

AN EVEN BRIEFER HISTORY OF THE PURCELL FAMILY OF IRELAND

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The first Purcell to settle in Ireland was Sir Walter Purcell, an English knight of Norman origin. He was a descendant of Oyn Purcell, a baron who held the English manor of Catteshall, near Godalming, Co. Surrey, in return for service as a chamberlain (specifically, usher of the king's chamber) to King Henry I of England, son of William the Conqueror. When exactly the Purcells arrived in England from Normandy is unknown. Oyn Purcell may well have been a relation or descendant of one Hugh Purcell (called Hugo Porcellus in an 11th century Latin document), who in circa 1052 was lord of the vill of Montmarquet, located near the border between Normandy and Picardy. The unusual surname and the fact that the name Hugh was to be very common in the Purcell family in later centuries suggest a connection, but unfortunately evidence proving kinship is lacking.

Several Purcells after Oyn held Catteshall and served as chamberlains to the king. Oyn was succeeded at Catteshall in 1130 by his son Geoffrey Purcell, who later conveyed some land he held at Windsor to Reading Abbey, where, as a widower, he eventually became a Benedictine monk. The last of the four Purcells to hold the Catteshall barony was the best known: Ranulf Purcell, also called Ranulf de Broc, a leading figure at the court of King Henry II. Ranulf was one of the principal persecutors of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, and it was from Ranulf's residence at Saltwood Castle, Kent, that the four knights rode forth in late December 1170 to murder the archbishop.

According to an ancient manuscript now in the British Museum, Sir Walter Purcell arrived in Ireland as part of the retinue of knights who in 1185 accompanied Prince John (later King John), son of King Henry II, to the island. The same manuscript, as well as another old manuscript in the Royal Irish Academy, also suggest that Sir Walter's spouse was a daughter of King Henry II. It is impossible today to establish whether this assertion is accurate. If it is factual, she would have been one of the king's illegitimate children. Sir Walter was granted lands in Co. Kilkenny (including the manor of Kilmenan, now in the civil barony of Fassadinin, which he held prior to 1205) and was appointed seneschal (chief administrative and judicial officer) of the Irish province of Leinster in 1219.

Sir Walter Purcell was a close associate of the Earl Marshal (William the Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke), who had inherited Strongbow's vast Irish lands by marrying his daughter. William Marshal was one of the most powerful nobles in England. A major row erupted between King John and the Earl Marshal in 1210 when the latter gave shelter in Ireland to the king's enemy,

¹ In connection with the planned 2024 Purcell gathering in Ireland, the present writer was asked to prepare an abbreviated summary of his monograph, *A Brief History of the Purcells of Ireland*, which is published in PDF format on the website of The Purcell Society (www.purcellfamily.org). This paper is the result. For further details on the family and for sources and footnotes, the reader is referred to the longer text.

William de Braose. King John travelled to Ireland in that year and met the Marshal at Kilkenny to address the dispute. The king asked the Marshal to give him five knights (Geoffrey FitzRobert, Jordan de Sackville, Thomas de Samford, Jean d'Erlée, and Walter Purcell) to act as hostages while the matter was sorted out. Only two of the knights, Sir Jean d'Erlée and Sir Walter Purcell, were with the Earl Marshal at the time. Both readily agreed to be hostages and were imprisoned for a year. At the death of King John and the succession of his 9 year old son King Henry III in 1216, the Earl Marshal became regent of England.

Sir Walter Purcell's son Sir Hugh Purcell married in circa 1220 Beatrix Butler, daughter of the head of the Butler family (Theobald Walter, 1st Chief Butler of Ireland). Upon his marriage, Sir Hugh received numerous knights' fees (perhaps as many as 25) of Butler lands in Co. Tipperary, including Loughmoe (in today's civil parishes of Loughmoe West and Loughmoe East) and Corketeny (in today's adjoining civil parish of Templemore). He was the first Baron of Loughmoe, a feudal title. Hubert Walter (d. 1205), Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England, as well as sometime regent of England, one of the most influential figures at the court of King John, was the brother of Theobald Walter, 1st Chief Butler and uncle of Beatrix. Sir Hugh held his lands as a feudal liegeman of the Butlers, and so began the centuries in which the Purcells were military lieutenants of the heads of the Butler family. This feudal connection with the Butlers was strengthened by frequent intermarriage between the Butlers and the Purcells.

Sir Hugh Purcell and his wife Beatrix were very devoted to the cult of Thomas Becket, who had been canonized in 1172 as St. Thomas the Martyr. This was not unusual, because devotion to Becket was widespread among English settlers in Ireland during the 13th century, and the saint's feast day was a holy day of obligation in Ireland's English Pale. But it is interesting to recall that Sir Hugh was a relation (likely a great-nephew) of Ranulf de Broc and was perhaps a grandson ("on the wrong side of the blanket") of King Henry II, so his dedication to Becket may have reflected a wish to make amends on their behalf. In 1177, King Henry II, in expiation of Becket's murder, had founded the Abbey of St. Thomas the Martyr in Dublin. In a 13th century charter witnessed by "Walter Purcell, my father," Sir Hugh granted Kildroch to the Abbey of St. Thomas the Martyr for the salvation of his soul and the souls of his father, his mother, his "wife Beatrix" and his children. In another charter Sir Hugh Purcell granted the church of "Locmuy" [Loughmoe] to the same abbey for the salvation of his soul and the souls of his late "wife Beatrix of happy memory" and his ancestors and descendants. Sir Hugh, by then a widower, founded a Franciscan friary in Waterford city in 1240 and was buried there in the same year. The Franciscans of Waterford prayed for Hugh's soul every day thereafter, until they left Waterford

city in 2019. Sir Hugh's tomb is no longer to be seen in the friary (now called the French Church) but was apparently still there as late as the mid-18th century.²

