

The Mulvihill Voice

Summer 2006 Issue Number Two

MULVIHILLS GATHER IN STROKESTOWN

Second Annual Mulvihill Clann Gathering
A SUCCESS

Members of the extended Mulvihill Family gathered in counties Roscommon, Offaly and Westmeath to meet relatives and share stories, songs, genealogy information and family history this July. New friends were made and relationships born last summer were deepened. Many a meal and pint were shared.

Mulvihills from England and the United States as well as from counties Dublin, Longford, Carlow, Sligo, Galway and Westmeath made the journey to the ancestral home of the family. To our delight, four local historians joined us over the course of the weekend, bringing the past to light in both scholarly and entertaining ways.

The group traveled up *Slieve Bán*, known in ancient times as *Sliabh Bágghda*, the mountain at the eastern edge of the ancient Mulvihill territory. Named for an ancient Firbolg chief, according to historian P.A. Sharkey, *Sliabh Bágghda* is said to have once had a line of "standing stones and crosses" separating its western and eastern faces. It is the western side of the mountain and the plains below where our ancestors, the ancient tribe of *Corca Achlann* ruled.

A gentle rain, beautiful vistas, abundant (continued on p. 6)



Photo by Tom Mulvihill

Mulvihills hiking on *Sliabh Bágghda*, in their ancestral homeland



Ancient Urney Church at heart of Mulvihill territory

Amid wildflowers and mist, among sheep and scattered trees lie the ruins of a small church built many centuries ago.

According to historian Henry Owens of Co. Roscommon, it is stated in *The Annals* that the church was built by Mulvihills in 1236. Others sources indicate it was consecrated to the 7th century *Saint Urnaith* then and its foundation may date back to his era. In any case, it apparently was built on the site of a much earlier structure, which was in turn built upon an earlier Pagan holy place. Now it sits amid tranquil fields and is all but forgotten by the generations that have passed, its songs and ceremonies silenced by time.

Urney Church is in imminent danger of collapsing. Having stood majestically in the ancient tribal land of the Mulvihills for many hundreds of years, its stones now sit precariously upon one another, as season after season of wind and rain weaken the sacred structure. (cont. on page 8)

Corca Achlann

Tribe of the Ancient Mulvihills

*Let us commemorate the Three Tuathas
The steady host of fair Cruachan
Let us not spoil their untarnished splendour
Let us name their... lords*

*...Powerful is the vigor of Clann Brennan
And also of the majestic O'Mulmihil
They command the strong forces of Corca Achlann
of the herds*

---John O'Dugan, c. 1320

The Mulvihills (MaoilMhichils) and MacBrannáins were cousins, springing from the same rootstock and were chiefs of the tribe of Corca Achlann in ancient Connacht. The group was one of the three *tuathas* or tribes which reigned in the northeast of modern day county Roscommon. They grew corn, rye, oats and wheat. They were skilled hunters, herdsmen, fisherfolk and warriors. Cows provided not only meat and dairy but were a form of currency.

Their dwellings were often within ringforts, circular enclosures of varying sizes which provided a measure of protection and community. Others, roughly between the years 500-1000 AD, were on crannógs, small man-made islands built on the edges of lakes and marshlands. Both types of dwellings were commonly fortified with surrounding wooden palisades. *Rathbranan* is a remaining place name near the old territory indicating the prior existence of a tribal ringfort.

Justice was delivered through the ancient Brehon Laws up until the 12th century when the Normans invaded, although some laws lingered centuries later. The laws were quite complicated and comprehensive. All people had certain rights despite social rank. All children were provided for under the law. Ten types of marital relationships were recognized with differing laws for each. Crimes such as wearing down your neighbor's hatchet and robbing his beehive were noted as were offenses related to satire.

Some authorities say Corca Achlann means "the people of Achlann". They surmise Achlann to be the name of a very ancient chieftain or sept, whose identity we may never know. Others say it means "people of the swampy plain". There are large bogs and plains as well as mountainous areas in the family territory.

