



Select document: The last will and testament of Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair, prior of Cluain Tuaiscirt na Sionna

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ABSTRACT. *It was not common for members of religious orders in the late middle ages to make a last will and testament because profession as a regular removed their testamentary capacity. This article prints the Latin text of the testament of Brother Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair, prior of Cloontuskert na Sinna, O.S.A., County Roscommon, drawn up in 1462 and proved a year later in London, along with a translation. It also offers a discussion of the testament, including Ó Conchobhair's stated intention of going on pilgrimage to Rome, in the light of other evidence relating to both its testator and to the monastic orders in general in late medieval Ireland and England.*

Among the wills recorded in the late medieval probate registers of the Commissary Court of London is a Latin testament, dated 1462, of one Dermicius Oconor who calls himself prior of Clontosyerd in the diocese of Elphin. The document is relatively short, but is of interest because it was rare during the late middle ages for members of religious orders to make last wills and testaments, and because it throws a little extra light on the life and career of this otherwise obscure Irish monastic superior. The purpose of this article is to print the text of the testament, along with a translation, and discuss some of its implications in light of other documentary evidence for its monastic testator.

The testament is copied into the fifth probate register of the London Commissary Court, now housed at the London Metropolitan Archives (L.M.A.).¹ It was made on 12 October 1462, but was not proved until over a year later, on 16 December 1463. The name of the testator, Dermicius Oconor, can be readily understood as the Irish name Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair. The reference to the diocese of Elphin means the monastery in question must have been the Augustinian priory of St Mary at Cloontuskert na Sinna (*Cluain Tuaiscirt na Sionna*), in the barony of Ballintober South, County Roscommon,² and not its namesake, Clontuskert-Omanny (*Cluain Tuaiscirt Ua Maine*), County Galway, also O.S.A., which was located in

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¹ The testament of Brother Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair (London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter L.M.A.), DL/C/B/004/MS09171/005), f. 350r. It is calendared in Marc Fitch, *Index to testamentary records in the Commissary Court of London, vol. I: 1374–1488* (H.M.C., London, 1969), p. 136 (the place-name form *Clontosyard* there is incorrect).

² Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses Ireland with an appendix to early sites* (London, 1970), pp 165–6; note also V. George Shillington, “‘What do these stones mean?’ Inscriptions on stone from an ancient monastery in Ireland that address Jewish-Christian relations’ in *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, xxxiv (2013), pp 64–71.

the diocese of Clonfert.³ The priory of Cloontuskert na Sinna occupied the site of an earlier ‘Celtic’ monastery, allegedly founded by St Faithlech (Faithlenn) mac Finnloga.⁴ The site itself, located as its name implies near the Shannon, was considered to mark one of the boundaries of the territory of Uí Mhaine.⁵ The exact date and circumstances of the monastery’s refoundation as a house of Augustinian canons of the Arrouasian observance in the twelfth century are unclear, but it has been suggested that this occurred *c.*1140, possibly under the patronage of Toirdhelbhach Mór Ua Conchobhair, king of Connachta (d. 1156).⁶ An association of the priory with the Uí Chonchobhair is certainly possible, and we know of at least one member of the dynasty, Ruaidhri mac Aodha Ua Conchobhair (d. 1244), who was buried there ‘most honourably’ (*co h-uassal onorach*).⁷ Furthermore, according to the account of the inauguration of Toirdhelbhach’s son Cathal Crobhdearg (d. 1224), the *comharba Fhaithlinn ó Chluain Tuascirt* is listed among the coarbs required to be present at the inauguration of the Uí Chonchobhair kings of Connachta.⁸ The fact that our testator was himself surnamed Ó Conchobhair may be relevant here though, as will be shown below, he appears to have started his canonical career at another, but still nearby, Augustinian monastery.

For many religious houses located in the predominantly Gaelic regions of late medieval Ireland, the survival of primary documentation, and therefore information about their respective brethren, is very sparse to say the least. The lack of extant documents from many ‘Gaelic’ monasteries themselves, and the fact that they lay beyond the notice of both the English colonial administrators and the archbishops of Armagh and their extant registers, means we are often reliant almost entirely on periodic notices of members of these houses in papal sources: the Vatican and Lateran registers, and the *annates* (payments of ‘first fruits’), as well as the largely unpublished (for Ireland) *Registra Supplicationum*.⁹ For

³ Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses*, p. 165; see also the Monastic Ireland entry: (<http://monastic.ie/history/clontuskert-augustinian-priory>).

