



Finte na hÉireann-Clans of Ireland

Bromehill House, Kilrush, Co. Clare, Ireland V15 RT28



Patron: Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

Accredited as a Civil Society Non-Governmental Organisation by The United Nations.

21 July 2023

A chara,

It is now 333 years since the Battle of the Boyne, one of the decisive engagements in *Cogadh an Dá Rí* or the War of the Two Kings. The Roman Catholic James II and his son-in-law the Protestant William III were contesting the throne of England, Ireland and Scotland. The majority of the Irish population were Roman Catholic and consequently were inclined to support James. The Protestant minority who supported William lived, for the most part, in the counties of what we now know as Northern Ireland, having been settled there from their native Scotland and Northern England during the early years of the 17th century. In addition, during the middle of the century, Oliver Cromwell and his Parliamentarian Army had confiscated much of the property of the native Irish landowners. The motivation for supporting James was, therefore, not only born of religious sympathy but also an intention by the old Catholic dispossessed proprietors to have title to their lands restored to them.

The long-term result of this War is the two pre-eminent cultures that continue to exist on the island of Ireland today. It is no secret that the second half of the 20th century was marred by sectarianism that largely owed its origin to *Cogadh an Dá Rí*.

The culture that fascinates many of the people who are involved in the family and clan organisations that are members of Clans of Ireland predates the 17th century and, perhaps, the period when life in Ireland became more anglicised. Most of us are interested in the Medieval Period, from when reasonably verifiable history dates. However, we are also interested in the known unknowns of our earlier history, the period before Christianity, the Bronze and Iron Ages as well as the even earlier Neolithic Period.

One of the most iconic physical manifestations of the Neolithic Period is the array of chamber tombs, standing stones and enclosures that can be found around the country and, as an exemplary site, probably most marvellously at Newgrange, which is not far from the site of the Battle of the Boyne. (I should note that the Burren in Northwest Clare almost certainly has the greatest proliferation of preserved stone enclosures in Ireland, dating back through the Medieval Period to the Neolithic era and possibly earlier.)

There have been a number of suggestions over the years that Clans of Ireland would organise an excursion to this famous County Meath site and it is now being given serious consideration for the Friday of the weekend of the 2024 Cultural Summit. How and what is to be organised will depend on the level of the members' interest. Should there be adequate interest a minibus or coach will become an option, for those who do not wish to use their own transport. Can I please ask you to make your general interest known by contacting our newly elected Events Co-Ordinator, Ms Kieran O'Dowd (treasurer@clansofireland.ie), during the next two weeks, so that arrangements can be made and the visit planned in a structured format.

We have made a preliminary booking for 24 people to arrive at Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre at 11.30 a.m. on Friday April 12th, 2024. The Tour takes two hours and the initial element of the tour is the self-guided exhibition centre that involves approximately 45 minutes. We will then be transported via shuttle bus to Knowth and Newgrange, including the chamber at Newgrange, for a guided tour.

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Directors:

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Enormous numbers of people visit Brú na Bóinne so that they have had to increasingly become stricter on their protocols. We will be restricted to a minimum of fifteen and a maximum of twenty-four people. Should our interest be in excess of this we will consider make another booking, but a group in excess of twenty-four is generally not permitted for the same date. Should we have less than twenty-four, other visitors may be allowed to join our group. If we are less than fifteen, we become part of a public group. Therefore, twenty-four is the ideal, so that we will work on a first-come-first-served basis.

The theme of the 2024 Cultural Summit, "The historic building / monuments / sites associated with Ireland's clans" brings me to another project that we are becoming increasingly involved in, the Historic Sites Plaques. Members who attended the ceremony at Christ Church Cathedral in May witnessed the unveiling of the most recent Historic Sites Plaque in the Chapter House, by Dr Patrick Wallace.