Sir Hugh's son John Purcell was the father of another Sir Hugh Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe. The second Sir Hugh was Sheriff of Tipperary in 1295, the same year he was summoned to sit in the Irish Parliament as a baron. In 1295, while sheriff, Sir Hugh denied accusations that he had attacked Silvester le Ercedekne's castle on the Thursday after Easter, breaking into chests and coffers, and stealing goods worth 500 pounds ("*...money, robes, tablecloths, napkins, coverlets, sheets, fallings, hacquetons, gambisons, habargeons, helmets, spears, bows, and other armour, ... cups and silver spoons, gold rings, precious stones, brooches, girdles woven with silk, and other jewels ... 471 cows...180 afers...48 stud mares...48 oxen... 4 great (horses) ...1500 sheep...400 lambs...215 pigs...150 goats...80 kids ...46 bacons, 20 carcasses of beef, 4 tuns (dolea) [barrels] full of wheat flour, 3 tuns of oat flour, 4 tuns of ale which they drank and consumed...*").

On 3 January 1296, King Edward I commanded 27 knights of the English nobility of Ireland, including Sir Hugh Purcell and Sir Theobald Butler, to be at Whitehaven on 1 March "with as powerful and becoming a force as they could to aid the King in doing what he intended for the preservation of his regal rights and the honour of his crown." The king further ordered these knights to be ready to depart on the king's service and proposed to be present at Whitehaven himself. In 1296/1297, Walter Serjeant was pardoned after Hugh Purcell testified before the king that Serjeant had "well and manfully" served King Edward I in the war of Scotland. During 1297 and 1298 Sir Hugh was still on the king's service, staying in England for some of that period. On 4 May 1297, along with thirty other knights of the English nobility of Ireland, he was commanded by King Edward I to provide himself without delay with horses and arms and to prepare to join the king in his war against the King of France. (The text of King Edward I's letter read: "*Whereas the King would soon want the assistance of Hugh Purcell and his other lieges in Ireland, by reason of the present war between the King and the King of France, the King entreats and commands him on his fealty and affection to the King that without delay, he provide himself with horses and arms, so that he may be prepared to come to the King and to go with the King in the King's own proper person, wherever the King shall demand. The King shall retain him by his side and he shall never be sent away from the King, wherefore it becomes him to be prompt in coming.*") A document dated 29 November 1297 states that Hugh Purcell was about to join the King "in foreign parts." On 10 April 1298, the King wrote of "the good service rendered...in Flanders and elsewhere" by Hugh Purcell, formerly sheriff of Tipperary. Thus, we see that, after

² Charles Smith, in his book *The Ancient and Present State of the City and County of Waterford* (Dublin, 1746) described (p. 182) an ancient tomb in the French Church depicting in high relief a man in armor, with a shield on his left arm. Rev. R.H. Rylands, in his book *The History, Topography and Antiquities of the County and City of Waterford* (London, John Murray, 1824) (p. 130), identified this as the tomb of Sir Hugh Purcell but noted that it had disappeared from the church. Smith wrote in 1746 that the shield bore three lions passant guardant in pale. In respect of the manuscripts stating that Sir Hugh's mother was a daughter of King Henry II, it is intriguing that the coat of arms of the Royal House of Plantagenet at the time of Sir Hugh's death in 1240 was three lions passant guardant in pale. Later the various coats of arms used by the Purcells contained boar themes.

more than a century in Ireland following Sir Walter Purcell's arrival there in 1185, the Purcells still very much identified themselves as English.

In a Latin document in which he is described as Lord Hugh de Purcell ("De domino Hugo de Purcell"), Hugh is stated to hold Corketeny from Edmund Butler, 6th Chief Butler of Ireland, in 1305 in return for military service.

In 1328, James Butler, 7th Chief Butler of Ireland, was created 1st Earl of Ormond in the peerage of Ireland by King Edward III. James Butler had married the king's first cousin, Eleanor de Bohun, whose mother Elizabeth Plantagenet was a daughter of King Edward I. Edward III also appointed James Butler as lord palatine of Tipperary. Between 1328 and 1337, James, 1st Earl of Ormond named John Purcell (son of Walter Purcell and grandson of the Sir Hugh Purcell who was Sheriff of Tipperary in 1295) as Baron of Loughmoe within the Tipperary palatinate. This was a palatine designation, not a peerage title. In a March 1338 inquisition taken weeks after the death of James Butler, 1st Earl of Ormond, it was confirmed that John Purcell had held several knights' fees in Corketeny from the 1st Earl, as lord of the manor of Thurles, in return "for 4 [pounds] of royal service when scutage runs, a sparrowhawk yearly and doing suit at court." When the O'Kennedys attacked and burned the Butler town of Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, John Purcell captured Donald O'Kennedy, chief of the name, and had him hanged at Thurles and then drawn by horses.