⁴ Pádraig Ó Riain, *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1985), pp 59–61, 204.

⁵ John O’Donovan, *The tribes and customs of Hy-Many, commonly called O’Kelly’s Country. Now first published from the Book of Lecan, a ms. in the library of the Royal Irish Academy; with a translation and notes, and a map of Hy-Many* (Dublin, 1843), pp 78–9.

⁶ Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses*, p. 165.

⁷ William M. Hennessy (ed. and tr.), *The annals of Loch Cé. A chronicle of Irish affairs from A.D. 1014 to A.D. 1590* (2 vols, Rolls Series, liv, London, 1871), i, 362–3; John O’Donovan (ed. and tr.), *Annala rioghachta Eireann: annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616* (7 vols, Dublin, 1848–51), iii, 308–11.

⁸ John O’Daly and John O’Donovan, ‘Inauguration of Cathal Crobhdearg O’Conor, king of Connaught’ in *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, ii (1853), pp 340–1. Also, O’Donovan, *Hy Many*, pp 78–9 mentions the *comarba Cluana Tuaiscirt na Sinda* with reference to the inauguration of the Uí Cheallaigh, though this is possibly an error for Clontuskert-Omanny.

⁹ W. H. Bliss *et al.*, *Calendar of papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (23 vols, London and Dublin, 1893–present); M. A. Costello, *De annatis Hiberniae. A calendar of the First Fruits’ fees levied on Papal appointments to benefices in Ireland A. D. 1400 to 1535 extracted from the Vatican and other Roman archives. Volume I: Ulster* (Dundalk, 1909), and ‘Obligaciones pro annatis diocesis Dublinensis, 1421–1520’ in *Archiv. Hib.*, ii (1913), pp 1–37, 39–72, and other dioceses published in later volumes

Cloontuskert, the names of about twenty canons and priors can be gleaned from these papal sources, dating from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. Clontuskert-Omanny fares a little better, with about thirty-five brethren identified, but both stand in marked contrast to well documented ‘English’ monasteries, such as Holy Trinity Cathedral Priory, Dublin, which has rendered the names of over 250 different canons and priors, from the late twelfth century until the dissolution.¹⁰ We are fortunate, therefore, that Brother Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair, is recorded *twice* in papal sources, allowing a narrative of his career, though very sketchy, from the mid 1450s until his death, to be reconstructed. Many late medieval Gaelic monasteries were both controlled and populated largely by members of local ruling lineages: for example, at least half of the recorded priors and canons of Clontuskert-Omanny were called O’Kelly and, thus, presumably closely related to the local Ó Ceallaigh lords of Uí Mhaine. On the other hand, Cloontuskert na Sinna does not seem to have been dominated so clearly by one family, judging from the greater variety of surnames of its brethren, though some local Roscommon names such as Mac an Choiligh and Ó hÁinle do occur more than once.

According to a papal mandate dated 3 June 1455,¹¹ an Augustinian canon of St Mary’s, Saints Island (*de Insula Sanctorum*), in the diocese of Ardagh, called Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair (*Dermit Oconcubayr*) is said to have accused Matthew Macoly (Mac an Choiligh), the current prior of Cloontuskert na Sinna (*Cluoyntuasgerthanasinna*), of a variety of crimes and misdemeanours. The pope responded by instructing two canons of Elphin and the ‘official’ of the diocese to examine these accusations and, if found to be true, to deprive Prior Matthew and collate Diarmaid to the priorship of Cloontuskert in his place. The papal mandate also states that the latter was himself of illegitimate birth (being apparently the son of a married man and an unmarried woman) and the pope duly dispensed him of this illegitimacy so that he could be ordained to all holy orders and, therefore, receive ‘and retain’ the priory.

