Roache/Roach/Roche/Roch

Roch in Wales and Operation Ireland

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Wales - Roch in the Hundred of Rhos

There is ample documentation from highly credible sources that the first at Roch was Godebert Flandrensis (of Flanders). His sons - Richard and Rodebert (Norman French), are documented in several source documents including the Complete Peerage (Vol 5, 1949, St. Martin's Press, N.Y., Geoffrey White, Editor). However, with much that is written, the Complete Peerage, Burke's and other Reference books are not without error. White states that Godebert, in AD 1130, was "paying to have certain lands in Pembroke", implying that the family was well established there by then.

According to feudal tradition, they would have been required to supply men (Knight's fees) and arms at the pleasure of the King or their overlords, the de Pendergasts and de Clares for their holdings (especially ones of such size and value) in the barony of Rhos.

There is no supported claim to them having been at Hastings. The "Cambro" in Cambro-Norman is derived from Cumbria, Latin for Wales. There was a permanent Norman/Flemish presence in Scotland and Wales well before the Conquest, we do know that Roche or de Roch, initially Godebert and FitzGodebert were in Wales by the reign of Henry I (1100-35).

In Wales, the furthest back we can go with authority is to "The Chronicle of the Princes" (Brut y Tywsogion). The Chronicle was a continuation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae. It survived several Welsh translations from original Latin, which did not survive. It records that Normans originally arriving in Wales to defend the March (border) spoke Old French [not English or a Germanic tongue].

It also confirms the systematic planting of Flemish settlers in the hundred of Rhos and Dauglleddau about AD 1106, 1108 and 1111 by Henry I. But, Godebert is reported as having had been born in Roch in AD 1096. Henry I was leery about the Flemish and Scots becoming too friendly in the north of England and in Scotland. He trusted neither. He sent their Peerage home and their rank and file to Wales. As with Henry II and his son John, who had reservations about "the foreigners" and the Irish, Henry I was insecure about the possibility of an alliance threatening his Crown. However, many had taken Scots names by then, and became leaders in future Scots rebellions.

Norman families like the de Clares were looked after, but they had to fight to hold the grants they were given - not always successfully - against the Welsh. They were also often in trouble with their Kings, not being know for the quality of their character.

Castles didn't exist in Wales before the Normans arrived. Yet in two centuries, they built hundreds. Most were the property of "Marcher Lords" (from the French word "march" meaning "frontier"). The March Lordships eventually swung in a great arc from Chester in the north to Chepstow in the south, and then west to Pembroke(shire). This concept had originated with Charlemagne. It put potential trouble makers as far away from him as possible and held to potential for expansion of his domain.

The grandest and most powerful were built by the Lords, but there were smaller ones built by lieutenants of the major barons. Several stood guard over the Norman de la Roch holdings near Williamston in Llangwm, Pembrokeshire. Roch was at one end of the family's holdings and Benton was at Llangwm, the other end.

Roch Castle near Haverford, was "caput baroniae" to Godebert's family, but they spent more time at Benton Castle and Pill Priory from the second generation onward. Roch Castle is located in the Village of Roch, overlooking St. Bride's Bay. Llangwm was close to the Welsh, but also had land reaching to the sea. Like Roch, the surrounding countryside was cleared so that an approaching enemy would be seen.

Godebert of Flanders, however was subinfeudated to Maurice de Prendergast and, as such, did not hold his position and lands direct from de Clare, but from a man much renowned in the historical record. In the barony of Rhos, he, unlike de Clare who was at times stripped of the title Earl by the Monarchy, had solid control over four parishes - Roch, Nolton, Camrose and Treffgarne, and seems to have enjoyed the respect of the local people. Otherwise it would have proven difficult to hold land so close to the Welsh.
Some of the land at Roch had earlier been held by Lambert Echiners (who may have given his name to Lambston - or the reverse) in Pembroke. He was French (Norman), not Welsh. The change in control was not, to my knowledge, documented. The family expanded their holdings to include Rickerston, Clareston, Llether and Pakeston, New Moat, Little Newcastle, Stainton, South Hook, Denant, Stodhaze, Strickemershille, Redeberch, Thorneton, Liddeston, Neogol, St. Hubertston, on and on.

The area originally held by the de Roche family at Benton Castle (David who married Johanna de Roch) is shown in yellow (see right). They moved to England because they were surrounded by Welsh, and held their grant under Brehon rather than Feudal Law.

It is in Llangwm, some distance from the Roch Castle stronghold, but was not without support, because as noted above, there were Flemish "towers" nearby to provide protection.

ROCH in the barony of RHÔS, six miles northwest of Haverfordwest, on the eastern shore of St. Bride's Bay is near the Cyfern Mountain to the west and southwest. It is on the main road between Haverfordwest and St. David's. Near the village are Roch Gate and Roch Bridge. The family controlled more of the barony than Roch,...as illustrated in colours below.

