

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books of enduring scholarly value

Rolls Series

Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptorum, or *The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*, usually referred to as the 'Rolls Series', was an ambitious project first proposed to the British Treasury in 1857 by Sir John Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, and quickly approved for public funding. Its purpose was to publish historical source material covering the period from the arrival of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII, 'without mutilation or abridgement', starting with the 'most scarce and valuable' texts. A 'correct text' of each work would be established by collating 'the best manuscripts', and information was to be included in every case about the manuscripts used, the life and times of the author, and the work's 'historical credibility', but there would be no additional annotation. The first books were published in 1858, and by the time it was completed in 1896 the series contained 99 titles and 255 volumes. Although many of the works have since been re-edited by modern scholars, the enterprise as a whole stands as a testament to the Victorian revival of interest in the middle ages.

Chronicum Scotorum

This chronicle, first published in 1866, is a transcription and translation of a manuscript that gives an account of the earliest-known period of Ireland's history until 1135, describing the leaders and tribes of the Scoti, as the Romans called the inhabitants of the island. Forming part of the Rolls Series of publications of manuscripts concerning the history of Great Britain and Ireland during the middle ages, this work was edited and translated by William Hennessy (c.1829–89), a linguist who was interested in the preservation of the Irish language. His extensive introduction to the text examines the complicated history of the manuscript's previous versions, and his essay has been considered a valuable source for historians. The text has transcriptions of the manuscript in its original Irish and provides corresponding English translations, as well as a glossary.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Chronicum Scotorum

*A Chronicle of Irish Affairs,
from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

EDITED BY WILLIAM M. HENNESSY



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108048705

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1866
This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-04870-5 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

The original edition of this book contains a number of colour plates, which have been reproduced in black and white. Colour versions of these images can be found online at www.cambridge.org/9781108048705

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI
SCRIPTORES,

OR

CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND

DURING

THE MIDDLE AGES.

17433.

α

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the Reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

4

The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

*Rolls House,
December 1857.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CHRONICUM SCOTORUM.

—
A

CHRONICLE OF IRISH AFFAIRS.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

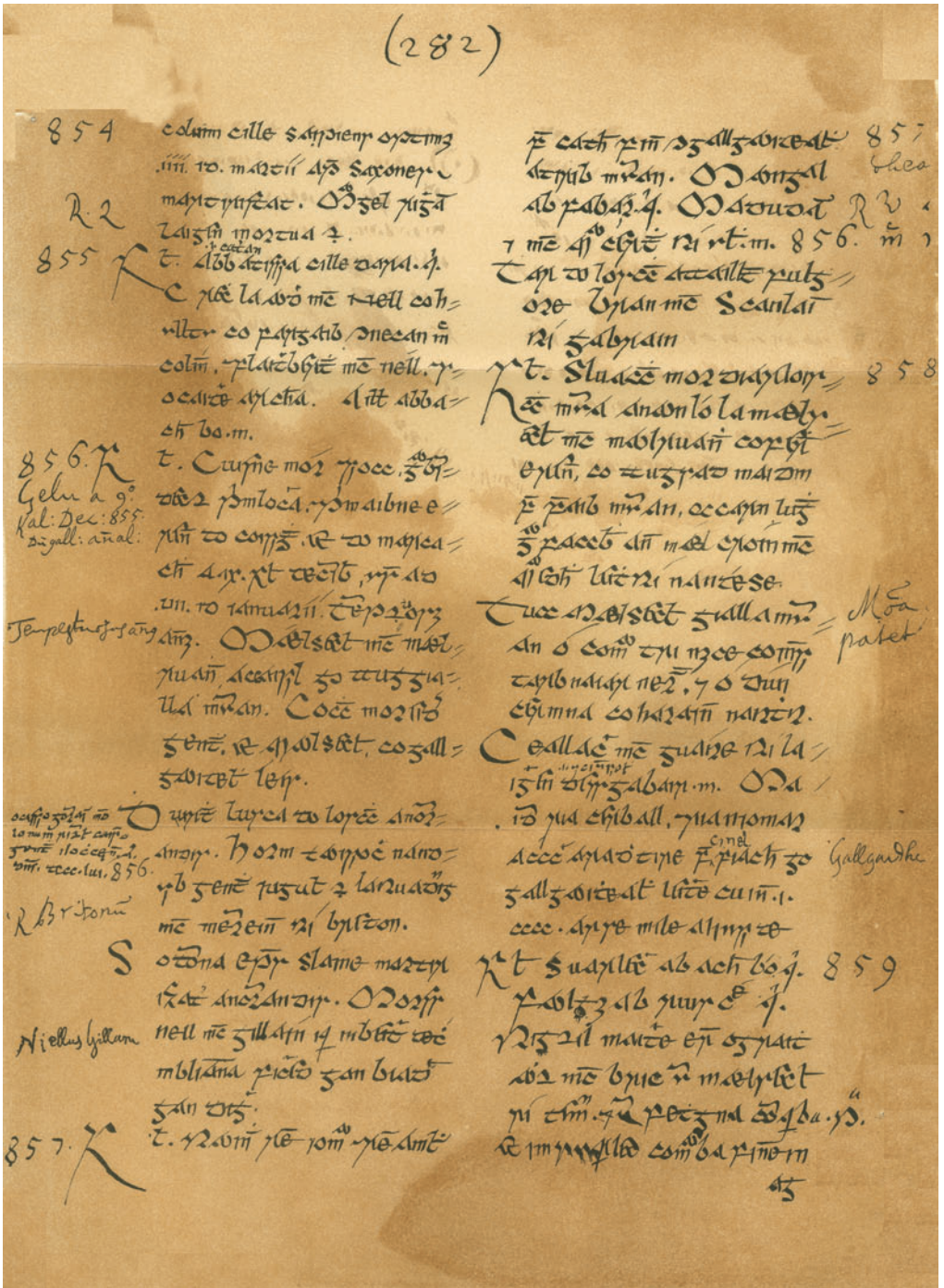
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - Chronicon Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