Many elements of this short narrative will be familiar to those who study the ecclesiastical history of Ireland during the fifteenth century. In particular, we should note the phenomenon known as ‘Rome running’ by which Irish clerics — both secular clerks and members of religious orders — would petition the Curia for provision to a particular benefice — which could also be either secular or, as here, regular — usually by accusing the current incumbent of one or more crimes.¹² In this case, Prior Matthew was accused, in the standard wording of the published calendars of papal registers, of being a ‘public and notorious fornicator’, as well as of alienating property of the priory, presumably for his own personal gain and, for

of the same journal. For the registers of applications, see, for example, Luke McNerney, *Clerical and learned lineages of medieval Co. Clare: a survey of the fifteenth-century papal registers* (Dublin, 2014), pp 276–82.

¹⁰ For these figures and a preliminary discussion of the monastic prosopography of late medieval Ireland, see my ‘Naming and national identity: the monastic orders in late medieval Ireland and Wales compared’ in Rebecca Thomas, Sadie Jarrett and Katharine Olson (eds), *Memory and nation: writing the history of Wales* (forthcoming, Cardiff), and ‘Crossing monastic borders in late medieval Ireland: monks’ personal names *inter Anglos et inter Hibernicos*’ in Elisa Ramazzina (ed.), *Medieval borders and the environment* (forthcoming, Leiden, 2024).

¹¹ Bliss *et al.*, *Calendar of papal registers*, xi, 200–01.

¹² John Watt, *The church in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1972), pp 188–92; K. W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the middle ages* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2003), pp 117–21.

good measure, of simony too. How far such accusations were true, or at least were upheld at the time, is not always easy to determine, as we often only have the mandate instructing local clerics to investigate them. In this case, one can assume that Diarmaid's accusations against the prior were in fact supported for, as we shall see below, he is recorded a few years later as prior of Cloontuskert. Indeed, the charge of fornication against a member of a religious order was not entirely without precedent, and the papal registers do also record many Irish regulars who were said to be sons of a monk or canon and, thus, dispensed in order to be ordained or promoted to a benefice.¹³ Furthermore, many who achieved provision as abbot or prior were not always brethren of the particular monastery or even necessarily members of the relevant monastic order; and in the latter cases, the new superior would have to be professed before he could assume office. Thus, in 1455, Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair is said to have been a canon of *Insula Sanctorum* in the diocese of Ardagh — that is, the priory of Saint's Island, O.S.A., on Lough Ree, County Longford,¹⁴ which was located less than 15 miles (20 km) from Cloontuskert na Sinna. This priory is also relatively poorly documented, though in this case about half of the recorded canons and priors bore the surname Ó Fearghail, and were presumably members of the powerful O'Farrells of Longford. A few others seem to have had the surname Mac Conghalaigh. Perhaps in 1455, Ó Conchobhair thought his chances of promotion were better at Cloontuskert, as it was not only closer to Uí Chonchobhair territory but also was not dominated by a single family to the same extent.

His bid for promotion would appear to have been successful, for in an entry dated to 13 August 1460, we are informed that one Diarmaid Ó Martáin (*Dermicius Omartayn*) paid 40 marks as *annates* for the priory of Cloontuskert na Sinna, O.S.A., in the diocese of Elphin, said to be vacant due to the deprivation of Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair (*per privacionem Dermicii Oconcuyr*).¹⁵ No additional information is supplied about this Diarmaid Ó Martáin, even whether he was a regular canon or not. Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair must have been deprived of the priorate by August 1460 at the latest, but how much earlier is not clear, nor do we learn the circumstances of his deprivation: had Ó Martáin made accusations similar to those made previously by Ó Conchobhair against his own predecessor? Clearly, Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair held the office of prior for no more than five years, but we know little of his fortunes thereafter, except that two years and two months later he was in London where he made his will.

The very fact that Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair left a will that has survived is in itself a matter of significance. Firstly, relatively few wills of Irish testators are now extant from the middle ages, with less than 100 from Ireland itself.¹⁶ Furthermore, during

¹³ Nicholls, *Gaelic & Gaelicized Ireland*, pp 107–08, 123–4; Canice Mooney, *The church in Gaelic Ireland: 13th to 15th centuries* (Dublin, 1969), pp 56–60.

¹⁴ Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses*, pp 193–4.

¹⁵ Gearóid Mac Niocaill and M. A. Costello, 'Obligaciones pro annatis diocesis Elphinensis' in *Archiv. Hib.*, xxii (1959), p. 12.