In the middle of the 14th century, the Black Death, as the bubonic plague was called, ravaged Tipperary and Kilkenny. Chaos reigned, and, in terms of succession to land, it was unclear to the authorities who was still alive and who had died. In circa 1350, yet another Hugh Purcell penned a letter in Norman French (then still the language of the English aristocracy) to an unnamed clergyman. In it, he claimed the lordship of Corketeny, one of the principal lands of the Baron of Loughmoe. A rival kinsman, Geoffrey Roth Purcell, in 1356 submitted himself to James Butler, 2nd Earl of Ormond "until the coming of a certain true heir of the Purcells, lords of Corketeny." This suggests they were still trying to sort out who in the Purcell family remained alive. Hugh Purcell succeeded temporarily in advancing his claim, but in 1362 his manors of Loughmoe, Corketeny and Ikerrin in Tipperary were forfeited to the Crown. In letters patent dated 3 October 1362, King Edward III transferred the forfeited manors of Corketeny, "Loghmy" [Loughmoe] and Ikerrin to his first cousin once removed, James Butler, 2nd Earl of Ormond. The following month, Lord Ormond granted Corketeny and Ikerrin for life (without mention of the manor of Loughmoe) to Geoffrey Roth Purcell and Geoffrey, son of John Mór Purcell. The succession thereafter passed within the lineage of Geoffrey Roth Purcell's descendants, who held the family lands, including Loughmoe, from 1362 until 1722.

An official Irish document from 1341 makes a distinction between Englishmen raised in England and Englishmen raised in Ireland. John Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe, alive in 1338, was an example of the latter. By this time, the English Crown had become alarmed that "Englishmen raised in Ireland" were becoming increasingly Irish in their outlook, by taking Irish wives, speaking Irish (in addition to English and Norman French), and adopting Irish customs. In 1366,

the Irish Parliament passed the Statutes of Kilkenny to forbid this assimilation with what the statute termed the "Irish enemies." But the legislation came too late. The assimilation continued apace in future generations, so that some Anglo-Norman families, including the Purcells, in due course would be described as *hiberniores hibernis ipsis*, that is, more Irish than the Irish themselves.

In the wake of the Statutes of Kilkenny, there arose the phenomenon of Anglo-Irish gentry who when necessary made solemn official assurances of their Englishness while actually living lives that, in cultural terms, were akin to those of Irish chieftains. An excellent example of this is James Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe in the middle of the 15th century.

James's father, Thomas Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe, had seized by force two messuages (dwelling houses) and four ploughlands in Magowry and Skehanagh, Co. Tipperary, from the St. John family and enfeoffed James Butler, Earl of Ormond, of them. These had formerly been Purcell houses and lands. The St. John family regained this property only by resort to the courts. In circa 1465, James Purcell was described in a contemporary document as having repeated his father's actions by again seizing the same St. John messuages and lands in Magowry and Skehanagh "*with force and arms, in manner of war, with banner displayed, contrary to law and against the peace of our sovereign lord the King.*" The italicized language contains a very serious charge, because an allegation of using force, in manner of war, with banner displayed and against the king's peace, was an accusation of waging a private war. This was considered a grave defiance of royal authority. Only the Crown was empowered to wage war. James Purcell, who in the same document is said to be "*maintained and supported by divers English rebels and other Irish enemies of the King that he will not obey any process of the Common Law,*" was ordered to surrender himself to the king's judges in Ireland until the issue of title to this property was decided.

This James Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe was a celebrated soldier and cattle-raider in Co. Tipperary and was an example of the odd contemporary term "degenerate Englishman," a disparaging phrase used by London during this period to describe members of the English nobility and gentry of Ireland who, like James and his wife (a Butler), adopted Gaelic customs, spoke Irish fluently, and kept an Irish bard or poet in the household to record their exploits and sing of them. London deeply deplored cultural enrichment of this sort.

James Purcell is the subject of an extraordinary Gaelic funeral elegy which in the early 1500s was reduced to written form in the northeast of Co. Tipperary by an unknown scribe. The manuscript is entitled, in Latin, "*In Obitum Jacobi Pursell Baronis de Lughma*" ["On the death of James Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe"] and is now preserved in the British Museum (British Museum Add. Ms. 33993). The funeral elegy describes James as having curly red hair and ruddy skin, as being a descendant of Charlemagne and of Geoffrey Roth Purcell, and as having desired to reconcile Normans and native Irish. It was translated from the Irish by the late Irish language scholar Anne O'Sullivan. A couple of stanzas give a sense of this poem:

I did not realise how spoilt I was by the son of Thomas [James, Baron of Loughmoe] with locks that curled like horns, until clay was thrown on that nobleman I lacked for nothing...

Should anyone wish to praise him since he is dead they would say that the French of whose race he was were not anxious to seek a quarrel with him...

Know that Loughmoe is full of sadness and Killahara after the King [the Baron], all wish to weep for the soldier and none thinks of stopping.

A strange thing occurred in the household of the baron, at the height Of our mourning for the lion of fierce valour the fire went dark...

Though it is my duty as poet to enumerate his exploits the truth is that it is not difficult for me to remember them, however numerous they were, it was my charge to keep an account of them.

[There follows a description of some three dozen cattle raids and armed engagements led by James. The following stanza provides a flavor.]