FROM THE MS. H. I. 18., TRIN. COLL. DUBLIN.

FRONT MATTER

The material originally positioned here is too large for reproduction in this reissue. A PDF can be downloaded from the web address given on page iv of this book, by clicking on 'Resources Available'.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CHRONICUM SCOTORUM.

A

CHRONICLE OF IRISH AFFAIRS,

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO A.D. 1135;

WITH

A SUPPLEMENT.

CONTAINING THE EVENTS FROM 1141 TO 1150;

EDITED, WITH A TRANSLATION,

BY

WILLIAM M. HENNESSY, M.R.I.A.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF HER MAJESTY'S
TREASURY, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

L O N D O N :

LONGMANS, GREEN, READER, AND DYER.

1866.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

DUBLIN: PRINTED BY ALEXANDER THOM, 87 & 88, ABBEY-STREET,
FOR HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

	Page
INTRODUCTION,	ix
CHRONICUM SCOTORUM, OR THE CHRONICLE OF THE SCOTI,	1
SUPPLEMENT TO THE CHRONICUM SCOTORUM,	338
GLOSSARY,	351
INDEX,	357

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

THE text of the following chronicle has been taken from a manuscript preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, Class H., Tab. 1, No. 18, collated with a good copy in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy, classed P., 23, 5. The former, which is denoted by the letter A. in the Notes appended to the accompanying translation, is in the fine, bold, Irish handwriting of the celebrated Irish scholar and antiquary, Duaid Mac Firbis. The latter, indicated in the Notes by the letter B., is in the handwriting of the Rev. John Conry, or Connery, and was transcribed in France, about the middle of the last century, apparently from the autograph of Mac Firbis. There are three other copies of the chronicle in the Royal Irish Academy, viz:—two in the “Betham” collection, and one amongst the MSS. recently purchased by the Academy from the representatives of the late John Windele. There is also a copy in the College of St. Patrick’s, Maynooth. But these are modern transcripts, full of gross inaccuracies, and so utterly valueless that it has not been considered necessary to collate them with the more correct text supplied by the MS. A.

Some observations on the historical value of the latter MS. will be found further on.