¹⁶ Margaret Murphy, 'The high cost of dying: an analysis of *pro anima* bequests in medieval Dublin' in *Studies in Church History*, xxiv (1987), pp 111–22; also, Henry A. Jefferies, 'Men, women, the late medieval church and religion: evidence from wills from County Dublin' in *Archiv. Hib.*, lxix (2016), pp 355–65. On the loss of Irish wills, see Clodaigh Tait, 'Writing the social and cultural history of Ireland, 1550–1660: wills as example and inspiration' in Sarah Covington, Valerie McGowan-Doyle and Vincent Carey (eds), *Early modern Ireland. New sources, methods, and perspectives* (London, 2018), pp 27–48.

the middle ages, members of religious orders had no testamentary capacity, that is they were generally not permitted to make last wills and testaments.¹⁷ For instance, according to English common law the act of profession as a regular clerk resulted in one's civil death and the consequent loss of civil rights, including the right to own, inherit and dispose of property.¹⁸ One group of regulars who could — with the appropriate licence — make a will were those who became bishops, but they were the exceptions.¹⁹ The late Michael Sheehan did discuss instances of monastic superiors in England during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries receiving royal or papal permission to own property and, thus, make a will but, as he conceded, the evidence for this practice is largely second hand.²⁰ It was only after the dissolution of the monasteries that the now *former* religious were permitted to make wills.²¹ The survival of Ó Conchobhair's testament is therefore significant.

The text of the testament is in Latin (with one English word, *skynner*, 'skinner'): by the late fifteenth century it was not uncommon for lay people to have their wills drawn up in English, but most clerical testators continued to use Latin. The testament itself is relatively short and to the point, occupying just eleven lines in the register, including the probate clause, but the text does contain some important points that are worth considering in the light of what we know of its testator's life. The basic structure of the testament conforms to the common pattern for late medieval wills in England. It opens with the standard invocation *In nomine Dei amen* followed by the dating clause. The testator then identifies himself, with forename and surname, along with his status: in this case, he describes himself as prior of Cloontuskert, O.S.A., in the diocese of Elphin. No parish of residence in London is given, which we would expect for lay testators in particular, but of course Ó Conchobhair was not a local. The explicit use here of the title *prior*, and not *quondam*, 'former', may be significant: was he still using the title despite his deprivation, or had he been restored in the meantime? We will return to this point below.

Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair states at the beginning of his testament that he was 'of sound mind and whole memory', a common phrase in wills, intended to indicate that the testator was mentally capable of making the testamentary decisions recorded therein. Unlike many testators, however, Ó Conchobhair does not add

¹⁷ For another Irish 'monastic' exception, see Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'Mistress, mother and abbess: Renalda Ní Bhriain (c.1447–1510)' in *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, xxxii (1990), pp 50–63.

¹⁸ Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The history of English law before the time of Edward I* (2 vols, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1898), i, 433–8.

¹⁹ For regular episcopal wills, see David E. Thornton, 'Out of sight, out of mind? The wills of monastic and mendicant bishops in Britain and Ireland, 1350–1535' in *Journal of Medieval History*, 1, no. 1 (2024) pp 92–118. Most of the regular bishops of Irish dioceses whose wills survive were in fact non-resident English religious who served as suffragans in England. Exceptions include the Irish Franciscan Seán Ó hEidhin Will of Seán Ó hEidhin (T.N.A., PROB 11/4/306), sometime bishop of Clonfert (1438–59), who did however end his days in England, and the English Augustinian abbot of Osney, John Walton, who was archbishop of Dublin (1472–84): Henry F. Berry, *Register of wills and inventories of the diocese of Dublin in the time of archbishops Tregury and Walton, 1457–1483: from the original manuscript in the library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin, 1898), pp 167–71.

²⁰ Michael M. Sheehan, *The will in medieval England from the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to the end of the thirteenth century* (Toronto, 1963), pp 250–53.