Our first known reference to the tribe is in the 7th century text *The Book of Armagh* which is based on earlier now lost books. It chronicles St. Patrick's visit to the area around the year 434 AD and his interactions with the chief of the Corca Achlann, the Druid Ona. Various events of our tribal history are mentioned in many (continued on page 7)

GENETIC GENEALOGY 2: PRIVACY AND MEDICAL CONCERNS

By James M. Mulvihill, Chieftain

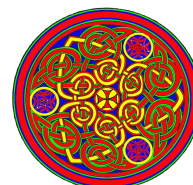
In the last newsletter, we spoke about the incredible promise of Genetic Genealogy to expand our understanding of our individual family histories. This time we'll address the concerns that people may have about making use of this awesome technology.

Genetic Genealogy is a powerful tool, and, like any utility capable of such extraordinary work, it has the potential for abuse and misuse. Common concerns about participation include general privacy issues, exposure and compromise of medical or health issues, and those of trust concerning the suppliers of testing services.

First of all, let me say that these are largely non-issues as concern the type of DNA analysis commonly applied in Genetic Genealogy. The analysis being employed in the Mulvihill Family DNA Project is confined to viewing a tiny portion of one of the twenty-three pairs of chromosomes that comprise the enormous DNA molecule. The investigation focuses on a non-coding segment of the Y Chromosome only. No information is collected on any other part of the molecule, and no regions containing genes are involved. Analysis of the whole DNA molecule would be a hugely expensive proposition and is unnecessary for genealogical purposes.

The single Y Chromosome was chosen because it is inherited, nearly unchanged, by sons from their father. In this respect it parallels the use of surnames in most societies. The other forty-five chromosomes that make up our genetic inheritance are randomly blended mixtures of components from both parents, and as such are impractical for our purposes. The features of the Y Chromosome that are most useful for genealogy reside within long stretches of so-called "junk" DNA, and are referred to as Short Tandem Repeats (STR). They are short repeating segments of components that have been randomly accumulated during the long history

(continued on page 7)



Ancient Echoes

This summer we feature the 6th century early Christian site of Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, which the Mulvihills visited in July. This is a site where we spent several hours, but one could easily spend the entire day there, examining the many ruins, high crosses, nearby hiking trails, exhibitions and river banks.

Upon the site of a holy well, Clonmacnoise was founded in 548 by St. Ciarán, where the River Shannon crosses the *Eiscir Riada*, the ancient east-west roadway across Ireland. St. Ciarán died less than a year later from yellow fever, but his monastic community thrived for over 1,000 years. It became one of the most important seats of learning in the western world and students came from across Ireland, Britain and continental Europe. It was a renowned center of craftsmanship as well as of religious scholarship. Also a seat of great political power, Clonmacnoise had changing and complex relationships with kings and chieftains from Connacht to Tara, many of whom are buried there. Around its sacred well developed a hospital for the poor and a place of healing pilgrimage.

One of the most important books to Irish literature and history was scripted here, copied from earlier now lost texts. This is *Book of the Dun Cow (Lebor na hUidre)*, containing the very oldest known versions of some of Ireland's most beloved legends, such as the *Táin Bó Cuailgne* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley), stories of the Kings of Tara and their customs, ancient fairy stories and tales of Ireland's earliest invaders. Called the earliest exclusively Gaelic document in existence, it introduces Queen Maeve, Cúchulainn, Cormac Mac Airt, Étaín and Midir, Fionn Mac Cumhaill and the Fianna, among others. It is believed to record legends that go back at least to 400 BC. It names the sacred burial places such as Cruachan and Newgrange where kings and nobles could be buried. (cont. on page 4)



Mulvihills examine Temple Ciarán, where the saint is said to be buried

The Mulvihill Voice

EDITOR: Mary Ann Mulvihill-Decker,
Deputy Chieftain for North America
ASSISTANT EDITOR: James M. Mulvihill,
Chieftain, Mulvihill Clann

To contact us please write or e-mail to:

Tánaiste
Bricklin Press
P.O. Box 700
Sea Cliff, NY 11579
USA

mulvihillvoice@hotmail.com

We invite you to join the Mulvihill Clann now!