Of the history of its transcriber, Dubhaltach Mac Firbisigh, generally written Duaid Mac Firbis (or Dudley Firbisse, as he has himself anglicized the name), but few particulars can now be ascertained. Enough is known, however, to show that he was a man of no ordinary talent and character. Although his name is not even once men-

b

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

tioned by Ware, who was indebted to him for much of the information which enabled him to acquire his distinguished reputation as an Irish antiquary, nor included in the catalogues of native authors published by Bishop Nicholson and Edward O'Reilly, his contributions to Irish history, genealogy, and literature, entitle him to a place in the foremost rank of Celtic scholars.

Neither in the contemporary writings of his friends and associates, nor in the voluminous mass of his own works hitherto discovered, is there any evidence to indicate the date or place of his birth; but he is believed to have been born about the year 1585, at a place called Lecan-mic-Firbis, now Lackan, in the parish of Kilglass, barony of Tireragh, and county of Sligo, where his family, he states, "wrote books of history, annals, poetry, and kept a school of history."¹

According to the genealogy² of his tribe, as traced by himself from the ancient records of his ancestors, the family of Mac Firbis was descended from Dathi, or Nathi, the last pagan Monarch of Ireland, and progenitor of most of the principal families of Connaught, from whom the subject of the present notice was, as he alleges, the twenty-ninth in direct descent. But as the death of King Nathi is recorded under the year 428, *infra*, it is evident that some generations have been omitted in the pedigree, unless it be conceded that more than thirty years, the standard average laid down by Newton, should be allowed to each generation.³

In the Introduction to his large genealogical work, the original of which is in the possession of the Earl of Roden,

¹ *History*. See *Tribes and Customs of Hy-Fiachrach*, ed. O'Donovan, (Dublin, 1844), p. 167.

² *Genealogy*. See *Tribes and Customs of Hy-Fiachrach*, p. 101, *sq.*

³ *Generation*. The late Dr. O'Don-

ovan was of opinion that it appeared "from all the authentic Irish pedigrees that more than thirty years, the average standard laid down by Newton, must be allowed to each generation." *Hy-Fiachrach*, p. 107. *n.* 9.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xi

Mac Firis observes that his ancestors were historians, genealogists, and poets to the chief septs of Connaught, such as the families of Ui-Fiachrach¹ of the Moy, Ui-Amhalghaidh,² Ceara,³ Ui-Fiachrach of Aidhne,⁴ and Eachtgha,⁵ and also to the Mac Donnells⁶ of Scotland. Their chief patrons, however, were the O'Dowdas, princes of Hy-Fiachrach, or Tireragh, whose patrimony in 1350, according to the contemporary Topographical poem of John O'Dugan,⁷ comprised the entire district

“ From the Codhnach of the fairy flood
To the limit of the Rodhba,”

an extent of territory extending from the Cownagh to the Robe, and corresponding to the present baronies of Carra, Erris, and Tirawley, in the county of Mayo, together the barony of Tirawley, and a large portion of Carbury, in the county of Sligo.

At what time the Mac Firis family began to follow the profession of historians it would now be useless to enquire. They appear to have been one of the many tribes in which the profession was hereditary, in accordance with the practice that seems to have existed since the introduction of

¹ *Ui-Fiachrach*, or *Tir-Fiachrach*, now Tireragh, co. Sligo.

² *Ui-Amhalghaidh*, otherwise *Tir-Amhalghaidh*, or Tirawley, co. Mayo.

³ *Ceara*. Now the barony of Carra, co. Mayo.

⁴ *Ui-Fiachrach of Aidhne*. The territory of this tribe comprised the entire of the present diocese of Kilmacduagh, in the south of the county of Galway.

⁵ *Eachtgha*; a district in the S.E. of the co. Galway.

⁶ *Mac Donnells*. The connexion of Mac Firis's family with this sept may afford some countenance to the following observation in the abridged copy of his large genealogical work: “It is said that the Clann Firis of

Lecan-mic-Firisigh in Hy-Fiachrach and Hy-Amhalghaidh have the surname with the two aristocratic families of Forbes of Drominoir, in Scotland, or wherever else they are to be found as Scotchmen, in the three kingdoms.” No other evidence to support the identity has been discovered. The ancestor, Firis, from whom the name of Mac Firis has been derived, is set down in the pedigree as the twelfth in descent from King Nathi, and must, therefore, have lived in the eighth century.