²¹ For example, see David E. Thornton, 'Best friends forever? Testamentary evidence for friendship networks among Cistercians in Britain after the Dissolution' in *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, lxxii (2021), pp 115–53.

that he was also ‘sick of body’. Late medieval and early modern testators usually drew up their wills when they were old and/or very ill, and the imminent prospect of dying motivated them in the first place. Seemingly, that was not the case for Brother Diarmaid, who goes on to state that he intended to visit Rome, a trip that he would presumably not have undertaken if he expected to die very soon. Ó Conchobhair then begins the main body of his will by committing his soul to God, the Virgin Mary and all the saints (the standard committal in late medieval wills), but also adds that, as he proposes to visit Rome, he may be interred ‘wherever God will have arranged’. Most late medieval testators indicated their preferred place of burial, usually their parish church or a nearby religious house,²² but those who were not sure where and when they would die, such as pilgrims, could leave this open.

The central part of Diarmaid’s will — the bequests — are brief and few in number. He bequeathed 20 shillings (not a small sum at that time) to one John Rolle to pray for his soul. Such bequests for prayers were common in medieval and early modern (Catholic) wills, often listed before the legacies to family and friends. Wealthier testators could make multiple and complex arrangements for such prayers, primarily to help their souls pass through purgatory.²³ Diarmaid made no other specific bequests, and instead left the residue of his goods to his executor to be distributed as he saw fit. He did however state that this distribution should be done (again) for his soul and reminded the executor that his actions will ultimately be judged by God. The executor was named as Richard Dogan of London, a skinner by trade. Ó Conchobhair concluded his testament by stating that he had attached his seal, as a means of authenticating the document, and that he himself had written it ‘by my own hand’ (not uncommon for clerical testators). He named two witnesses, Nicholas Stalys and John Herdford, who are said to have been personally present when he made the will.

Because this was not the original will, but a copy entered into a probate register, we also have the probate clause, which states that it was proved on 16 December 1463, before the London commissary John Crall, and that the executor, Richard Dogan, had duly received administration of the will. The date of probate is important because it was normally the case that the testator had died not long before the will was proved. In cases where the date of the will itself and that of probate were very close — a matter of days or a week — then the will clearly had been made when the testator was on his/her deathbed. We may assume, therefore, that Diarmaid did not die until November or December 1463, over a year after making his will, which would certainly have been long enough to have gone on pilgrimage to Rome and have returned to London.²⁴

The testament of Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair is a relatively short document, but it does contain a number of elements worthy of further consideration. From its testimony, we can state that, by October 1462 at the latest, Ó Conchobhair had found his way to London. The explicit association of his executor with that city, and the fact that the testament was proved a year later at the London Commissary Court, would support this assertion. How long he had been in London after his deprivation as prior is less certain, and it is of course possible that he was merely there en route

²² Murphy, ‘The high cost of dying’, pp 112–14.

²³ For such *pro anima* bequests, see *ibid.*

²⁴ For the length and time of pilgrimages to Rome, see Debra Julie Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the middle ages: continuity and change* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 60.

to Rome when he decided to make his will. However, he would definitely not have been the only cleric from Ireland in the city. Virginia Davis has demonstrated that, of immigrant Irish clergy in late medieval England — especially but not exclusively secular clerks being ordained — most found their way to London in particular.²⁵ While the majority of these men were from the dioceses in Ireland under English colonial influence and bore English or Anglo-Irish surnames, some, like Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair, did hail from the Gaelic areas and/or bore Irish names.²⁶ Individual regulars from Ireland could receive a ‘license to remain’ in England,²⁷ though as clergy they would not have been among those Irishmen classified, temporarily, as ‘aliens’ for purposes of taxation in 1440.²⁸ If Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair was in fact living in London in 1462 when he wrote his testament, and not just passing through, then he would certainly not have been the only religious from Ireland to be in England.

One element in Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair’s testament that is relatively infrequent in medieval wills is his proposal ‘to visit the thresholds of the Apostles Peter and Paul’ (*visitare limina Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*), which was a common way of indicating pilgrimage to Rome.²⁹ As well as encouraging pilgrimage to their own churches, members of religious orders did occasionally go on pilgrimage themselves, though such travel was contrary to vows of stability they may have taken and, therefore, required appropriate permission. Accordingly, monks and regular canons from Ireland are attested on pilgrimage.³⁰ Pilgrimages were sometimes mentioned in late medieval wills. Increasingly but still relatively rarely, testators made post-mortem bequests for so-called proxy or vicarious pilgrimages to be undertaken for their souls by others after death;³¹ but some made their wills shortly before departing on pilgrimage themselves, perhaps in order to settle their affairs before undertaking what could in some cases be a long and dangerous journey.³² We have already noted that the planned pilgrimage was probably the reason why Ó Conchobhair did not specify where he wished to be buried.