By becoming a member you will receive:

- *The Mulvihill Voice*, in whichever format you prefer
- Information on upcoming events and gatherings
- Updates on Mulvihill history and family news

By becoming a member, you will also be able to share your ancestry records and help piece together the mosaic that is Clann Mulvihill today.

Watch the mystery of DNA analysis unfold as we track the movements of our ancestors back through time and across Europe to Ireland.

Meet distant relatives and Discover your roots!

Please send your name, address, e-mail and phone contact info to:

Thomas C. Mulvihill, Membership
8821 Misty Creek Drive
Sarasota, Florida 34141

mm2000@comcast.net

941-929-9093

Dedication:

The summer issue of The Mulvihill Voice is hereby dedicated to **Sarah-Jayne Mulvihill** of England.



Sarah-Jayne, 32, was a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal British Air Force. Tragically, she was killed on May 6, 2006 when her helicopter was shot down over Basra, Iraq along with four comrades.

Sarah was an accomplished and dedicated airwoman and served as a Flight Operations Officer. She had also flown in Kenya in training exercises. She was the first British servicewoman to be killed in Iraq and the first to be killed in action in 22 years. She was on her second deployment to Iraq at the time of her death. Her husband is also a member of the RAF.

Sarah was born in Canterbury, England as Sarah-Jayne Poole. She excelled at running and rowing and loved sports and outdoor activities.

On behalf of our entire clann, our condolences go out to her husband Lee Mulvihill, and all of her family and loved ones.

--Mary Ann Mulvihill-Decker, Editor and Tánaiste

Note from the Editor:

Please send us the names of any elderly Mulvihills that you think would appreciate a printed copy of the newsletter. We especially want to include those folks who may not be able or inclined to read an online newsletter. We would also love to hear from you regarding what you would like to see in the newsletter. Thanks!

*TRADITIONAL MULVIHILL
MOTTO*

PRO ANIS ET FOCIS

'FOR OUR ALTARS and our Firesides'

Ancient Echoes *continued*

Now housed in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, the book was written around 1100 AD on calf-hide and named for St. Ciarán's legendary and magical calf.

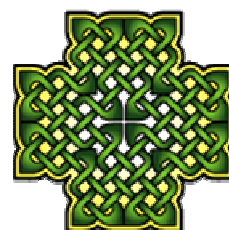
The site at Clonmacnoise is a wonder to visit. Its stone carvings are world renowned. It has exceptional high crosses, two round towers, a castle, many ruined churches and numerous grave slabs from 700-1200 AD. Here the group viewed two slabs which have the earliest known extant inscriptions of our name, in one of its many early Irish spellings (see photo). One of the slabs is on display in the on-site museum; the other can be viewed by arrangement.

Its pivotal location on a major crossroads also led to disaster. It was pillaged perhaps dozens of times by warring Irish chieftains, Vikings and Anglo-Normans alike. Clonmacnoise was finally reduced to ruin in 1552 by the English garrison from Athlone.

The Mulvihill clann was blessed with a perfectly sunny day and with our largest turnout of the weekend, especially by many beautiful children from nearby Coosan.



One of the two 7-9th century **Omaelmhichil** slabs at Clonmacnoise. Reads **Prayer for servant of Michael**



With great excitement, we spent a day at the ancient royal area of Cruachan, written up in our premier edition of *The Mulvihill Voice*. Experiencing for ourselves how very close Cruachan and its sixty known heritage sites are to Strokestown and *Corca Achlann* left no doubt whatsoever that our Mulvihill/Macbranán ancestors were vitally linked to this potent center of royalty and spirituality.