⁷ *O'Dugan*. See *Topographical Poems*, Dublin, printed for the Irish Archæological and Celtic Society, 1862, p. 61.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

letters into Ireland. But some individuals of the name are referred to by the annalists, at a very early period, as distinguished for learning and a knowledge of the national history; and their compilations, many of which are still in existence, have always been regarded as among the most authentic of the native Irish records.

The Annals of the Four Masters, under the year 1279, notice the death of Gilla-Isa, or Gelasius, Mac Firbis, "chief historian of Tir-Fiachrach," or Tireragh, *i.e.*, the O'Dowda's country. Harris, in his edition of the works of Sir James Ware,¹ alludes to another person of the same name, "a learned annalist," whose death is referred to the year 1301. The obits given by the Four Masters, at the year 1362, include Auliffe and John Mac Firbis, two "intended Ollamhs," or professors of history. Under the year 1376, also, the same annalists record the death of Donogh Mac Firbis, "a historian," and three years later, that of Firbis Mac Firbis, "a learned historian."

Of the numerous compilations made by the older members of the Mac Firbis family, only two are now known to be in existence, viz. :—I., the magnificent vellum MS., called the "Book of Lecan," written before 1416, by Gilla-Isa Mor Mac Firbis, the ancestor of Duaid; and II., the hardly less important volume known as the "Leabhar Buidhe Lecain," or "Yellow Book of Lecan," written about the same period, and partly by the same hand. The former of these originally belonged to Trinity College, Dublin, but was carried to France in the reign of James II., and was restored to Ireland in the year 1790; it now enriches the extensive collection of Irish MSS. in the possession of the Royal Irish Academy. The latter, or—to speak more correctly—a large fragment of it, is preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin.

These manuscripts were written, as their names import,

¹ *Ware*. See *Harris's* edition of *Ware's* "Writers of Ireland," p. 77.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xiii

at Lecan-mic-Firbis, in the county of Sligo, the residence of the compilers at the time. The Mac Firbis family seems to have previously resided in the county of Mayo; for, in the genealogical tract on the tribes of Hy-Fiachrach, contained in the *Book of Lecan*,¹ the Clann Firbisigh, or sept of Mac Firbis, are stated to have resided at Ros-serc, a place still known by the same name, and situated in the barony of Tirawley, in that county. The extent of their possessions is not given; but it is certain that they were amply endowed, according to the usage of the period, by which members of the learned professions in Ireland were entitled to privileges and emoluments hardly inferior to those enjoyed by the rulers of territories. The following extract from the account of the ceremony² observed at the inauguration of the O'Dowda, as prince of Hy-Fiachrach, affords a curious illustration of the nature of some of these privileges:—

“And the privilege of first drinking [at the banquet] was given to O'Caemhain by O'Dowda, and O'Caemhain was not to drink until he first presented it [the drink] to the poet, that is, to Mac Firbis. Also the weapons, battle-dress, and steed of O'Dowda, after his nomination, were given to O'Caemhain, and the weapons and battle-dress of O'Caemhain to Mac Firbis. And it is not lawful ever to nominate the O'Dowda until O'Caemhain and Mac Firbis pronounce the name, and until Mac Firbis raises the body of the wand over the head of O'Dowda. And after O'Caemhain and Mac Firbis, every clergyman and comarb of a church, and every bishop, and every chief of a district, pronounces the name.”

We have no evidence to show when the family of Mac Firbis removed to Lecan, on the eastern bank of the river Moy, where they appear to have been settled before the year 1397, as some of their compositions are stated to have been written there in that year.

¹ *Book of Lecan*, folio 82, bb.

² *Ceremony*. See *Tribes and Customs of Hy-Fiachrach*, p. 440.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Duald, who was the eldest of four brothers, would seem to have been of a junior branch of the family, for he observes that the Castle of Lecan or Lackan, in which he was born, was erected in the year 1560 by his cousins, Ciothruadh and James. Although there can be no doubt that the Mac Firbises then held the land attached to the castle in right of their profession, their tenure would seem to have been altered at a subsequent period, for by an inquisition taken at Sligo on the 22nd of August, 1625, Donough O'Dowda, their chief and patron, was found to have been then "seized of the castle, town, and quarters of Lecan-mic-Firbisigh, and other lands, which he had settled by deed, dated 28th of August, 1617, to the use of his wife Onora Ny-Connor, for their lives, and then to the use of his own right heirs"—a state of things incompatible with the possession of any permanent interest therein by the Mac Firbises.

