

For over a century before Cromwell came to Ireland, Ballybrack in the County of Dublin belonged to the Goodman family. Although they were Catholics, they were first class brigands and plunderers. They were given a large expanse of land in Loughlinstown on the borders of the Pale on condition that they kept it out of the hands of the wild Irish tribes of O'Byrne and O'Toole - that is to say the native Irish who were the rightful owners of this land for some thousand years.⁽¹⁾

James Goodman is the first member of the family to appear in the records, and he may well have been the first member of the family to come to Ireland to impose the will of the English on the native population. By 1541 he had become Sheriff of the County Dublin, a job of considerable standing in the County. People like James were expected to maintain a buffer region outside the Pale and they would get short shrift from the citizens of Dublin if they failed to defend their holdings and left the capital city exposed to the vengeance-seeking Irish from the hills. James was sufficiently ambitious to accept a grant of further land in Castlekevyn in County Wicklow and surrounded by the native Irish. With the Government's consent he gave up his job as Sheriff and took up fulltime residence in his new holding.⁽²⁾

According to the records both himself and his wife, Margaret Hyke, were granted a pardon in 1549. It is not clear what crime they had committed, but it is not unlikely that their main fault is that they were Catholics.⁽³⁾ From the Reformation on the Catholic colonists began to fall out of favour with the English monarchy one of whose aims, after all, was to stamp out the old faith. Nevertheless the King was depending on the "Old English", as these Catholic colonists were called, to keep down the Irish tribes, defend the capital city and see that the Royal writ ran as far as possible throughout the Irish countryside.

While James was in Castlekevyn he left his son James the younger in charge of Ballybrack and the surrounding area. This was mainly arable land as livestock would have been too vulnerable to the attacks of the Irish coming down from the hills.

In 1552 the Goodman family tried to take over the patronage of Kill of the Grange in order to enable them to appoint a minister who would not be too strongly opposed to the Catholic population and who would not therefore betray them to the Protestant authorities for practicing the old faith. The attempt failed, however, and we can be sure that the religious practice of the family was subject to very close scrutiny from then on.

In 1566, William Walsh who was related to a neighbour of James the younger, stole £4.10s.4d. worth of goods from Gormle O'Clondowil a widow from Glencullen in County Dublin. These consisted of one brass pan, worth 26s.4d., two gallons of butter, worth 18d. each, three sheep, worth 2s. each, one nightgown, worth 10s., two women's gowns, worth 20s. each, and one cloak, worth 5s. The Sub-sheriff of County Dublin finally caught up with Walsh, and when he was bringing him under custody from Bray to Dublin, James the younger and a band of his friends attacked him on the mainroad near Shanganagh, where Loughlinstown Hospital now stands, and set Walsh free. Instead of being imprisoned, as one might expect, James and his friends were granted a pardon. Is it possible that James's father, formerly Sheriff of the County, pulled a few strings on his son's behalf. Whatever the reason, this little adventure doesn't appear to have hindered the young man's career in the slightest. (4)

In the same year he was given a commission to execute martial law "from the water of the Lyffye to the water of Arklowe, and as far as the Bernes country stretcheth, and in Cowlranel, the Ferter, Clencape, Fercollen and Imayle, and along the mountain side to Baltenglasse". (5) He was given power to search out all disorders in the county, and on finding any persons to be felons, rebels, enemies, or notorious evil-doers, to punish them by death or otherwise. This power did not extend to anyone having 40s. a year freehold, of £10 in chattels, or any of honest name, unless taken in the act or duly convicted. Needless to say, these exceptions were of precious little help to the poor Irish peasants. (6)

This commission included a number of specific instructions to those entrusted with executing martial law and the more interesting of these are given below:

1. Proclamation to be made, that after eight days no idle person or vagabond be found within the district without just cause or travel by night unless accompanied by " some honest man in Englishe apparell", on pain of imprisonment.
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6. When the commissioner travels for the punishment of malefactors, he may take meat and drink for horse and man " in reasonable sorte", not remaining more than one or two nights in each barony or place, so as not to be oppressive.
 8. The constable of every parish shall give warning to the parish priest or curate of the same, to publish the premises openly in the church, that the people may not be ignorant of them.

In 1568 part of James the younger's land was freed of subsidy and he was made liable to be charged to hostings, in other words to feed the Queen's army should he be called upon to do so. (7) Five years later, along with the Archbishop of Dublin, the Lord of Howth, the Chief-Justice and others, James was given a commission to muster and array the inhabitants of the County Dublin. The more interesting parts of the instructions which accompanied this commission are reproduced below: (8)

The commissioners shall direct the barony constables to come before them on a certain day with lists of the persons in their baronies between the ages of 15 and 60, and to command the people to appear at the same time with all such horse, armour, bows, arrows, guns, and other warlike apparel as they can put in readiness for the service of her majesty. Any able man not appearing shall forfeit 20s. On the day of muster the commissioners shall make lists of all men appearing, distinguishing archers arquebusiers, billmen, horsemen and kerns, also those who have a horse, jack, spear, bow, sheaf of arrows, bill, gun, sword, or habergeon of mail. .. No man required by law to find horse or armour may be allowed to muster as servant or substitute for another.

