

# The Campbells are Comin'

by Gerry Oates

The surname *Campbell* is among the top 30 family names in Ireland and in the top 5 in Ulster and the 4th most common in County Armagh, according to the Irish Registrar General's report for the year 1890.<sup>1</sup> I doubt if the situation has changed much in the meantime.

In most people's imagination the name is rightly associated with Scotland, but not all Campbells are of Scottish origin, and not all Campbells are true Campbells at all. Their native homeland is Argyll and *Campbell* is the family name of the Dukes of Argyll. The origin of the name 'Argyll', and its pronunciation 'Ar-gyle', present a clue. The name is from the Gaelic 'Airthir Gaedhil' ('the East-land of the Gael'),<sup>2</sup> or the Irish settlers who began colonising the west of Scotland in the late 4th century from their kingdom of Dalriada in Antrim.<sup>3</sup> The name *Campbell* is derived from the Scots Gaelic *cam* 'crooked' and *beul* 'mouth' and it is suggested that the name emanates more from moral traits than physical appearance. This, of course, has been asserted through the ages by neighbours and rival clans, but the term *cam-beul* appears to be no more than a nickname, for in a charter dated 1447 a certain Lord Campbell is cited as *Duncan le Cam-bell* ('Duncan known as crooked mouth'). A popular, but incorrect, explanation of the name suggests that it is of Norman French origin, *de Campobello* ('of the beautiful plain'), but if that were true the form of the name, grammatically, should read *de Bello Campo*; yet from the earliest times the name had always been written *Cambel(l)* with no hint of the Latin-influenced *p* of *campo* (< *campus* 'meadow, field') which insinuated itself later but was never pronounced.<sup>4</sup>

Scottish clan tradition states that the clan was originally known as *Clan Duibhne* in Gaelic, or *O'Duine* from a certain *Diarmid O'Duine* of Lochow (Loch Awe) in Argyll and is corroborated by a charter of

David II, dated 1368, entitling Archibald Campbell of Lochow as heir to the properties of *Duncan M'Duine* in the barony of Lochow. On the door lintel of Carnasarie Castle is an inscription *Dia leinn O Duibhne* ('God with O'Duibhne' i.e. the Campbells). The Clan Campbell divided into three septs each bearing a separate name: Clan Dubhgal Craignish, Clan MacIver of Asknish and MacArthur of Strathcur.<sup>5</sup>

Many Campbells migrated to Ulster at various periods during the 17th century as the Plantation of Ulster took effect and several septs of the Clan Campbell of Argyll, bearing the surnames *Bal-lentyne*, *Loudon*, *MacIvor*, *Paterson*, *Orr* and *Pinkerton* among others<sup>6</sup> settled in the Armagh area where the names are still to be found. Two hundred years earlier, in the 15th century, another group of Campbells arrived in Ireland at the invitation of O'Donnell, lord of Tyrconnel, to fight as galloglasses in his wars against the English and rival Irish clans. They were the descendants of a certain *Colin Cam-beul*, known in Scots Gaelic as *Mac Cailein* 'son of Colin', and in Donegal they became *Mac Calli(o)n*. Some of these Donegal *Mac Calli(o)n*s later adopted the surname (*Mac*) *Campbell*.<sup>7</sup> Scots *Cailein* / *Colin* has no connection with the English *Colin* which is a reduced form of *Nicholas*.

However, the greater number of Campbells in Ulster are not true Campbells at all, but descendants of a Tyrone family which adopted the name after the Plantation. The Clogher-based family *Mac Cathmhaoil* ('son of the battle chief'), whose ancestors claimed descent from the 5th century king Niall of the Nine Hostages<sup>8</sup>, adopted a number of anglicised versions of their name during the 17th and 18th centuries to comply with official directives. In civil and church records the surname *Mac Cathmhaoil* was

recorded in a bewildering plethora of varieties, more than 20 versions appearing in Leslie's *Armagh Clergy* alone. In the original Gaelic the consonantal combination *-thmh-* was represented by English *w*, which produced the version (*Mac*) *Cawell*, the most accurate phonologically of all the versions. In the spoken language the medial *-w-* was seldom heard and, consequently, this version became *Mac Call* / *Mac Caul*. Other versions which followed were (*Mac*) *Caulfield*, (*Mac*) *Camphill*, *Cowell* and *Howell*, but by far the most common form was *Campbell*.<sup>9</sup> *Caulfield*, however, is the family name of the Earls of Charlemont whose founder, Sir Toby Caulfield, came to Ulster at the latter end of the reign of Elizabeth, in the 16th century, to take on the power of the O Neills. Sir Toby's proper name was *Calfehill*, later corrupted to *Caulfield*, and one of the family's seats was at Castlecaulfield (formerly *Baile Uí Dhoinghaile* – O'Donnelly's town)<sup>10</sup>; this was in the territory once inhabited by the *Mac Cathmhaoils* which led to some of the clan adopting Lord Charlemont's title as a surname, usually prefaced by *Mac* 'son'.