"It is quite clear," observes Dr. O'Donovan,¹ "that Donnoghe O'Dowde could not have settled Lacken in this manner, in 1617, if it had been then the freehold inheritance of the family of Mac Firbis. The most that can be believed, therefore, is, that the Mac Firbises may have farmed the townland of Lackan, or a part of it, from Donnoghe O'Dowde, or his successor, till the year 1641, at which period it was forfeited by O'Dowde, and granted to the family of Wood."

Respecting his education, Professor O'Curry writes:²—"Duald Mac Firbis appears to have been intended for the hereditary profession of an antiquarian and historian, or for that of the *Fenechas*, or ancient laws of his native country (now improperly called the Brehon Laws). To qualify him for either of these ancient and honourable professions, and to improve and perfect his education, young Mac Firbis appears, at an early age, to have passed into Munster, and to have taken up his residence in the

¹ *O'Donovan*. See *Hy-Fiachrach*, Introduction, p. vi.

² *Writes*. Lectures on the MS. materials of Irish History, p. 121.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

XV

school of law and history then kept by the Mac Egans¹ of Lecan, in Ormond, in the present county of Tipperary. He studied also for some time, either before or after this, but I believe after, in Burren, in the present county of Clare, at the not less distinguished literary and legal school of the O'Davorens, where we find him, with many other young Irish gentlemen, about the year 1595, under the presidency of Donnell O'Davoren."²

Duald Mac Firbis's studies were not confined to the ordinary branches of education attainable through the medium of his native language, but included also Greek and Latin. From his account of the Anglo-Norman and Welsh families settled in Ireland, he seems to have been familiar with the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis and Holingshed. He appears also to have read Verstegan's "Restitution of Decayed Intelligence," and the "Fasciculus Temporum" of Rolewinck. In his copy of Cormac's Glossary, preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, (Class H. 2, 15), he explains many Latin and Greek words in the margin, always writing the Greek in the original character. Nevertheless, the rude Latinity of some of the entries in the following chronicle indicates that his knowledge of Latin was very imperfect.

We have no account of Mac Firbis's proceedings from the period when he had completed his education until the year 1645, two years after the death of his father, when he seems to have been settled in Galway, where he became acquainted with the learned Roderick O'Flaherty (then only seventeen years of age), and Dr. John Lynch, the author of "Cambrensis Eversus," to both of whom he

¹ *Mac Egans*. These were hereditary Brehons, or judges, and professors of the old Irish laws, and descendants of the men who compiled the splendid vellum MS. called the *Leabhar Breac*, or "Speckled Book," preserved in the library of the Royal Irish Academy. This MS., which was compiled in the year 1397, is the most valuable re-

pertory now remaining of ancient Irish ecclesiastical affairs.

² *O'Davoren*. The author or transcriber of a curious and important Irish Glossary, written in 1569, and published by Mr. Whitley Stokes (London, 1863), from the original in the British Museum.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

acted as Irish tutor, affording them, besides, much valuable assistance in the prosecution of their historical studies. O'Flaherty, who appears to have been much attached to him, and frequently acknowledges, with much feeling, the obligations he owed to Mac Firbis, in his chapter on the letters of the Irish, says of him, that he was “*rei antiquariæ Hibernorum unicum, dum vixit, columen, et extinctus, detrimentum.*”¹ Again, referring to his enumeration of the kings of Ulidia, O'Flaherty observes: “*Horum nomenclaturam, et annorum numerum, quo illorum quisque Ultoniæ præfuit, penes me habeo ab intimo nostro amico Dualdo Firbisio è vetustis majorum suorum Monumentis excerptum, qui anno Domini 1670-1 cruenta morte sublatus antiquitatum, et Hiberniæ linguæ cognitioni altum vulnus infixerat.*”² And in another place he calls him “hereditary professor of the antiquities of his country.”³

Dr. Lynch, who wrote under the name of “Gratianus Lucius,” also acknowledges⁴ having received assistance from Mac Firbis.