The prey he took from Guirtin Classach, Cluain O Sgilleog was a bloody affray, his people burned Newtown and the mist did not cover the slaughter of all...

Anne O'Sullivan wrote: "The baron's 'battle-roll' consists, in the spirit of his time, of a list of successful cattle-raids. These were wide-ranging and carried out indiscriminately against Anglo-Norman and Gaelic lords... In one episode he is seen on a wider stage campaigning in support of the Butler lordship when it was invaded by the Earl of Desmond about 1468. James, we are told, routed Desmond's allies, the Roches, and drove them across the Slievicrot mountains, bordering the Glen of Aherlow... Compared with the other elegies he was on a very close footing with his poet who fears that he and his fraternity will no longer be welcome at Loughmoe after James's death... Bardic poetry was a stylised form of oral art and its highly condensed thought expressed in esoteric allusions and kennings to suit the metre is difficult to render in translation. Much of its artistic quality is inevitably lost. ...When it was still part of a living tradition, however, the bardic idiom was immediately comprehensible to an aristocratic company. The elegies would have been chanted ceremoniously to a musical accompaniment at the obsequies, an impressive performance, according to accounts. It heightened the dignity of the occasion and gratified the mourners' pride as they listened to their lord's prowess being so elegantly extolled. After the funeral the poem would have been committed to memory and circulated orally until some future occasion led to its being transcribed into manuscript and preserved as a permanent memorial."

James Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe, and his Butler wife were buried at Holy Cross Abbey, near Thurles, Co. Tipperary. It was likely they who built the oldest surviving wing of Loughmoe Castle: the south tower, with its spiral staircases, vaulted floors, narrow loopholes and walls ten feet thick at the base. Recent scientific testing has established that this wing was erected between 1444 and 1494. Above the fireplace in the great hall of the south tower were carvings of the Purcell coat of arms (on the left side, when facing the fireplace) and the Butler coat of arms (on the right). The Purcell arms have been defaced, but the Butler arms were still visible in 1984.

The 15th century was also a time when several Purcells held high office in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Landed families actively sought such positions for their younger sons. John Purcell, Bishop of Ferns, was appointed papal nuncio by Pope Calixtus III in 1455, Jordan Purcell was Bishop of Cork and Cloyne from circa 1429 until at least 1463, and Thomas Purcell became Bishop of Waterford and Lismore in 1483. John Purcell was the abbot of the Abbey of St. Thomas the Martyr in Dublin in 1487.

In a 1518 deed signed at "Logmo", "Thomas Purcell, baron of Loughmoe [Loughmoe] and Corkyny [Corketeny]" confirmed that he held the barony of Loughmoe and the manor of Corketeny from Piers Butler, 8th Earl of Ormond, "as his ancestors had and held them from old times." Thomas Purcell's son James succeeded him as Baron of Loughmoe. A son of Thomas and younger brother of James was Philip Purcell, who became the last Abbot of Holy Cross Abbey, before Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries of Ireland in 1539. This was an important position of the Catholic Church in Ireland. In 1543, several Purcells, including Abbot Philip Purcell, were among the signers of an address to King Henry VIII praising James Butler, 9th Earl of Ormond in the following terms: "*...his intent hath been and is to his power and possibility so to put away Irish usages, extortions, and abuses ... He helpeth to bring up at his charges...[the] children [of the signers]...after the English sort...all the Irishry in effect do bear [him] more mortal hate, encompassing his destruction above any man living.*" In their address to the king, the signers also affirmed their loyalty to the House of Tudor. This is another example of how the Purcells would stress their Englishness when it suited them, while at the same time remaining completely at ease in the Irish language and culture surrounding them.

Another Purcell elevated to high ecclesiastical office during this era was John Purcell, Bishop of Ferns from 1519 to 1539, the second member of the family to hold this diocese. In 1537, the king's commissioners accused the lord bishop of a long series of "robberies and assaults," including the robbery of twenty houses in Feddred, when "the bishop, who was on horseback, frequently called for fire, to burn the said houses."

James Purcell was succeeded as Baron of Loughmoe by his son Thomas Purcell. In 1569, during the First Desmond Rebellion against the Tudors, waged on behalf of the Catholic Earl of Desmond, Gerald FitzGerald, Thomas Purcell, a Catholic, fought against the Desmond rebels in Co. Kerry. One of the main military commanders against the Desmond forces was Thomas

Butler, 10th Earl of Ormond, the Anglican friend and cousin (through Anne Boleyn) of Queen Elizabeth I. But Lord Ormond's Catholic younger brothers, Sir Edmund Butler, Edward Butler and Piers Butler, were themselves in open rebellion, at least in the early phases of the Desmond uprising. The Tudor government in Dublin wanted to clip the wings of Catholic figures like Thomas of Loughmoe and Ormond's younger brothers, who often conducted themselves as independent warlords. In April 1569, the Lord Deputy of Ireland sent a commission from Dublin to Tipperary to collect evidence of the treason of Ormond's brothers. The commissioners spent a night at Loughmoe Castle, and Sir Edmund Butler, in defiance, arrived at Loughmoe with his private troops who "pilfered and spoiled the poor people of the town, so as all night we had but howling and crying." The other brother, Piers Butler, having also arrived at Loughmoe, was ordered to travel to Kilkenny to meet the commissioners. Fearing arrest, Piers Butler "retired to his bed at Loughmoe, sore sick or so feigning himself" in order to avoid the journey to Kilkenny.

