

WHIDDY ISLAND

Derivation: T. F. ORahilly, Cork Journal Jan/June 1958,
Canon Lyons, Guys 1875, Bennett, Lewis,
Smith, Fullerton.

Hag of Beare. Kuno Meyer. "Myvaun from
Whiddy".

1261: Quotation from Annals of Innisfallen re destruc-
tion of castle. Was it a Norman Castle? Where sited?
On site of present ruin built 1400/1450 (Henry IV?)
Name of O'S. builder of 15 cent. castle

Kilmore church and graveyard built within rath. Any
Papal mentions? Anything in Brady, Webster or other
Prot. mentions of this church? Was it used for Prot.
worship? In 1668 Walter in his Will left bequest to
the Chappel of Whiddy. Walter presumably Prot.
(Cork Waters disclaim relationship)

Canon Cahalane's theory of a one-time parish between
present parishes of Durrus and Bantry. Inis Cuinge,
and that Whiddy may have been in this lost parish.
(Canon Lyons' theory, a "lost" parish between Schull
and Kilroe (Goleen)). Any possibility of locating
mention of Kilmore church?

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Describe traditional account of burial of "Lady" Walters in Kilmore owing to tempest preventing journey to mainland. (No trace of Walter graves in mainland burial grounds)

Whiddy Castle known as "Old Woman of Whiddy". Where is this mentioned? Is it a confusion with flat boulder on strand West of Coos Roe on which the lady who jumped from top of Hungry Hill is said to have landed on her bottom, leaving its imprint on the boulder?

1400/1450. Building of castle. Where is castle and island mentioned as a prison of O S. Beare?

1565. Granted by Crown to Sir Owen

1591. Mortgaged by Sir Owen - to Davenant and Pilchard Co?

1601. Pacata mention of Earl of ^{Thomond} ~~Kenmare~~ leaving garrison there

1602. Pacata - Carew

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1608. Lease to Davenant, etc?

1612. 9 ploughlands, Whiddy, granted to Sir Owen:
Butler's Gleanings, p. 27

Is there a statement that OSullivan More held Whiddy?
Seem to remember it. It is unlikely that O S. More even
temporarily had a grant of it.

1618. Sean de Mais mention of poem "Crough Faoide"

1621, 1622, 1637, 1631 - Documents re Davenant in hand
and bespoke from P.R.O., London

1629. Drake's letter from Middleburgh Zealand re project
for Huguenot settlement in Beare Is. and perhaps
in Whiddy. Davenant probably the supporter of
project mentioned.

1636. Davenant's Will

1642. Adm. of above Will

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1641. Claims in T.C.D. of Protestants' goods lost in
Rebellion; see also Bennett

1652. Walters (letter from Cromwell) and shipping of deportees to Spain.
1653. Dunlop, Ireland under Commonwealth and seizure of Whiddy by Rebel Forces and raids therefrom
1659. Was Walters confirmed in ownership of island this year?
1659. Quote Census of Ireland figures for Whiddy. He apparently living at Blackrock on mainland and owner of Whiddy? Later living on island.
1660. Waters to settle Prot. families in Bantry. Governor of Bantry Fort "at 5/- day or less". Dunlop, Vol. II. p. 136. W. son of a haberdasher and charged with withholding £1,000 in quit rents.
1666. Anglesey granted Bantry, Whiddy, etc.
1668. Walter made his Will before setting out for Spain to collect freight on his shipments of deportees. Left a bequest to Chappel of Whiddy. Does this infer Chapel was used for Protestant worship? or is it possible Walters a Catholic? Most unlikely that friend of Cromwell and Governor of Fort a Catholic. Left his property to

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1680. Walters died.

1701. Dive Downes mentions of Whiddy. Also Smiths of 1749. Pococke?

Davys Anglesey's tenant in 1700. Was Davys Anglesey agent? There is mention in Kenmare Papers of a Davys of Dublin being A's agent. And was Davys of same family as Dean Rowland Davies whose son, Richard, born 24/11/1682, Blarney Castle, was Vicar of Bantry? Died 29/4/1736. This Richard had a son, Roland of Danstoun and two daughters.