During the ensuing five years Mac Firbis was occupied in compiling his important work on Irish genealogies, which he finished in 1650, as he states,⁵ in the College of St. Nicholas, Galway. In the year 1652, he lost one of his steadfast friends, Dr. Lynch, who fled to France on the surrender of Galway to the Parliamentary Forces; but he still continued, although under adverse circumstances, to apply his honest zeal and active industry to the task of transferring to a more permanent shape the contents of MSS. falling into decay. A few years later, however, his prospects assumed a brighter aspect. Sir James Ware, impressed with the importance of

¹ *Detrimentum.* Ogygia, p. 233.

² *Infixerat.* *Ib.*, Proloquium, p. [13].

³ *Country.* “Dualdus Firbissius, patriæ antiquitatum professor hæreditarius.” *Ib.*, p. 219.

⁴ *Acknowledges.* See *Cambrensis Eversus*, cap. xx.

⁵ *States*; viz:—in the Preface to the work.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xvii

securing the services of one so thoroughly acquainted with the language, history, and antiquities of his country as Mac Firbis had the reputation of being, employed him, in the year 1655, to collect and translate, from the Irish Annals, materials for the composition of his learned works on the Antiquities and Ecclesiastical History of Ireland. His connection with Ware, who, as already remarked, makes no reference to the services rendered him by Mac Firbis, has been generally considered to have commenced only a short time before the death of that distinguished scholar in 1666; but there are two tracts compiled by Mac Firbis in 1655—one a catalogue of Irish bishops, preserved in the British Museum,¹ in each of which he states that it was drawn up for his friend and patron, Ware. At a subsequent period he seems to have been an inmate of Ware's house, in Dublin, as appears from the following remark of Harris, in his account of the Bishops of Tuam:—

“One John was consecrated about the close of the year 1441. [Sir James Ware declares he could not discover when he died; and adds that some called him John De Burgo, but that he could not answer for the truth of that name.] But both these particulars are cleared up, and his immediate successor named, by Dudley Firbisse, an amanuensis, whom Sir James Ware employed in his house to translate and collect for him from the Irish manuscripts; one of whose pieces begins thus, viz. :—‘This translation began by Dudley Firbisse, in the house of Sir James Ware, in Castle-street, Dublin, 6th of November, 1666,’ which was 24 days before the death of the said knight.” “I suppose the death of his patron,” adds Harris, “put a stop to his further progress.”²

The small amount of patronage extended to him has also been made the subject of complaint by old Charles

¹ *British Museum*. Cod. Clarend. tom. 68; Ayscough, 4799; Plut. cxv. E.

² *Progress*. See Harris's edition of *Ware; Bishops of Tuam*, under John

[De Burgo]. The document here alluded to by Harris is a translation of some annals, which has been printed. *Irish Archaeological Society's Miscellany*, vol. i., p. 200.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

O'Connor of Belanagare, the grandfather of Dr. O'Connor, editor of *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*. "Duald Mac Firbis," observes¹ this venerable antiquary and scholar, "the most eminent antiquarian of the latter times, was possessed of a considerable number of the *Brethe Nímhe*.² He alone could explain them, as he alone, without patronage or assistance, entered into the depths of this part of Scottish learning, so extremely obscure to us of the present. When we mention Mac Firbis, we are equally grieved and ashamed; his neglected abilities ignominious to his ungrateful country! his end tragical! his loss irreparable!"

The death of his enlightened patron, Sir James Ware, having put a stop to his labours in Dublin, Mac Firbis appears to have returned to his native place in the county of Sligo, where he lived in great poverty during the remaining few years of his life. He had outlived many of the friends who had encouraged and assisted him in former years; others, like Dr. Lynch, had sought safety in flight from the vengeance of their successful opponents in the civil war which then distracted the country; and of those who remained behind, the majority, including the learned Roderick O'Flaherty, heir to a handsome patrimony, were reduced by confiscation to a state of poverty³ hardly less intense than that in which Mac Firbis was plunged.

¹ *Observes. Dissertations on the History of Ireland*, Dublin, 2nd edit., 1766, pp. 124, 125. See also the first ed., Dublin, 1733, p. 155.