²⁵ Virginia Davis, ‘Irish clergy in late medieval England’ in *I.H.S.*, xxxii, no. 126 (Nov. 2000), p. 147.

²⁶ Davis, ‘Irish clergy in late medieval England’, p. 148; and her ‘Material relating to Irish clergy in England in the late middle ages’ in *Archiv. Hib.*, lvi (2002), pp 7–50. Generally, lay immigration from Ireland (mostly by ‘Anglo-Irish’) would seem to have been less heavily London-focused than Davis’s clerical and ordination data suggests: see W. Mark Ormrod, Bart Lambert and Jonathan Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300–1550* (Manchester, 2019), pp 78–83.

²⁷ For example, H. C. Maxwell-Lyte *et al.*, *Calendar of the patent rolls preserved in the Public Record Office* (16 vols, London, 1891–1916), v, pp 454, 461.

²⁸ J. L. Bolton, ‘Irish migration to England in the late middle ages: the evidence of 1394 and 1440’ in *I.H.S.*, xxxii, no. 125 (May 2000), pp 1–21.

²⁹ Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the middle ages*, p. 7.

³⁰ Louise Nugent, ‘Pilgrimage and the Augustinians in medieval Ireland’ in Martin Browne and Colmán Ó Clabaigh (eds), *Households of God: the regular canons and canonesses of St Augustine and of Prémontré in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2019), p. 233.

³¹ Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in medieval England* (London, 2000), pp 191–210, and her *Pilgrims and pilgrimage in the medieval West* (London and New York, 2001), pp 133–47; Kerr Houston, ‘Vicarious pilgrimage’ in Larissa J. Taylor (ed.), *Encyclopedia of medieval pilgrimage* (Leiden, 2012), pp 793–7.

³² Francine Michaud, ‘Wills of pilgrims’ in Taylor (ed.), *Encyclopedia of medieval pilgrimage*, pp 822–5; Webb, *Pilgrims and pilgrimage in the medieval West*, pp 44–5, 133–47.

The reasons for going on pilgrimage in the late middle ages varied. While for some medieval pilgrims, it was essentially an excuse for a trip — like those mentioned by Geoffrey Chaucer who, with the arrival of spring, long to go on pilgrimage — on the other hand, many had specific and serious reasons for undertaking the journey. In addition to genuine devotion, these reasons could include: to request, or give thanks retrospectively for, saintly help in their personal lives, especially for cures from illness; to perform penance for particular sins, either voluntarily or imposed by a confessor; and, to gain a more general remission of sins through indulgences, in order to reduce the soul's time in purgatory.³³ Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair mentions his intention of visiting Rome after the interesting phrase *pro eo tempore confeccionis presencium*. If this is correctly interpreted to mean 'for [or on account of] that time of the completing [or putting into effect] [*confeccionis*] of the present things [*presencium*]', and if these 'present things' were the arrangements outlined in the testament, to be executed following Ó Conchobhair's passing, then the phrase may be an indication that he planned to undertake the pilgrimage for the benefit of his soul after death.