Lettice, wife of Henry White
Martha, " " Richard White of Whiddy
(Who was Henry White? A brother of Rd. of Whiddy?)
There appears no definite date as to when White came from parish of Fanlobus and became a tenant in Whiddy. Any suggestions as to how to find out?

It would be circa 1700/1705, I believe. If Davys Davies the same, it might explain White's entry into Whiddy.

1747. "Counsellor" White, son of Rd. writes of his desire to buy Whiddy.

There exists an account book commencing 1730's and continuing to late 1740's kept by White containing a mine of information on White's trading in pilchard, train oil, oak staves, oak bark, iron, etc., etc. Many Years ago, I copied it extensively, but it is doubtful if present custodian would permit me to use it. He is unaware of my knowledge of its existence. It was before his time I was lent it, and perhaps the then custodian would not wish it known he had given it to me.

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In addition to the foregoing, I have various traditional accounts dealing with the island, scattered amongst my papers, which would entail considerable time in sorting out and, as far as I can recollect, are not of any importance. I also have extracted census population figures 1841 to date.

I recollect there exists an island rent book 18th century also in custody of Shelswell White and not accessible - understandably - as the then rents on the tenants were prohibitive.

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Whiddy is the second largest island in Bantry Bay. Its soil has always been renowned for its fertility and richness. It gives safe anchorage for large ships, and it provides a focal point for the protection of Bantry and its hinterland. As might be expected, therefore, references to the island in literature and official records concerning the County of Cork have been plentiful. Some of these references throw interesting light on the island's past and will here be dealt with.

Variously spelt through the centuries with the lack of consistency common in those days, the name of the island has appeared as Whedeis, Fuida, Faide, Foyd, Ffwydye and even Gide. And there have been other variants. By the end of the 17th century, however, if not before, the orthodox-spelling seems to have settled down to its present form. The meaning of the name, on the other hand, does not appear to have been finally settled to this day. Some authorities have considered the name to mean under-tide land"; others "the island of length". The island being considerably longer than it is wide, it may well be that the last interpretation is the true one.

Whiddy's agricultural features have been very frequently commented on and the fertility of the soil, in particular, has constantly been stressed. As long ago as 1687, Sir Richard Cox, founder of Dunmanway, wrote somewhat picturesquely:-

The pleasant Island of Whiddy, a most delightful seate in Summertime and not far from the Chapell Island, soe situate and of soe strange an herbage that it yeelds 20s. rent per annum for every acre which is a prodigious rate in soe poor a country

In 1701, Dive Downes, Protestant Bishop of Cork, wrote a report on a tour of his Diocese which he had recently completed. In it he says that the land is very good and that "frost and snow seldome continue". Fifty years later, in his classic work on the County, Dr. Charles Smith also mentions the excellence of the soil and since then there have been a number of further allusions to its richness and variety. Such good land commanded good rents. In the above extract Sir Richard Cox speaks of 20 shillings an acre; but in 1812 it is recorded that the land let for as much as three guineas an acre.

To tillage few references have been noticed and it seems likely that the island was esteemed chiefly for its pasture. Certainly there is frequent mention of

CH & A J Page 45
Jan June 1938
Prof J. H. & Shalvey
Compiles of 4 Masters
unfamiliar with the
graph of Dunmanway as the
first town of Whiddy
- "Oleay
Faide"

both in literature
& in spoken language.
Croagh Faide
a poem composed
1618.
Sean Bush says it's
probably Danish.

Cox got his for year
out of McCarthy
estate from the
huge blunder & was
an unwilling enemy
of the Irish.

He bewailed the
execution of Charles II
but joined Cromwell
yet was in the saddle under Charles II again.

livestock. In 1750, for example, Dr. Charles Smith reports that "the island produces as large mutton as any in the County of Limerick, where the largest in Ireland is said to be; it is not unpleasant to see the small Bantry mutton, which is exceedingly fat and good in its kind, compared to this of Whiddy Island, and bears no proportion to it as to bigness". He notes too that in the deerpark then maintained by the owner (Richard White) the deer were very fat. He adds that the adjacent islets, including Coney (presumably Rabbit Island) "fatten lean horses in the spring season to admiration" and it is probable that the comment was equally applicable to Whiddy. Later on, in 1815, it is recorded that the land of Whiddy (the inhabitants of which were said to be remarkably well shaped) was capable of fattening the largest bullocks.