² *Brethe Nímhe*; pron. *Brehe Níóc*; a collection of ancient Irish Laws, for an account of which see *Cambrensis Eversus*, Dublin, 1848, vol. II., pp. 367-375.

³ *Poverty*. The condition of the Irish nobility at this period has been briefly described by Mac Firbis, in a note added by him in his genealogical work (Royal Irish Academy copy, folio 299). Referring to the ancient celebrity of the Irish, and to the alleged continental expedition of King Dathi, (vid. *infra*, ad an. 428),

he observes:—"It is no doubt a worldly lesson to consider how the Gaoidhel were at this time conquering the countries far and near, and that not one in a hundred of the Irish nobles, at this day, possesses as much of his land as he could be buried in, though they expect it in this year, 1664." On which Dr. O'Donovan remarks, "This, and many other strong passages to the same effect, show that the Irish in our author's time were in an awful state of destitution; and it is highly probable that he himself was begging from door to door at the time that he inserted this passage." *Hy-Fiachrach*, p. 321.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xix

The state of misery to which his friend O'Flaherty was brought after the confiscation of his ample inheritance, is incidentally told by Dr. Thomas Molyneux, in his account¹ of a journey made to Connaught in the year 1709.

"I went," he says, "to visit old Flaherty, who lives, very old, in a miserable condition at Park, some three hours west of Galway, in Hiar or West Connaught. I expected to have seen here some old Irish manuscripts; but his ill fortune has stripped him of these as well as other goods, so that he has nothing now left but some few of his own writing, and a few old rummish books of history printed." O'Flaherty was then in his 80th year.

The death of Mac Firbis was sudden and violent. In the year 1670, while travelling to Dublin, he was assassinated at Dunfin, in the county of Sligo. The circumstances attending the event, are thus narrated by Professor O'Curry.²

"Mac Firbis was at that time under the ban of the penal laws, and, consequently, a marked and almost a defenceless man, in the eye of the law, whilst the friends of his murderer enjoyed the full protection of the constitution. He must have been then past his 80th year, and he was, it is believed, on his way to Dublin, probably to visit Robert, the son of Sir James Ware. He took up his lodgings for the night at a small house in the little village of Dunfin, in his native county. While sitting and resting himself in a small room off the shop, a young gentleman, of the Crofton family, came in and began to take some liberties with a young woman who had the care of the shop. She, to check his freedom, told him that he would be seen by the old gentleman in the next room; upon which, in a sudden rage, he snatched up a knife from the counter, rushed furiously into the room, and plunged it into the heart of Mac Firbis."

¹ *Account*. Published in the *Miscellany of the Irish Arch. Soc.*, vol. i.

² *O'Curry*. *Lectures, &c.*, p. 122.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04870-5 - *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135*

Edited by William M. Hennessy

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

“Thus it was that, at the hand of a wanton assassin, this great scholar closed his long career—the last of the regularly educated and most accomplished masters of the history, antiquities, and laws and language of ancient Erin.”

The venerable Charles O’Conor, to whom the circumstances attending the murder of MacFirbis were known, but who withheld them from publicity out of consideration for the descendants of the murderer, thus deploras the event¹ :—

“Duaid Mac Firbis closed the line of the hereditary antiquaries of Lecan, in Tirfiacra, on the Moy; a family whose law reports and historical collections, (many of which lie now dispersed in England and France), have derived great credit to their country. This last of the Furbises was unfortunately murdered at Dunfin, in the county of Sligo, A.D. 1670; and by his death our antiquities received an irreparable blow. The last years of his life were employed in drawing up a glossary for the explanation of our old law terms, the great desideratum of the present age. Of the fate of this last performance we know nothing, but we may well suppose it lost, as the author lived without a single patron, in days unfavourable to the arts of which he was master.”

The compilations of Mac Firbis are numerous, and of the most varied nature, including works on Biography, Genealogy, Hagiology, History, Law, and Philology. He appears also to have transcribed many tracts compiled by others, and to have translated some. The following list comprises all his works that are at present known to exist, either in his own handwriting, or in authentic transcripts therefrom :—

1. The transcript from which the following chronicle has been printed.

¹ *The event.* See *Ogygia Vindicated*, Preface, pp. ix., x.