The 10th Earl of Ormond hurried to Kilkenny to deal with his brothers. The 10th Earl's dealings with Thomas Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe were complicated. It is likely that Thomas Purcell, as a Catholic, had conflicted loyalties. Purcell would have dealt frequently with Sir Edmund Butler, because the Earl was in England for long periods and had named his brother Edmund as his representative in respect of his Irish lands. Many years later, one of Thomas Purcell's sons, Richard Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe complained that those "*who procured my noble Lord of Ormond [Thomas Butler, 10th Earl of Ormond] to persecute his [Richard Purcell's] father and mother from time to time, by long imprisonment and such other extremities, and to take a principal part of their lands to his own hands, continue their old malice...*" Ormond's brothers eventually fell into line, and Thomas Purcell remained in line. A 1621 book by Philip O'Sullivan Beare mentions a battle at Goart-na-Pisi (Gurtnapisha, Co. Tipperary) where a Butler army, commanded by Edward and Piers Butler, Thomas Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe and Lord Dunboyne (a Butler), was defeated by the Desmond army. This would have been in circa 1581.

Historians consider the Desmond Rebellions of the 16th century to be an early forerunner of a kind of Irish nationalism. The rebels, who were Catholics, opposed the expansion of English government authority in the Irish province of Munster and the "plantation" there of Protestant settlers from England. As stated above, Thomas Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe fought against the Desmond rebels. But during the 17th century that was about to begin, Thomas Purcell's descendants, as well as many other Purcells, would align themselves consistently in support of various initiatives (all of which ended in failure) to increase Irish control in Ireland and to protect Catholic rights. These included the rebellion of O'Neill and O'Donnell, the Catholic Confederation, the fight against Cromwell, and the Jacobite struggle against William and Mary.

It is likely that Thomas Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe added the massive central and north wings to Loughmoe Castle, transforming it from a fortified keep into a comfortable manor house. He died in circa 1599 and was buried at Loughmoe. The memorial hymn composed by John Scott and played at his funeral (*Scott's Lament for the Baron of Loughmoe*) survives and can be heard on the internet: www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9qdS2mNfHg

Thomas Purcell was succeeded as Baron of Loughmoe by his son Ralph Purcell. In 1598, Ralph, along with many Butlers, including the Viscount Mountgarret, the Baron Cahir, and the 10th Earl of Ormond's nephew Piers Butler (son of Sir Edmund Butler), joined the rebellion of O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and O'Donnell, Earl of Tyrconnell against the Crown. When Piers Butler was captured, his uncle Ormond had him hanged at Thurles as a traitor and had his head sent to Dublin.

Ralph Purcell died early in the 17th century and was succeeded as Baron of Loughmoe by his brother, Richard Purcell. In 1599, Richard, in command of 200 foot and 60 horse, had also joined the rebellion of O'Neill and O'Donnell and received a pardon in 1602. This was a fraught time for Ireland's Catholic gentry, because the Dublin government of Elizabeth I was keen to seize any opportunity to confiscate their lands and bestow them on Protestant families from England which the government had recently settled in Ireland. (Official documents of the period refer to the latter recent arrivals as the New English and to families long settled in Ireland, like the Butlers and Purcells, as the Old English.)

The lands of Richard Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe had not escaped the notice of the government, and nor had his behavior. Richard and Sir Walter Butler of Kilcash (a Catholic who later succeeded as 11th Earl of Ormond) were accused of stealing 700 cows and 3000 sheep in a massive cattle raid in 1601 against FitzPatrick of Upper Ossory. In 1606, Richard was imprisoned in Dublin Castle on a charge of murdering Adam Tobin, Sheriff of Tipperary. Adam Tobin's sister, born Margaret Tobin, was the widow of Ralph Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe. She had sued her brother-in-law Richard Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe and his mother Joan Purcell (née FitzPatrick), Dowager Baroness of Loughmoe in respect of a property claim. Richard Purcell and his men challenged the sheriff when he tried to seize Purcell property and cattle as surety. A struggle ensued.

Purcell having lost his staff leapt from his horse and drew his sword half way out of the sheath, but the sheriff being likewise lighted, and having a dart in his hand, suddenly closed with him and told him that if he would not keep the peace, he would stab him with his dart. Purcell, retiring backward from the sheriff, fell upon his back, and withal the sheriff fell upon him, and both being down and struggling together, Purcell lying undermost upon the ground, cried out to his men, "Purcello Abo" (which is an invitation or call which the Irish lords use to their followers when they would have them stick to them in any danger or distress). Thereupon divers of Purcell's men drew their swords and gave the sheriff sundry wounds in his head, whereof he died about twenty-four days after, and hurt divers of the sheriff's men.

London followed this case closely, seeing an opportunity to seize the Loughmoe properties and grant them to a Protestant. Letters survive from the Lords in Council in London to the Lord Deputy of Ireland instructing the latter that Richard, "sometime a notorious rebel" and the perpetrator of many other "execrable murders," should not be allowed to escape his just punishment and informing him that His Majesty intended to grant the lands Richard would

forfeit to a well-deserving servant. In the same period, acting under martial law, the authorities arrested and executed Richard's first cousin, Redmund Purcell, on charges of being a "notorious thief and rebel." Thomas Butler, 10th Earl of Ormond, even wrote to Lord Salisbury imploring him not to pardon Richard Purcell due to his commission of murders and other offenses.