However, it may be postulated that an alternative reason for Ó Conchobhair's proposed pilgrimage was to petition for restoration to the priorship of Cloontuskert. We have already noted above that, in his testament, he still calls himself *prior*, which was perhaps an indication that he had not fully accepted his deprivation. The papal registers are full of cases where a deprived Irish abbot or prior had clearly resisted and, thus, continued to 'detain' the relevant monastery. For example, according to a papal mandate dated 21 January 1469, Diarmaid Mac Giolla Phádraig, who had previously been deprived as abbot of Canon Island, Inisgad, O.S.A., had 'unduly detained' the abbey for about seven years and was now to be removed.³⁴ It seems Mac Giolla Phádraig could have appealed against his deprivation but 'did not prosecute it within the lawful time'.³⁵ Other superiors were more successful in petitioning the curia to be restored. Thus, in a mandate dated 14 April 1459, we are informed that yet another Diarmaid, surnamed Ó Dornaigh, had previously been falsely deprived of the abbacy of Fermoy, O.Cist., by the Abbot of Monasteranenagh (Fermoy's mother house), on the basis of crimes alleged by members of the convent, and was replaced by one of the monks, Tadhg Ó hÍceadha (*Ohiky*); but Ó Dornaigh had petitioned the Pope and was to be restored.³⁶ In the light of these and other similar cases, it is possible, though beyond any certain proof, that Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair set out to Rome in 1462–3, ostensibly on pilgrimage, but that his real motive was not to benefit from the intercession of the apostles Peter and Paul, but rather to have himself restored as prior of Cloontuskert na Sinna. The available documentation does not allow us to determine whether or not Ó Conchobhair actually made it to Rome, though, as we have seen, the fourteen months that elapsed between the date of the testament and that of probate would certainly have been more than enough time for him to have made the trip. The absence of Ó Conchobhair's name from the (at best) patchy

³³ For reasons for making pilgrimages, see Diana Webb, *Medieval European pilgrimage, c. 700–c. 1500* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp 49–55.

³⁴ Bliss *et al.*, *Calendar of papal registers*, xii, 302; for a fuller account of this abbey in the fifteenth century, see Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses*, p. 162.

³⁵ It is possible that this attempt to oust Mac Giolla Phádraig also failed, as he seems to have still been abbot in 1478 when he passed the abbacy to his son and namesake Diarmaid: see McNerney, *Clerical & learned lineages*, p. 118.

³⁶ Bliss *et al.*, *Calendar of papal registers*, xii, 53–4.

records of pilgrims in fifteenth-century Rome, such as those of the English Hospice of St Thomas, does not prove that he was *not* there,³⁷ and, of course, as a regular canon he could equally have found hospitality at houses of the Augustinian order. Furthermore, even if Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair did go to Rome to petition for restoration as prior, there is no way of being certain of the outcome because there are no references to priors of Cloontuskert na Sinna in the (published) papal sources from 1460, when Diarmaid Ó Martáin replaced the deprived Ó Conchobhair (above), until 1477, when one Aodh Mac Néill (*Odo Magneill*) became prior.³⁸

Finally, the identities of others named in medieval wills can often inform us about the family and personal ties of their testators. Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair mentions only four people in his short testament. Of these, the identity of his executor in particular is of interest. Testators usually selected close relatives or friends who they expected would be both willing and able to take on the duty of executing the will, even without the added incentive of a residual bequest. The surname of Ó Conchobhair's executor, Dogan, may be the Gaelic name Ó Dubhagáin, usually anglicised as Duggan, in which case Diarmaid had chosen a fellow Irishman as executor, or at least someone of Irish descent, living and working in London. More specifically, the Uí Dhubhagáin, whose surname is preserved in Ballydoogan (Baile Uí Dhubhagáin), near Loughrea County Galway, were a learned lineage closely associated with the rulers of Uí Mhaine during the late middle ages, and it is at least not impossible that Brother Diarmaid's executor in London was related to that Connacht family. The surnames of the other three men named in the testament do not necessarily suggest associations with Ireland, and they were probably residents of London too: witnesses especially were usually neighbours and others living locally who were, therefore, readily on hand to be present in person when the will was made. The John Rolle to whom Ó Conchobhair made a bequest to say prayers for his soul after death would have been a priest and was presumably living in London, though no further evidence concerning him has so far come to light.

The testament of Brother Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair is of historical interest because it was relatively rare for members of religious orders to make wills during the late middle ages, and because it also allows us to determine the fortunes of this Irish regular canon after his deprivation as prior of Cloontuskert na Sinna. The text of the testament, along with a translation, are given below, in the hope that the document will be of interest and use to students of late medieval Irish monasticism.

The Testament of Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair
L.M.A., DL/C/B/004/MS09171/005, f. 350r³⁹

³⁷ Joel T. Rosenthal, 'The English Hospice in Rome: a late medieval home away from home' in *Catholic Historical Review*, cviii, no. 1 (2022), pp 44–67; John Allen, 'Englishmen in Rome and the hospice 1362–1474' in John Francis Allen (ed.), *The English Hospice in Rome* (2nd ed., Leominster, 2005), pp 61–8; see also Matteo Binasco, 'The Irish community in Rome, 1377–1870' in *Archiv. Hib.*, lxxi (2018), pp 148–9.