Perhaps connected with the excellence of the pasture was the reported abundance of hares and rabbits. In those days however, in striking contrast with present-day practice, "the owner suffered none to be killed" and to that fact the unusual numbers may be chiefly be ascribed. In many parts of the country there was considerable profit in the sale of skins so that the breeding of rabbits in warrens specially maintained for the purpose and sometimes it is said, containing as much as £10 worth of rabbits to the acre, was a common activity of landowners.

Mention is also often made in contemporary records of Whiddy's hopyard and orchards. The cultivation of hops in Ireland is stated by an early 19th century authority to have been very rare and the existence of a hopyard on Whiddy therefore has particular interest. Orchards, on the other hand, were frequently to be seen, cider being "a common beverage in gentlemen's houses", though not, as in the west of England, among the people.

Nor was Whiddy's connexion with the fishery in Bantry Bay overlooked. Until the close of the 18th century, when the fish rapidly disappeared, there was, as is well known, an important pilchard fishery in Bantry Bay, large quantities of the fish being salted in the "palaces" dotted along the shore for subsequent export to Spain, Portugal, Italy and perhaps other countries. Dues were levied on the fishery by the O'Sullivan Beares and official records mention a case in connexion with the pilchard fishery at Whiddy which was of such importance that it was taken to the Privy Council in 1622. Large beds of scallops round Horse Island are noted by Bishop Dive Downes in 1701 and a writer in 1815 refers to the eels in Whiddy's salt-water lake. These eels were said to be remarkable for their great size, and it is stated that, on one occasion, a spaniel swimming in the lake in pursuit of waterfowl suddenly disappeared, having been, as was

*White sold Oyle
at 12^d for gallon.
From oil from
Pilchard & allures.*

*Oyster beds & wharves
Property leased by
Annual state grants
See Fisheries report
1836 & later.*

supposed, the prey of those voracious fish. But the writer is careful to add that, although the fact of the spaniel being drowned was sufficiently established, the immediate cause of his death admitted of some question.

*"The Old Woman
of Bear" mentions
in her lament the
delicious myvawn
from Whiddy which
she fed on.*

Two other products of Whiddy have been specially noticed in the past. One was myvawn or dillesk, a species of sea-plant found growing on the rocks, which was dried and sent to Cork for eating and it was reputed very sweet and wholesome. It was also common, however, elsewhere along the coast, particularly at Youghal. The other product was a soft black slate much resembling black-lead and found on the north side of the island. It was thought to be very uncommon and samples were sent to London for examination early in the 19th century. But although it occasionally commanded a good price, it was considered unlikely to be capable of exploitation with advantage as the demand was small. It was stated in 1837 to be then chiefly used by carpenters as black chalk although formerly used as medicine.

**
Could this be confused
with The Hay of Bear*

Whiddy's position is such that in times of disturbance it must always have had strategic importance and its Castle at the end was no doubt an important element in this connection. Nicknamed "The Old Woman of Whiddy" *x* it is said to have been built by the O'Sullivan Beares in the first half of the 15th century but, if that is so, there was another before it for the Annals of Inisfallen record the burning of the Castle of Whiddy by McCarthy and by the Desmumu, the people of south-west Cork and south Kerry, in 1261. During the ascendancy of the O'Sullivan Beares, Whiddy was, at times used by them as a place of confinement and it may be presumed that the Castle served as the actual prison. But its life was brought to an abrupt end in the middle of the 17th century when it was destroyed by Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law and deputy in Ireland. Whether or not it was rebuilt subsequently, it was reported in ruins in 1849 and there is a record of the collapse of what remained on 11th January, 1920. *See Cox & M.J.*

*O'Sullivan Beares
had personal dominion
in part of Whiddy
while the rest was
O'Sullivan Beares property.*