Here was the nexus of power in Connacht, located on the plains of *Magh Ai*, referred to in legend and in manuscripts such as *Book of the Dun Cow* and *The Dinshenchas*. Cruachan is at the historic crossroads of the east-west Ballina road and the Anglo-Norman road north to Sligo. Kings were coronated here on the mound at Carnfree; its ancient coronation stone now sits outside Clonalis House, Castlerea, in the hands of the O'Connor Clann. In an ancient prose-poem celebrating the inauguration of Felim O'Connor in 1310 as King of Connacht, according to a translation of *The Annals* by Prof. Myles Dillon, *MacBranáin* is one of the twelve names listed among the local chieftains to be present.

It is here that St. Patrick is said to have baptized Eithne and Fidelma, the Pagan daughters of King Laoghaire of Tara. In Christian times, Cruachan remained a center of ritual and became part of the Diocese of Elphin, the same diocese that also includes the ancient territory of *Corca Achlann*, the early Mulvihill tribe.

Now the twenty-first century has arrived at Cruachan. Rathcroghan mound, considered the primary site and royal seat, has now been imaged using technology such as ground-penetrating radar and other non-invasive geophysical survey tools. Without disturbing the mound through traditional archaeological methods, researchers from NUI Galway have revealed that the mound is quite complex. Concentric internal rings with many clearly defined segments indicate the previous presence of large, circular timber structures, possibly temples. These findings are similar to those at other important royal sites such as Tara and Navan Fort (Emain Macha) helping to quell longstanding controversies about the site's ancient prominence.

We walked several miles through the tranquil landscape to various legendary sites. Although we chose not to descend, locating the mouth of the Cave of the Cats (*Oweynagat*), subject of many legends spanning millennia, was mind-boggling. So was standing atop the ringfort *Rathnaderve*, where the white and brown bulls of the *Táin Bó* reputedly battled to the death. Other sites were off limits due to the presence of bulls, as much of the complex is still privately owned. A system of trails is very much needed to facilitate its accessibility. Yet the staff at the award-winning visitor center in Tulsk went out of their way to assist us to view the area and to explore its many mysteries. Cruachan is a *must* on any Mulvihill history tour through Roscommon.



Rathcroghan mound at the royal site of Cruachan, just west of Corca Achlann in Co. Roscommon

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I read the edition of *The Mulvihill Voice* with great interest.

I am looking for information about Denis/Dennis Mulvihill who was the "Stoker Mayor" of Bridgeport, Connecticut from 1901-1905.

He was notable for being the first Labor Mayor of this industrial city during the Labor Reform Movement and was called the Stoker Mayor because he had worked as a stoker at a local sewing machine factory.

Denis was my grandfather, Michael Lee's, first cousin. I would like to be able to trace my family back to Ireland, but no one seems to be able to remember what county they came from. I haven't had much luck tracing the Lees, but I thought I might be able to find Denis.

Here is what I know:

Denis was living in Bridgeport in 1890.

He may have had a son, Cornelius Jr. born 1893- I'm not sure because of the Jr.

If you have any leads on Denis, I will be very grateful.

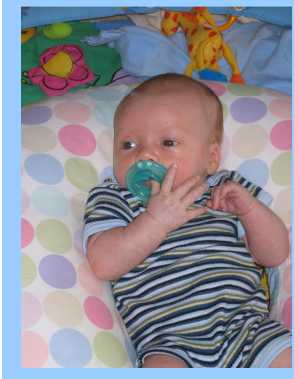
Best Regards,
Elizabeth Lee-Fulford
Elee-fulford@att.net



Rites of Passage

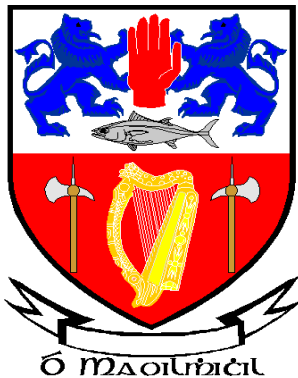
*Please send us your Mulvihill family
announcements for the next issue
Thank you.*

This summer we joyfully welcome a new addition to the clan. William Patrick Mulvihill was born on May 23, 2006 to Daniel Mulvihill IV and Marisa O'Connor Mulvihill of Hoboken, New Jersey, formerly of New York City.