³⁸ Mac Niocaill & Costello, 'Obligations pro annatis diocesis Elphinensis', p. 16.

³⁹ The transcription of the will is produced here with permission of the diocese of London. I am also grateful to my colleague, Dr Paul Latimer, for discussing certain palaeographical and grammatical issues.

Text:

[*In marg.*] *Test(amentu)m Dermicii Oconor*

In no(m)i(n)e Dei amen. Anno D(omi)ni mill(esi)mo CCCC^{mo} sexagesimo secundo XII.^{mo} die mensis Octobr(is). Ego Dermicius Oconor, prior de Clontosyerd, ordinis Sancti Augustini, Elphin(en)sis dioc(esis), compos ment(is) et sana memoria, condo testamentu(m) meu(m) in huic modu(m). In primis lego a(n)i(m)am mea(m) om[n]ipotenti Deo, Beate Marie (et) om(n)ib(us) sanct(is), et pro eo tempore confecc(i)on(is) p(re)se(n)ciu(m) p(ro)pono visitare lim(i)na Ap(osto)lor(um) Petri (et) Pauli sacre urbis Rom(a)e, ideo corpus meu(m) sepe-liend(um) ubi Deus disposuerit. Item, lego Joh(an)ni Rolle ad orand(um) pro anima mea xx s(olidos). Residuu(m) vero bonor(um) meor(um) no(n) legator(um) do (et) lego executori meo ut ip(s)e disponat pro anima mea sicut ei melius videbitur expedire (et) sicut vult respondere coram sum(m)o Iudice in die Iudicii, (et) ad istud test(amentu)m fideliter p(er)implend(um) ordino et constituo Ricardo Dogan de London' Skynn(er) meu(m) veru(m) (et) legitti(mum) executor(em). In cuius rei testimonium p(re)sentib(us) sigillu(m) meu(m) apposui. Dat(um) London' ac sc(r)ipt(um) manu mea p(ro)p(ri)a i(n) maiorem fidem (et) testimoniu(m) p(re)missor(um) Anno D(omi)ni mense (et) die supradict(is) Nich(ola)o Stalys et Joh(an)ne Herdford' testibus ad p(re)missa vocat(is) (et) rogat(is) necno(n) ib(ide)m p(er)sonaliter p(re)sentibus.

XVI die Decembris anno D(om)i(n)u(m) mill(esi)mo IVC LXIII^o coram mag(ist)ro Joh(an)ne Crall ad tu(n)c in civitate London' Co(m)missar(io) erat p(re)sens test(amentu)m probatum et comm[i]ssa est admi(n)st(ra)cio Ricardo Dogan executori sup(er)ius no(min)at(o).

Translation:

The testament of Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair

In the name of God, amen. In the year of the Lord 1462, on the twelfth day of October, I Diarmaid Ó Conchobhair, prior of Cloontuskert, of the Order of St Augustine, in the diocese of Elphin, of sound mind and whole memory, make my testament in this manner. Firstly, I bequeath my soul to almighty God, to the Blessed Mary, and to all the saints, and for that time of the putting into effect of the present [things], I propose to visit the tombs [*lit.* thresholds] of the apostles Peter and Paul of the holy city of Rome, therefore my body to be buried wherever God will have arranged. Item, I bequeath twenty shillings to John Rolle to pray for my soul. Moreover, the residue of my goods not bequeathed I give and bequeath to my executor that he may dispose [of them] for my soul as seems most expedient to him and as he will answer in the presence of the highest judge on Judgement Day; and to fulfill that testament faithfully I ordain and constitute Richard Dogan of London, skinner, my true and legitimate executor. In testimony of which thing to those being present I have attached my seal. Dated [*lit.* given] in London and written by my own hand, in the greater faith and testimony of the aforementioned [things], in the aforesaid year of the Lord, month and day, Nicholas Stalys and John Herdford, being witnesses to the aforesaid, called and asked, and also being personally present here.

The present testament was proved on the sixteenth day of December 1463, in the presence of Master John Crall then commissary in the city of London, and administration was granted to Richard Dogan, the executor named above.