We don't know to what extent James the Younger succeeded in defending Ballybrack against the Irish. He died in 1575, and despite his being a Catholic, he was buried in the graveyard at Killiney, although the church there was now Protestant.⁽⁹⁾

His son Richard then took over Ballybrack and he must surely have been a quiet law-abiding person as he hardly appears at all in the records. In 1585 he was involved in a dispute with his neighbour John Walsh over his father's will. The point at issue is not clear, but if we are to give any weight to the involvement of the Vicar General of Dublin it probably concerned part of the townland of Killiney which the Church of Ireland had leased to the Goodman family and which bordered on Walshe's land.⁽¹⁰⁾

Richard died in 1589 and Ballybrack fell to his brother William. Although William lived in Loughlinstown for thirty years, little is known about him and his place in the history of the area is obscure. We do know that he signed the proclamation of loyalty to King James I in 1603. When he died in 1622 Ballybrack passed on to his nephew.

He was another James and the last of the Goodmans in Ballybrack. The effects of the Reformation was bearing more heavily on Catholics as time went on, and doubt was being cast on their right to hold land at all. The King had more faith in the new Protestant colonists, and these were posing an increasing threat to the "Old English". Nevertheless the Goodman family stuck by the old faith and we know that in 1630 mass was regularly celebrated in James Goodman's house, that he provided a schoolhouse in Loughlinstown for his own and neighbour's children and paid a Catholic teacher to instruct them in the old ways. This information comes from Maurice Lloyd who was a Protestant minister in the area and who passed it on to the authorities. He had great interest in the activities of the local Catholics, as attendance at his church in Killiney was falling and along with it his own income.⁽¹²⁾ Given this man's spying activities it is quite clear why the Goodman family tried to take over the patronage of Kill of the Grange some hundred years before.

By 1640, just before the uprising, James had possession of almost all of Killiney parish. He owned 250 (Irish) acres himself and these included Ballybrack and the Loughlinstown estate. This land was divided evenly between arable and pasture and contained:

one Castle and a strong Bawne; one Mill in use worth in the year 1640 Tenn poundes; an orchard and a garden; the Buildings Valued by the Jury at Twenty poundes.

James had a further 60 acres on lease from the Dean of Christ Church and this was all arable land.⁽¹³⁾

In the uprising of 1641 James sided with the Confederation Army, and was soon commissioned Provost Marshall. Early that year a Protestant minister accused James and his friends of stealing the following items from him: £40 worth of miscellaneous goods; £50 of hay; £10 of bonds; land and garden worth £5; fowl 18s., tithes and offerings £5. He also accused James of making his wife prisoner in her own house, of tearing her apron off her, and having pulled her from the house by her hair, of tying her to the back of her own horse with her clothes all torn off her. He then drove the horse through the bogs to William Wolverston's house in Stillorgan. William ordered the rebels to hang her, but not on his land, and according to Smithson, they took her with them for twenty miles, still tied to the back of her horse, and hanged her in a cruel and barbarous manner until she died, and her maidservant in the same way along with her.⁽¹⁴⁾

This is only one example of James's activities during the rebellion. He earned fame and renown throughout the area on account of his multifarious activities. So much so that he had to flee Loughlinstown when the British army set up camp there. He took refuge in the rebel camp in Bray, but was nevertheless captured in 1652 and accused of murdering one of his own tenants in the Camp. He was brought before the High Court in Dublin, and evidence was given that the rebels had captured a man named Boatson near Baggotrath on the outskirts of the city and taken him to the camp in Bray. Goodman was in the camp when Boatson was brought in, and for some reason unknown to us, he was consumed with hatred for the man and swore he would not rest until he had him hanged. Boatson offered him £40 to spare him but he was hanged nonetheless.

In December 1652 James Goodman was found guilty of Boatson's murder and was duly executed.⁽¹⁵⁾ And that was the end of the Goodman family in Ballybrack.

The history of the village had been tied up with the history of this one family for over a hundred years, and although they were colonists, had expelled the Irish chieftans from the area and were promoting an alien way of life, they were Catholics and they kept the faith alive in the area despite the terrible persecutions that were carried out during the century following the Reformation. It is as a result of their efforts that some 85% of the people of the area were still Catholics when Sir William Petty took his census in 1659.⁽¹⁶⁾

Footnotes

- (1) History of County Dublin. F E Ball. (Dublin 1920) pps 87-89.
Loughlinstown and its History. F E Ball. Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 1901 pps 68-72.
- (2) Fiat No. 9 of Edward VI. Appendix to the Eighth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland.
- (3) Fiat No. 266 of Edward VI.
- (4) Fiat No. 856 of Elizabeth I. Appendix to the Eleventh Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland.
- (5) Fiants Nos. 218, 999 of Elizabeth I.
- (6) Fiat No. 1196 of Elizabeth I.
- (7) Fiat No. 1284 of Elizabeth I.
- (8) Fiat No. 2444 of Elizabeth I.
- (9) Ball (1920) p 89.
- (10) Fiat No. 4820 of Elizabeth I.
- (11) Ball (1920) p 89.
- (12) The Diocese of Dublin in the year 1630. Irish Ecclesiastical Record. Vol V, pps. 160-1.
- (13) The Civil Survey 1654. Vol VIII. Co. Dublin. (Stationery Office 1945) pps 269-70.
- (14) Ireland in the Seventeenth Century, or, The Irish Massacres of 1641-2. (London 1884) Hickson. Vol II, pps 26-7.
- (15) Hickson, op. cit. p 232.
- (16) Census of 1659. Sir William Petty (?). (Stationery Office, 19