The version *Campbell* stems from the fact that the *-th-* of the original Gaelic form (*Mac Cathmhaoil*) was silent, and the *-mh-* (which would normally be pronounced *w*) was sounded *m* by English speakers which produced the 18th century form *Camell*.<sup>11</sup> Official standardization converted this to *Campbell*, but the vernacular pronunciation of the name persisted as *Camell* until relevantly recent times.

The *Mac Cathmhaoil* clan of Clogher played an important role in the civil and ecclesiastical history of Ulster throughout the late Middle Ages. They are first recorded in the Annals of Ulster in the year 1180 and were a leading sept of the Cineál Fearthaigh and related to the O Neills. It was their role to protect the western flank of O'Neill territory

against incursion from the O Donnells of Tyrconnell. Their main influence, however, was in ecclesiastical matters and as churchmen many achieved fame in the medieval Irish church. The *Mac Cathmhaóils / Campbells* provided bishops to Clogher, Derry and Armagh and their role in church affairs brought many of them to Armagh. The most noted of the name was *Hugh Mac Cawell*, consecrated Archbishop of Armagh in 1626, but who died before he could occupy his episcopal see. The family name, in a much truncated form, is preserved in the townland name *Clonmakate* in north Armagh adjacent to Maghery; the original form was *Cluain Mhic Cathmhaoil* 'Mac Cathmhaoil's meadow'.<sup>12</sup>

Before leaving the *Mac Cathmhaóils* or rather, the *Campbells*, I should mention another family with strong links to Co. Armagh and descended from the same line. In the 14th century a certain *Maelsheachlainn mac an ghirr Mhic Cathmhaoil* ('Malachy, son of the short Mac Cathmhaoil') established his own line now known as *Mac an Ghirr* ('son

of the short fellow') and subsequently anglicised *Mac Girr*, and by translation, *Short*. *Short* can also be of English origin, first recorded in Dorset in 1176, but Irish versions often appear with final *-tt*, as in *Shortt*.<sup>13</sup>

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## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Bell, R: *the Book of Ulster Surnames*, 28
- <sup>2</sup> Cameron Gillies, H: *The Place-Names of Argyll*, 3
- <sup>3</sup> Glover, J. R: *The Story of Scotland*, 33
- <sup>4</sup> Black, G. F: *The Surnames of Scotland*, 129
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 130
- <sup>6</sup> Clan House Publications: *Scots Kith and Kin*, 51-2, 61
- <sup>7</sup> Mac Lysaght, E: *More Irish Families*, 46
- <sup>8</sup> Bell, R: *obit*, 140
- <sup>9</sup> Mac Giolla Domhnaigh, P: *Some Ulster surnames*, 11
- <sup>10</sup> Mac Lysaght, E: *obit*, 53
- <sup>11</sup> Donnelly, J/Dillon, C: *Gravestone Inscriptions: St. Jarlath's, Confeakle* (Dúiche Néill 4, 60)
- <sup>12</sup> MacKay, P/Muhr, K: *Lough Neagh Places*, 82
- <sup>13</sup> De Bhulbh, S: *Sloinnte Uile Éireann*, 429 / Reaney, P. H: *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, 318

# Memories of Mr. Holden

by Madeline Devlin

A memorable person, who lived in Armagh, was Mr. T.W. Holden, the organist in St. Patrick's Cathedral. He was tall, thin, stooped and had fly-away sparse grey hair. He had a gracious manner; a perfect gentleman in every way and was known affectionately as 'Dicky'.

Dicky taught music in St. Patrick's College, singing in the Sacred Heart Convent Secondary School and he trained the Cathedral choir. He also gave private music lessons in his home. My friend Eilish went to him for piano lessons and she learned to play beautiful pieces like 'Minuet in G' and 'Humoresque' while my music teacher had me plodding along with Etudes and Scales. If I had been lucky enough to have gone to Dicky for lessons I would have had more pleasure practising.

The Armagh people were privileged to hear him play beautiful light classical pieces every Sunday on the Cathedral bells. In later years, when he was unable to climb the steep stairs to perform this task, he used to sit on each stair and go up backwards. That's dedication!

He came from an old English family and he had an ancestor beatified - 'Blessed Philip Holden'. Once, at a choir party in the Charlemont Arms Hotel, he told the men a wonderful story. In England, when the monasteries were being sacked by marauding armies, a monk had taken a ciborium filled with sacred Hosts and buried it in the garden near a row of beans. Some time later when the beans were harvested the print of a monsternace was found on each bean. As he said this Dicky put his hand in his waistcoat pocket; took out a little velvet bag, and produced one of the beans.

Canon Pentony and Mr. Holden composed the beautiful hymn 'Hail Christ our King'. I am sure his place in heaven is assured.