Whiddy played a part, though only a minor one, in the operations of Sir George Carew, President of Munster, which culminated in the siege and final reduction of Dunboy Castle at the beginning of the 17th century. In March 1601, the Earl of Thomond was sent by Carew on a reconnaissance march through Carbery with 1200 foot and 50 horse and before this force returned to Cork a garrison was left on the island. A year later, on 30th April, 1602, Carew himself who had decided to attack Dunboy reached Dunnamark with some 1500 men, but was here held up for 6 weeks awaiting suitable weather and the arrival of provisions. During his enforced stay at Dunnamark Carew paid a visit one day to Whiddy "totake view thereof" and

a little later, on 31st May, he and his expedition were at last able to proceed on their way to Dunboy "leaving our sick men (who were many" with a strong guard on the Island of Whiddy". Having reduced Dunboy, Carew was back again in 3 weeks, arriving at Whiddy with 2 regiments on 24th June. He himself and no doubt some of his officers passed the night on the island but "we had no means, for want of boats, to unship our men, and the night approaching were forced to leave our 2 regiments aboard".

what/In 1653, after the Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland, /was described as a rebel force of 1200 foot and 60 horse seized Whiddy and, using it as a base, made predatory raids from it. The island came near to another occupation by a hostile force when, in December 1796, the French fleet appeared in the Bay, some six of the enemy ships making their way as far as Whiddy and anchoring off its northern shore. So close were the ships that the movements on board were reported to be "plainly discernable by the naked eye from Seafield Park" (Bantry House) and, since the decks of the vessels were "crowded with an unusual number of men", it was thought in Bantry that a landing by the French was imminent. There was some panic and and such forces as were available were hurriedly rallied. But it was a false alarm. The French ~~at~~ confined their activities to plundering a merchantman lying at anchor near by and a few days later, after some contact had been made with the Whiddy inhabitants, mainly perhaps for the purpose of obtaining fresh provisions, the ships left the Bay. Before their departure however, they sent ashore eight men from Whiddy who had gone alongside one of the ships, apparently in the mistaken belief that it was English, and had been made prisoners.

The French expedition had failed in its object. But there could be no assurance that there would not be further attempts at an invasion and plans were accordingly drawn up for the erection on Whiddy of suitable fortifications. These took the form eventually of three separate batteries, each surrounded by a deep ditch and having in all 18 24-pounder guns with ovens for supplying them with red-hot balls. Barracks for 7 officers and 188 non-commissioned officers and men of the Engineers and Artillery were also built. There appears to have been delay in completing these works, however, for it is recorded that on 16th December 1803, no less than seven years after the appearance of the French, military works were still being erected, while a Martello tower was built at the northwest end of the island in the following year. It is reported that the stables of one Mahony, the contractor for the batteries were burnt down about this time with the loss of 25 horses. The works, together with those on Bere Island which were probably built about the same time,

*The Return of
Charleston Carolina
& The Juniors
Took the Two Brothers
Plundered the Colies
Hardly Wiser
They went to trade
I am known that
several local C.I.
men visited some
ferried on board
perhaps by the
Whiddy men who
were detained so
that they could
not be questioned
about their passages.*

are stated to have cost £230,000, but there was evidently considerable doubt in some quarters as to the wisdom of the expenditure. One writer in 1812, for example, goes so far as to say that the works were useless. They seemed too to be a deathtrap for the personnel for the same writer adds when he "visited them in December 1808, whether originating in the manner in which the buildings were constructed or from any other cause, I know not; but a great mortality prevailed among the men, some of whom were dying every day". Perhaps as a result of these apparently insanitary conditions or merely on grounds of expense, it appears to have been impossible always to keep the fortifications on the island fully manned in peacetime and, although there is mention of garrisons in 1835 and again two years later, it is stated that there was no more than a single man in charge about 1837.