Spread over the Irish countryside there are a great number of ancient lay and ecclesiastical buildings and monuments, both large and small, in various stages of neglect or maintenance that are associated with Irish clans and historical families. I would like to invite you to make submissions relating to historic sites associated with your clan or historic family. It would be a manifestation of your historic association with the geographic area from which your kindred originate. Particular consideration will be given to those historic sites associated with clans and families that are on the Clans of Ireland Register.

"Sites" include, but are not confined to fortified buildings, ecclesiastical centres, ancient private residences, inauguration sites, etc. This project is intended to provide a meaningful historical context that links physical structures to clan histories that can also provide a wider understanding to the general public of how families and clans lived during their development through the centuries. It is intended that this Clans of Ireland project will increase and preserve the known histories and associated folklore of the sites. Clans of Ireland would like to play our part in preserving our associated built heritage. Physical structures will eventually disintegrate, particularly when abandoned and it is up to us to preserve and make their history more widely accessible.

I have been asked by a number of members to address the inexcusable malicious attack on the Board and particularly the direct mischievous accusations against me in my role as *An Cathaoirleach*, specifically that my leadership of the organisation "included bullying and intimidation". You may recall that this occurred as a consequence of the Registration Committee, under the chairmanship of Michael Crowley, questioning the validity of claims that had been made by a member organisation, now a former member organisation, in relation to its origin as an Irish clan and the validity of claims by individuals of royal or noble lineage that had been made by persons associated with that organisation. This example confirms our recent more focused approach to the evaluation and authentication of historical and genealogical claims. Confirmation of authenticity is our objective as it represents the ideal identity of Clans of Ireland, while, conversely, unfounded and questionable claims undermine our integrity and can cause considerable reputational damage.

In order to ascertain whether any appreciable number of you, the members, felt disposed to agree with the accusations that were levelled against me, I resigned from the Board at the Annual General Meeting in May and immediately put myself up for re-election as a Director. I was re-elected, with general support and without objection from anyone, which was most gratifying. Subsequently, I was re-elected unanimously by my fellow directors as *An Cathaoirleach*. It is indeed

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an honour to have had the backing and confidence of both you, the members and the Board in being again elected to the Board and as your *Cathaoirleach*. It is, however, a responsibility that I take very seriously.

Clearly my accuser has as little understanding of the culture of Clans of Ireland as he has support within it. However, his website continues to broadcast his spiteful charges against our organisation and me. Clearly, he has demonstrated a complete lack of objective cultural compass as well as a disregard for the ethical integrity of Clans of Ireland and its attendant organisational privileges. Now, there are calls by some members who have suggested that a remedy should be sought through legal recourse. My chosen option is to adhere to the proverb of letting the sleeping dog lie undisturbed. However, this should not be misinterpreted as a lack of vigilance or lack of willingness to act on the part of the Board, should either the occasion or the proverbial dog arise.

I have been asked about the progress of *Linea Antiqua* by a number of people recently. The Clans of Ireland Director of Publications, Luke McInerney, reports that checking of the transcription is currently taking place, which is quite time-consuming and will take several months. When this has been completed the introductions will then be written, which, in turn, is considerably time consuming. During this period a publisher will be chosen and consulted with. It is likely that this will not occur until early 2024, but please bear in mind that a legacy transcription of such importance must receive detailed editorial attention and cannot be rushed.

This year, Laurie Joyce will focus the Members' Survey on your attitude to the future of the Annual Cultural Summit and the Members' Forum. Your responses provide the Board with the most valid understanding of how you, the representatives of our collective organisation, wish to proceed into the future.

Finally, I am delighted to announce that Seán McGrath has had a reversal of the personal circumstances that forced his retirement from the Board of Directors and having alerted me, his co-option back on to the Board was unanimously supported at the recent Meeting of the Directors. He will take up his former duties as Webmaster in addition to taking on responsibility for Public Affairs, particularly to do with the development of liaison with governmental agencies. Chris Nolan will continue to be responsible for Social and Traditional Media, as well as liaison with external cultural organisations.

Is mise le meas,

Gearóid Ó Ceallaigh
Cathaoirleach

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