He is named after his beloved Great-uncle Bill, the late author and teacher from Sag Harbor, New York.

We pray for him to have a long, healthy and very happy life.



Clann Mulvihill Officers & Staff 2006

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MULVIHILLS GATHER continued

midsummer blooms and inspiring history made for an extremely enjoyable walk on the legendary hill.

A few miles to the northwest, at the ruined cathedral of Elphin, local historian Sean Leary related the story of the noble Archdruid Ona, ancestor of the MacBranáns and Mulvihills, who hosted St. Patrick and was converted by him. This was the genesis of the Diocese of Elphin and the apparent advent of Christianity in our family. Sean also told us about archaeological finds at the site, including a canoe from around 1350 BC and burials dating back to 700BC.

Sunday morning found the early birds traipsing through nettles and tall grass to examine and document the ruins of Urney Church, said to be built by the Mulvihills in the middle ages. The structure looks as if it will soon crumble but might be the oldest tangible remnant of Mulvihill history in existence. (see article on page 1)

The Percy French Hotel was 'Mulvihill central' for two nights, with its welcoming pub and comfortable lounges, before we headed south to Athlone and our visit to the stunning monastic ruins of Clonmacnoise in the Shannon River valley. (see Ancient Echoes, page 3)

Meetings were held over the weekend to discuss plans for the future and projects of interest to the clann. The possibility of holding the reunion in Co. Kerry, Limerick or Clare was discussed at length. For while the ancient history of the clann lies in ancient Connacht on the slopes of Sliabh Bágghda, in Elphin and Cruachan, our ancestors were dispersed from there in the 1500s. There are now more Mulvihill families in Kerry than in any other part of Ireland. We very much hope to meet a lot more of them and those from Limerick, Clare and Galway next year. We plan to head south along the Shannon as did our ancestors and explore sites of Mulvihill history such as Doonmulvihill and Knockanira. We hope all Mulvihills reading this will join us next summer!

Please see our upcoming Autumn Issue of
The Mulvihill Voice

- The story of the Noble Druid Ona
- Brigit Mulvihill, Titanic Survivor

Corca Achlann continued

of the ancient records that have survived through the ages such as *The Annals of Connacht* and *Annals of the Four Masters*. We thus know of the tribe's existence between the years 430 AD and 1526, the last known mention of it in *The Annals*.

We know of a chief named MaoilMhichil from 430 and a Maolmichil in 866. We hear of a chief named Branain who died in 1120 and was grandson of Echthighern, Lord of the Horses. Our last known chief was Gillananaev O'Mulvihill who stood trial with others for the 1189 assassination of the heir of the King of Connacht. At times we fought with the O'Hanley's, whose territory was on the eastern slope of Sliabh Bágghda, adjacent to our own.

The long reign of the Corca Achlann may have been a result of various factors. For one thing, the territory was not within easy raiding distance of the Vikings and Normans, being inland. The mountain Sliabh Bágghda also somewhat protected it on the east and from invaders traveling upon the Shannon River. The proximity of the royal seat of Cruachan also led to a measure of protection by the powerful kings of Connacht, as the royal plains of *Magh Ai* bordered Corca Achlann to the west, near the modern town of Tulsk.

Yet it was the O'Connors, the very clann who held the royal seat and who had often been our allies who finally drove most of us out of the territory around 1416.

Nearly 600 years later, the descendants of the mighty and majestic Corca Achlann have found our way back. We stand together on the sacred hills, the mountain still beautiful, wild, inspiring. We gaze deeply into the past and there we find...the future, our tribe renewed, a clann of a new century, a family reunited.



Genetic Genealogy 2 continued

of man and are the signatures of individual family histories going back dozens or hundreds of generations.