Richard Purcell wrote to the Lord Deputy in 1606, protesting his innocence and complaining that the seizure of his property had resulted in his young son, who had been "a towardly scholar," having to leave school. Richard, who himself had studied for a time at Trinity College Dublin, also recalled that he had been a law student but had to abandon his studies due to the poverty of his parents. In the end, the jury acquitted Richard of murder and convicted him of manslaughter, with the result that he kept his lands. He died in 1624.

Richard's son and successor, Theobald (or Tibbot) Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe, married Ellen Butler, daughter of James Butler, 12th Baron Dunboyne. He represented Tipperary in the House of Commons of the 1634 Irish Parliament. Theobald was also a leader in Munster of the rebellion of the Confederate Catholics. The rebellion began in 1641, when Catholic gentry, while still professing loyalty to King Charles I, attempted to seize control of the entire English administration in Ireland. The attempt failed, but the Confederate Catholics did succeed in setting up their own government over a portion of Ireland. They made Kilkenny their capital. The rebellion devolved into a struggle between the army of the Catholic Confederation (one of whose commanders was Major General Patrick Purcell, of the Purcells of Croagh, Co. Limerick, a junior branch of the Loughmoe Purcells) and a royalist army under the 12th Earl of Ormond. In a December 1641 report of the lord justices, it is stated that "most of the county of Tipperary are in rebellion, led therein by the Baron of Logmoe (Purcell)..." After Cromwell overthrew the monarchy and invaded Ireland, the Catholic army and the royalist army combined forces in an unsuccessful attempt to defeat him.

On Theobald Purcell's death in 1644, his son James Purcell, aged 22, became Baron of Loughmoe. He married Elisabeth Butler, sister of James Butler, 12th Earl of Ormond, later 1st Duke of Ormonde, a knight of the Garter, and viceroy of Ireland. The Duke was raised as a Protestant, but his siblings, including Elisabeth, were Catholics. James Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe died at age 30 in 1652, leaving an infant son, Nicholas Purcell, born in 1651. The cause of James Purcell's death is unknown, but hundreds of thousands of people died in Ireland during this period of Cromwellian devastation.

The Cromwellians described all Catholics in Ireland, whether from Gaelic or Old English families, as "Irish papists." This term was an accurate one as to the Purcells, because by then the heads of the House of Loughmoe considered themselves thoroughly Irish and staunchly Catholic.

The early childhood years of Nicholas Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe, were traumatic. His estate of 11,5000 was confiscated, and the fatherless family was transplanted to Connaught. He was 9 when the Cromwellian regime fell and the monarchy was restored in 1660. In addition to the senior Purcell line of Loughmoe, the many Catholic junior lines of the Purcell family in

Tipperary, Kilkenny, Limerick and elsewhere had also suffered confiscation of their lands by the Cromwellians. Most only succeeded in regaining a portion of their former lands at the Restoration, but the child Baron of Loughmoe, Nicholas Purcell, was an exception. He managed to recover practically all of his lands, due to the influence of his legal guardian, his maternal uncle, James Butler, 1st Duke of Ormonde.

Colonel Nicholas Purcell, Baron of Loughmoe, is known to history as a Jacobite, that is, a supporter of England's last Catholic monarch, King James II, following his loss of the throne in 1688. Nicholas was sworn of James II's Irish Privy Council in 1686, served as a member for Tipperary of the Irish House of Commons in 1689, and was the commanding officer of a regiment in the Irish Army of King James II from 1689 to 1691. Ruvigny's *The Jacobite Peerage* also suggests that James II gave Nicholas a Jacobite peerage as Baron Loughmoe but cautions that the evidence for such a creation is "extremely slender."

Colonel Nicholas Purcell raised his regiment (originally of dragoons, later converted into a regiment of horse) in Tipperary, and it was composed of relations and tenants. Many of its officers were Purcells and Butlers. In 1689, the regiment fought at the Siege of Derry (where Colonel Nicholas Purcell had his horse shot from under him while riding behind his cousin, Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Butler, later 6th Viscount Mountgarret) and also in Scotland at the battle of Killiecrankie (where it fought dismounted and its bravery was praised). In 1690, the regiment was at the battle of the Boyne (where Purcell's Horse formed part of the reserve of which King James II took personal command) and at the first siege of Limerick. In the same year, Nicholas was a member of an Irish deputation which traveled to France to confer with King James II at his court in exile and was taken by that king to meet King Louis XIV at Versailles. In July 1691, the regiment fought at the battle of Aughrim, which marked the decisive defeat of the Jacobites by the army of King William III.

Many Purcells served in the Jacobite army, whether in Purcell's Horse or other regiments. One Purcell who fought in the Williamite army against the Jacobites was Colonel Toby Purcell, of the Purcells of Rorestown, Co. Tipperary. He was second in command of the 23rd Regiment of Foot (which later became the Royal Welsh Fusiliers) at the battle of Aughrim. The regiment's colonel was killed in action at Aughrim, and the next day King William III promoted Purcell to colonel and placed him in command of the 23rd Foot.