*Murphy's Garrison
Veteran in charge
of the 3 forts,
Installed a son in
ch. John
Dennis
Pain.*

*only recently vacated
by their children.
Walter desired for
about 20 years.
about same
middle were
vacated. Don
Murphy, Harb. Vain
Bantry, a son of
Pain.*

The ownership of Whiddy has undergone little change in the last few centuries. Until the middle of the 17th century it was, of course, included in the territory over which the O'Sullivan Beares held sway. Now in those uneasy days the title to land was sometimes strengthened by specific grant from the Crown and so it was in this case. There was a grant of the island, with other lands in Beare and Bantry, to Sir Owen O'Sullivan Beare in 1565. Later on, there was prolonged litigation between Sir Owen and his nephew, Donal Cam, and it was eventually ordered by the Privy Council that Sir Owen and his heirs should retain the Bantry area, including Whiddy, while the lands of Beare were assigned to Donal and his heirs. There is a record of the mortgage of the island in 1591 by Sir Owen and his son and of a further grant of "Whiddy 9 plowlands" to Sir Owen in 1612.

*See Pender's
Census.*

On the confiscation of the lands of the O'Sullivan Beare's after the rising of 1641, Whiddy passed into new hands. One document speaks of a Colonel Waters (of Walters) as the owner in 1659 and he was certainly amongst those who received grants of lands in the County a little before that date. It is interesting to note that at this time, according to one of the first Censuses made in Ireland, there were 9 English and 26 Irish resident on Whiddy. These however were probably the principal residents only. Waters himself then lived on the mainland at Blackrock (now Seafield), but he apparently moved later for in his Will of 1668 he describes himself as of Whiddy.

Colonel Waters was a well-known personality in those times. After the Cromwellian Settlement in 1652, he was actively engaged in transporting deportees to Spain and in 1660 he is described in an official document as having settled his own and other families at Bantry with the intention of establishing an English settlement. He was appoin-

Governor of the Fort of Bantry where there was a garrison and for this office was to be paid "5 shgs a day or less" In 1668 he left for Spain, in order to recover from the King a debt due to him in connexion with his transportation of deportees and, in a will he made before his departure, he left among other bequests the island of Whiddy to his son George and a sum of money for the "repair of the Chapple on Whiddey". He died in 1680.

In 1666 and the following years the title to most of the lands in the Barony of Beare and Bantry was granted by the Government to the Earl of Anglesey and, under some arrangement the nature of which is not clear, Colonel Waters now appears to have become Lord Anglesey's tenant of some of the lands, including Whiddy. Later still, in 1701, a Mr. Davys is mentioned as Lord Anglesey's tenant on the island and a Mr. Beamish as Davys' / under-tenant at a rent of about £80 per a.

Meanwhile, at the end of the 17th century, Captain Richard White, great-grandfather of the first Earl of Bantry, had settled on the island, occupying a house which is still standing. Here, his son (known later as "Counsellor" White) was born in 1701 and he it was who purchased most of the large estate extending from Bantry to Castletownbere which was passed on in due course to his descendents including the Earls of Bantry. Whiddy which was included in these purchases had become Counsellor White's property by 1750 although he and his father seemed to have been tenants of the Anglesey family for probably 50 years before.

It may here be mentioned that there are documents still in existence which suggest that the often repeated story of a member of the White family having exchanged his horse for the island of Whiddy has no foundation in fact. In a letter dated 28th June, 1737 to the Agent of the Anglesey family, for instance, Counsellor White says that he is "very desirous of purchasing the island that I may have some spot immediately in my possession that I can call my own whenever I might divert myself by a little improvement" and goes on to suggest that negotiations should be opened between them to that end. It seems unlikely that the letter would have been written if the story had been true.

The Whites, who were now owners of the island, continued to live on it until they removed to Blackrock, probably some time between 1763 and 1766. Such parts as were not required for their own use were leased to tenants in the ordinary course and it is interesting to note that, according to an authority writing in 1815, these tenants had held under the family without increase of rent

for 60 years. As is well known, by no means all land-
 lords in those days were content with such a state of
 affairs and it may be that there was some connexion
 between that fact and the rise in the population of the
 island from 450 in 1834 to 714 in 1837. The Whites
 continued as owners until when the tenants
 bought out under the Acts.

The Ordnance Survey assigns

Whiskey to O'S Moore

yet

Geo. E. & grant to O'Sear O'S Bear

Whiskey of 1/20th lands.

+ later

Further Whiskey belongs to

O'S Bear & O'Sear. Page 27

W. F. T. Butler's Statement -

Butler says no mention of

O'S Bear being in any way
 dependent on O'S Moore.

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