Individual identity is not compromised by this test. Tens, or even hundreds of thousands of people will have substantially the same results, if they belong to the same "family". This "family" is composed of the descendants of an ancestor that lived hundreds, or thousands, or even tens of thousands of years earlier. The test is designed to reveal family association, not individual identity. In this respect our DNA test differs from the CODIS system employed by law enforcement agencies, which is designed to conclusively identify individuals, and is based upon the analysis of a number of the other mixed chromosomes in addition to Y DNA.

Medical conditions, present or potential, are not explicitly revealed by this test. This is not the type of testing employed by doctors and medical researchers to identify the underlying causes of genetically inherited conditions. It will not help to characterize those risks any more than your surname already does.

Finally, the Mulvihill Family DNA Project uses the services of the largest, and one of the most highly respected, testing companies in the world. They have an extensive privacy policy in place. They are Family Tree DNA, Ltd, using Dr. Michael Hammer's prestigious laboratory at University of Arizona.

I encourage everyone to join with us in this exciting and rewarding project. The cost is minimal in comparison to the satisfaction you will derive from being part of such a momentous exercise. Every individual is like another small piece added to the assembling jigsaw puzzle, and when the final picture is revealed, you'll witness the two thousand year history of Clann Mulvihill in all its astonishing detail!

Visit our website at www.familytreedna.com, search Mulvihill, and sign up today!!.

Also log on to the Mulvihill website at <http://www.mulvihill.net/> for more information on Mulvihill history from Chieftain Jim Mulvihill and his family, descended from the Mulvihills of Glin, Co. Limerick

URNEY CHURCH *continued*

Legends have also left their mark on the small church. It is said that one of Queen Maeve's warriors died as she and her soldiers set forth from nearby *Cruachan* in search of the coveted brown bull of Ulster. His name was Nissi and he was supposedly buried on an island where Urney Church now stands. Legend has it that his brother erected a memorial there in the last century BC. It has been suggested that this signifies the beginning of what later became the town of Strokestown, Co Roscommon.

We do know that Urney Church was on an island and that the surrounding lake was drained away long ago. We know the church was structurally modified in the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries at minimum. There are written references to objects having been seen there such as a red sandstone holy water receptacle, a *sheela-na-gig*, a gold flagon and window mullions.

Precious to the Mulvihill Clann, Urney Church is of deep concern to the family. A committee has formed to explore options regarding what might be done to shore up the very unstable stone before it collapses. Finding a low cost way of having the site professionally assessed is high on the committee's list. The site has never been excavated, but would be a fascinating and potentially very fruitful spot for archaeological analysis. From Queen Meave's time through the early monastic era, from the middle ages to the dispersal of the Mulvihills from Corca Achlann, who knows what treasures of Ireland, what secrets of Mulvihill history are left hidden in the sacred ground at Urney Church.



Joe Mulvihill of Longford, Vice Chairman of the Mulvihill Clann with his sister Diana Bullingham of Brighton, England. Both lived in Strokestown during their youth.



West window, from the inside of Urney Church

OUR IRISH HERITAGE

This summer we introduce a new feature in which we'll highlight current issues and discoveries regarding our quest to learn more about our ancestors.

BREAKING NEWS: A 9th century book of psalms has just been unearthed at an undisclosed location in the midlands of Ireland. Written on vellum (calf-hide), the text could prove to be among the oldest books of psalms ever found in Ireland. Preserved in boggy ground, the ancient book was discovered by a farmer who notified the National Museum of Ireland. Their team is now on site to determine if the area is rich in other antiquities. The approximately 20-page book has been rushed to a temperature and oxygen controlled environment for advanced study. It is being described as a miraculous find for it has been two centuries since an Irish early medieval text has been discovered.

The anaerobic (oxygen-free) conditions within a bog often allow for a spectacular degree of preservation of material, for even thousands of years.

Ireland's oldest known book is *The Cathach*, also a book of psalms, written around 600 AD. It is also the world's second oldest copy of the Psalms.