Colonel Nicholas Purcell was one of the Jacobite negotiators of the 1691 Treaty of Limerick, which set the peace terms. He urged the soldiers of his regiment to remain in Ireland, but 150 of them sailed to Brest, France anyway. Nicholas was attainted in 1691. Although he received a pardon the following year, he was prevented from returning to Loughmoe Castle, which was occupied by a Williamite garrison from 1693 until roughly 1700 and which Nicholas described in 1700 as being uninhabitable. While dispossessed of the castle, Nicholas and his family lived mainly in London. On finally being allowed to move back into Loughmoe Castle, Nicholas Purcell and his wife Ellis Browne (daughter of the Jacobite peer, Sir Valentine Browne, Viscount Kenmare) lived in poverty at the castle until their deaths. In 1714, on the rumor of a Jacobite

rising, he was obliged to surrender his arms and horses. He was detained as a precaution at Clonmel Gaol in 1715, at the time of the Jacobite rising in Britain on behalf of King James II's exiled son.

Nicholas Purcell, last Baron of Loughmoe, died at Loughmoe Castle on 4 March 1722 and was buried in the chapel at the Loughmore cemetery. His wife (who was described in 1724 as penniless) died at Loughmoe in 1737. Nicholas had no son or brothers, and, after he and his wife died, the castle and the old Purcell lands, originally acquired in circa 1220 by Sir Hugh Purcell, first Baron of Loughmoe, passed out of the Purcell family.

By the early 1600s, the Purcells of Loughmoe had spawned numerous junior lines, mainly in Tipperary and Kilkenny (particularly in Kilkenny's civil barony of Fassadinin), but also in Limerick, Dublin and elsewhere. Some of these branches had been well established on their lands for many generations. The Purcells of Ballyfoyle were quite prominent. Philip Purcell of Ballyfoyle Castle in Co. Kilkenny was a member of the Supreme Council of the Catholic Confederation in the 1640s. His wife, the Hon. Ellen Butler, was a daughter of the President of the Supreme Council, Richard Butler, 3rd Viscount Mountgarret, a Catholic peer descended from a younger son of the 8th Earl of Ormond. The Purcells of Croagh, Co. Limerick also long held extensive lands. The best known member of this line was Major General Patrick Purcell, mentioned above as a general in the army of the Catholic Confederation in the 1640s. When the Confederate troops joined the royalist army under James Butler, 12th Earl of Ormond (later 1st Duke of Ormonde) to fight Cromwell, Purcell served as a major general in the royalist army. After Patrick Purcell was hanged and beheaded in Limerick by Cromwell's son-in-law in 1651, his widow (a daughter of the 18th Baron Kerry) married James Butler, Esq., of Kilmoyler, Co. Tipperary, a descendant of the 9th Earl of Ormond. Before the Catholic Confederation was formed, Patrick was called Colonel Patrick Purcell, having fought on the continent against France and Sweden in the army of Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III.

The Purcells of Loughmoe and most of the junior lines descended from them remained staunchly Roman Catholic. By about 1750, these Catholic lines had all lost their lands and positions. Some, like the Purcells of Foulksrath, Co. Kilkenny had their lands confiscated by Cromwell and never regained them. Their seat, Foulksrath Castle, which is said to date from the early 16th century, is the only former Purcell castle which is not a ruin. It remains a private residence. Others, like the Purcells of Ballyfoyle, Co. Kilkenny, only managed to regain a fraction of their former lands after the fall of Cromwell and were unable to thrive. The last of the Ballyfoyle line, Edward Purcell (son of Philip Purcell and Ellen Butler), could not adjust to his diminished status. Deprived of Ballyfoyle Castle, he lived in another family residence, Clogharinka Castle. After Edward was imprisoned in England for threatening to kill his kinsman, the 1st Duke of Ormonde (who apparently had ignored Edward's pleas to help him regain his lands), the Duke had mercy on him and found him a military appointment in France, where he later died. Other Purcell lines lost their lands after 1691 for fighting in the Jacobite army. Still others fell victim to Penal Laws enacted after the Jacobite defeat and which made it difficult for Catholics to hold and inherit land. The Purcells of these various lines who remained in Ireland found themselves

living in reduced circumstances compared to their forebears. In the 1690s and during the first half of the 18th century, some Purcells abandoned Ireland for the continent to seek military careers in the armies of various Catholic sovereigns in Europe. One example was John Baptist Purcell (1721-1779), of the Purcells of Rorestown, Co. Tipperary, who left Kilkenny at a young age and distinguished himself as an officer in the Austrian service, rising to the rank of major general and becoming a baron of the Holy Roman Empire. His son, Colonel Baron Johann Purcell of the Austrian army, commanded an Hungarian infantry battalion during the Napoleonic Wars. Beginning in the 19th century, many Purcells emigrated to Britain and to the New World.

Several junior Purcell lines conformed to the Church of Ireland and managed to keep their lands. One example of this is the distinguished line which later became the Purcells of Burton Park, Co. Cork. A member of this line, Sir John Purcell, was knighted by the Prince Regent in 1811 for bravely defending himself from physical attack and robbery. Although the family were Anglicans for several generations, the last males of this line, Raymond Purcell and his brother Charles, were Roman Catholics. Both brothers were graduated from Oxford and fought as officers in the British Army during World War I. Charles Purcell, Lieutenant, Irish Guards, was killed in action at the battle of the Somme in 1916. His older brother, Major Raymond John Purcell, never recovered from the trauma of his intense experience of combat and died in 1928. The Ryan-Purcells of Burton Park (descended from a sister of Raymond and Charles) now represent the family. Another Anglican line was that of Lieutenant Colonel John Purcell, M.P., High Sheriff of Suffolk (d. 1852), who married the wealthy heiress Mary Frances FitzGerald and changed the family name to FitzGerald. Their seats were at Boulge Hall, Suffolk and the Little Island, Co. Waterford. Their son Edward FitzGerald (who until age 9 was Edward Purcell) was the renowned translator of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*.

