Kiltimagh as one of the centres where the Cfiig Ulas or Ultaigh settled, but it was not yet a place of importance and would probably not be listed under its own name.

(IV) Impact

A few words in conclusion about the impact the Northerners made on their new surroundings. Apart from the fact that they added some thousands to the population of Mayo they influenced the history of their new homeland in a number of ways:

(1) Influence on the Linen Industry:

They provided a colony of linen weavers in an area where linen spinning had already a strong foundation and also where flax was grown. Most of the immigrants were linen weavers, as well as small farmers or farm labourers. Among the thirty-three male adults who settled in Foxford and Crossmolina, twenty-nine were weavers. Their arrival in N.E. Mayo undoubtedly helped to strengthen linen weaving in N.E. Connacht. North Mayo was already a well-known flax growing area long before the arrival of the Ulstermen. For instance, Arthur Young in his tour of Ireland in 1776, mentions that in the barony of Tyrawley flax is universally cultivated; a man with twenty acres will have a rood which is sown with five gallons of seed. But Young also adds that while all the females spin, the number of weavers is inconsiderable. A few years later, when the Statistical Survey of Mayo was compiled about 1800 the author noticed the change and remarked: "The migration of the Northern weavers during the late troubles into this county has greatly promoted the linen manufacture. Soon Mayo had an extensive linen industry centred on Castlebar and Westport." When the Tyroneman Thomas Reid, who wrote *Travels In*

Ireland In 1822, visited Westport in that year, he found "a small linen market attended chiefly by emigrants from the County Armagh."

(2) They provided a large group of disaffected people in a county which was to rise in rebellion in two years. While Denis Browne, as early as 1796, expressed confidence that, in the event of a French landing in Ireland, the northern migrants would remain loyal to the Government because of their hatred of the French allies (the Northern Presbyterians), a certain Magistrate Lindsay of Hollymount was doubtful about the Northerners and kept a suspect, Nathaniel Waren, prisoner in Castlebar jail.

When the French forces landed on Kilcummin Strand on 22nd August, 1798, and proceeded to Ballina, Captain Kane addressed the populace in Irish and English calling on them to join Humbert. According to Richard Hayes' *Last Invasion of Ireland* "there was an immediate response, especially from the colony of Ulster weavers who had settled in Ballina a few years before. Forsaking their looms they were placed under the command of Captain Bartholomew Teeling, Humbert's aide-de-camp, and remained a separate unit during the campaign -- numbering perhaps upwards of 100. Musgrave, the Government propagandist historian, blamed the Northerners for coaxing the Connachtmen to join the French and says the Northerners relied on "prophesies". After Ballinamuck several Northern names appeared on the list of those for whose capture rewards were offered. "

Thus £50 was offered for the capture of James McGreal of Kilgeever, east of Louisburgh, known locally as Samus Rua. Some of the McGreal families have still a tradition that they came from "near Belfast" and split into three groups: (1) one remained in the Clones area where they became McGales, now very common in Omagh; (2) one stayed around Dowra in County Leitrim where they still remain and spell the name McGrail; (3) the third group came to the Westport area and are still numerous in County Mayo with spelling McGreal. A £50 reward was offered for the capture of Michael Canavan of Ballina, painter. Cuffe's, Ballina, list records a Richard Canavan who came from Ardtrea, County Derry, and the Canavans of North Mayo have a tradition of Northern ancestry. £50 was put on the head of John Hueston, chandler of Castlebar; Hueston is still a very common northern surname with four columns of them in the Northern telephone directory. £50 was put on James Toole, "late of County Armagh". Some of the Tuffy's of Mayo, have a tradition that they were originally Tuffy O'Neills, descended from four O'Neill brothers driven out from near Dungannon.

In the half Barony of Ross, County Galway, the Landlord William Bermingham attributed the reluctance of his tenants to take the Oath of Allegiance to "the vast number of people from County Armagh... who may have instilled into the minds of these people some of their own principles."

A few brief words in conclusion:

1. The Ulster Migration to Mayo and other Western Counties in 1795-'96 was on a much larger scale than is generally realised. It probably totalled at least 5,000 souls and it was, therefore, probably the greatest displacement of population within Ireland which occurred in recent centuries. In fact, when you remember that the people who were moved across the Shannon in the Cromwellian Confiscations were mainly landowners and their families and retainers and that the population of Ireland was then probably under a million, the number of Northerners who were driven west after the Battle of the Diamond was probably greater than the number displaced after Cromwell.
2. The tendency of Northern families to move west went back of course to medieval times. Some, like the McDonnells and McSweeneys, came as gallowglasses or professional soldiers hired by the Burkes. Others, like the Langans, were ecclesiastical families sent over by Armagh to look after St. Patrick's interests in the West. A lot of Donegal families moved into North Mayo -- Gallaghers, O'Donnells, O'Boyles, McBrides, Tolans, Devaneys -- because of the close proximity across the bay and the constant political and economic relations between the two parts, especially when O'Donnell was claiming suzerainty over North Connacht. Hence the existence of a Northern name in County Mayo is not of itself sufficient to prove that one's ancestor moved west in the 1790s, unless the name occurs on some of the migrant lists -- in that case, it is possible but not certain.
3. While many of the 1795-'96 names have continued in County Mayo 'til the present day, a great number of them have disappeared. All I had to go on was the telephone directory, but I was surprised to find many of the names that arrived in the 1790s- Hurson, Bannigan, Lagan, McAdam, McKenney, Cudden or McCudden, etc. -- not represented in the list of Mayo telephones. For instance, Francis Mac Unshan arrived in Castlebar with his wife and eight children. In the telephone directory, which I consulted, 164 Nugents were listed in the 26 counties but not a single one in County Mayo. Did all his male children die young or did they all emigrate or were all his children gifts? Your guess is as good as mine.
4. There is no need to stress that the events of 1795 and '96 were shameful in a Christian country. Some people might think they should not be recalled. But they contain a useful warning for us all. We can only hope and pray that such events will never happen in our country again.