In 1979, a book called *Fassadinin: Land Settlement and Society in Southeast Ireland 1600-1850* by William Nolan, Ph.D., later a professor at University College Dublin, was published in Ireland. It is fortuitous that Dr. Nolan chose the civil barony of Fassadinin in Co. Kilkenny to examine land holding patterns in Ireland during the period covered. Fassadinin has many Purcell connections.

Sir Walter Purcell, the first Purcell to settle in Ireland and the father of Sir Hugh Purcell, first Baron of Loughmoe, held Kilmenan in present-day Fassadinin before 1205, but this land apparently later passed out of the Purcell family, because it went to Walter's daughter Mabel Purcell as a marriage portion. By circa 1404, the Purcells were again in Fassadinin, because

Thomas Purcell of Fennel held the castle and lands of Clogharinka. Clogharinka Castle remained a Purcell possession until the 1660s.³

Within the civil barony of Fassadinin in the 17th century were located the seats of numerous Purcell lines, including the Purcells of Foulksrath, of Lismaine, of Conahy, and of Esker. Clogharinka Castle in Fassadinin was long the principal seat on the Purcells of Fennel (later of Ballyfoyle), until they built Ballyfoyle Castle in a neighboring civil barony. In the 18th century the Purcells of Ballymartin also had their seat in Fassadinin. Dr. Nolan's book (pp. 187, 188-189) contains a section which describes well the general position of the Purcell family in Fassadinin (and, by extension, in Ireland generally) by 1850:

Much of the material fabric which characterised the medieval world in which the Anglo-Normans were dominant had disappeared by 1850. Apart from the few who were commemorated in townland names such as Clintstown, Foulksrath, Ballyragget and Suttonsrath, the majority of the early medieval family names had vanished without a trace. The occupiers in 1850 [note: that is, small farmers who were tenants, not landowners] whose surnames denoted their Anglo-Norman ancestry were invariably representative of seventeenth century landowning families such as Purcell and Butler ... The complete absence from the barony of the surnames Blanchville and Archer and the scarcity of occupiers with surnames such as Purcell and Butler adequately reflect the demise of the Anglo-Norman in Fassadinin. The Purcells in 1640 owned approximately one seventh of the barony [of Fassadinin]. [Note: The civil barony of Fassadinin has an area of 106.6 square miles. Therefore, one seventh of the barony equated to about 15.23 square miles.] In 1850 they were not even landowners and only thirty-eight occupiers with this surname were listed in the General Valuation of Rateable property. These held a combined area of 684 acres, and the largest farm held by a Purcell consisted of 84 acres in the hill townland of Coolcullen. The Purcells circa 1640 were predominantly associated with the fertile and attractive lowlands of Fassadinin. They are not found here in 1850. The Valuation Book returns them as occupiers in the Wandesford estate, in the bleak hill country in the east of the barony and in the townland of Knockmajor in south-east Fassadinin. They were completely absent from their ancestral townland of Ballyragget and the sites of long ruined Purcell castles were the only traces of their historical presence here. The distribution of the Butlers, which was the family name of the Ormondes and Mountgarrets, the two most influential landowning families in seventeenth century Fassadinin, reveals a similar pattern.

³ Clogharinka Castle, held by the Purcells since at least 1404, came back into Purcell hands in a roundabout manner. After the last Purcell of Ballyfoyle, Edward, emigrated to France, his sister Margaret Purcell (wife of Captain John Powell) managed to obtain possession of Clogharinka Castle at some point after 1669. Their granddaughter Alice Tirwhit married Major Toby Purcell of Ballymartin, Co. Kilkenny, and Clogharinka Castle then became the residence of the latter. The son of Toby and Alice Purcell emigrated to Europe and became an officer in the Austrian service. Their daughter Anne Purcell married Edmund Butler, later 9th Viscount Mountgarret, a Catholic who conformed to the Church of Ireland in 1736.

In 2021, The Purcell Society was formed, with the aim of bringing various branches of the family back into contact with each other and of encouraging research of and knowledge about the history of the Purcells. The co-presidents are Walter Ryan-Purcell, of the Purcells of Burton Park, representing Purcells who remained in Ireland, and Ronald Purcell, of the United States, senior descendant of Major General Baron Johann Baptist Purcell of the Austrian service, originally of Ireland, representing Purcells who emigrated. As of 7 November 2023, The Purcell Society has 292 members: Purcells, Purcell descendants and others from all over the world: Ireland, Britain, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Hungary, France, Latin America and elsewhere.

In June 2024, a three-day gathering of Purcells will take place in Tipperary, Kilkenny and north Cork, including a big celebration at the village of Loughmore, where the ruins of Loughmoe Castle stand and where the head of the Purcell family had his principal home for 500 years, until 1722. This will be the largest gathering of Purcells in Ireland in more than 300 years.

19 November 2023