Roch and other Parishes

A. Burton  B. Camrose
C. Dale  D. Freystrop
E. Haroldston St Issells  F. Haroldston West
H. Hasguard  J. Haverfordwest St Martins
K. Haverfordwest St Marys
L. Haverfordwest St Thomas
M. Herbrandston  O. Hubberston
P. Johnston  S. Llangwm
T. Llanstadwell  U. Marloes
V. Nolton  W. Robeston West
X. Roch  Y. Rosemarket
Z. St Brides
C1. Talbenny  D1. Treffgarne
E1. Walton West  F1. Walwyn’s Castle

Barony (Hundred) of Rhos
(in Pembrokeshire, Wales)

Roch Castle (parish of Roch, Pembrokeshire)

The Normans and their allies expelled the Welsh to the outside of the ring of castles (the March or Borderlands), which was to form the Landsker. They say English replaced the local tongue, but wait. The Normans spoke Old French; the Flemish didn't speak English, so who did? Cromwell's troops took de Roch Castles in Wales, and they did pass it on to English families, one a friend of Ann Boleyn. But the de Rochs had simply bred out by the 1400s. English could not have replaced Welsh (Celtic) as the local tongue within this area until centuries later.

Godebert or his family may have been elsewhere prior to the date of the Flemish re-settlement by Henry I of Flemings from Scotland. This is relevant to Roche genealogy because the first member of the family to emerge from the mists of time was Godebert de Flandrensis. He was still without a surname - and I am 100% certain he did not speak English. How could that be? He was just as likely to have spoken Welsh, if he was born and grew up there. But at the very least, or is it most, he would have spoken Flemish! Being born at Roch would have made him Cambro-Flemish!

There is also some disagreement over whether the "Flemish" de Roch came from the Barony of Rhos; the name from the Celtic word a moor Rhoslyn; or from the family's Castle or the Parish, Roch (Welsh: Y Garn), Pembroch. Henry I may not have been overly enamoured of the Flemish, but they had to watch him because under feudal law, he could strip them of everything in a moment's time. He had been Duke de la Roche earlier; and from a pragmatic desire to move socially and politically with their Norman allies [de la Roche], etc., the de Rochs might have taken a cue. They later named one of Rodebert's sons Henry in Ireland.


Later Cambro-Norman presence in Ireland would involve Flemish, Welsh, and Irish allies; and it was never intended to be a conquest by anyone but Diarmait [1126–1171] who wanted to be High King.

That Henry I got off on the wrong foot with the Welsh and Scots likely made the Flemish more than a little uneasy. When William II was killed, Henry had himself elected and crowned while his brother Robert was away on Crusade. So he was not a man to be trusted.

Henry had to accommodate the Anglos and the Flemish in Scotland and Wales (with an eye to the Scots), like everyone else who ever conquered that Island. Worse, his real interest and concern, like many Kings to come, never went beyond the most fertile and profitable portions of SE England.

I don't think anyone - myself included - can say with authority, but it would seem Godebert was not one of those re-located from Scotland and granted large holdings amongst the Normans on the March. Whatever his nationality, he was born in Wales earlier. Born in Roch in AD 1096, the question becomes how far back does the family go on the western side of the Channel? Flemings and Anglo-Frisians had been in both England and Scotland intermittently for a very long time. Could the Welsh have dubbed him Flemish because so many of the displaced Flemish from Scotland settled his lands?
The seed of the Eustaces ruled untroubled from the marriage of Maude de Lens, of Flemish descent, and her marriage, widowed, to Scots husband, David I. If the Scots and Irish were allies, and if the Flemish were in reasonable good stead with both, how did Godebert, an acknowledged Fleming, get tarred with the Lankster brush and anything English?

Maud of Northumbria (AD 1074-1130), Countess de Huntingdon, was the daughter of the II Earl of Northumbria and Judith de Lens (Flemish), the last of the major Saxon Earls to remain powerful after the Conquest. Maud inherited her father's Earldom of Huntingdon in England and married twice.

Maud, married Simon de St Liz, I Earl of Northampton in AD 1090 and they had a number of children including:

- Matilda de St Liz, who married Robert FitzRichard and then Saer de Quincy, 1st Earl of Winchester.
- Simon II de St Liz, 4th Earl of Huntingdon and Northampton.
- Saint Walter de St Liz (1100 – 1160).

Maud's first husband [St. Liz] died in AD 1109 after 19 years of marriage; she then married King David I of Scotland in AD 1113. From this marriage, she had one son, Henry. The Scottish House of Dunkeld produced the next Earl of Huntingdon. Henry Dunkeld, succeeded through her to the Earldom. Now this may or may not be correct because the records around this whole exercise are contradictory. Two death dates are extant for her - one reported as AD 1130 at Scone, yet her name appears on a Charter dated AD 1147. This could have been two different women of the same name - I have seen it before. But it might not!

It is just as likely to be the later work of antiquarians, who fiddled pedigrees for their rich employers, in the interest of money, land, and prestige. Even though apparently English born, Maud was considered Flemish, likely because of her mother being a de Lens. As a result, some Flemish followed her north at the time of her second marriage and settled in the north of England and in Scotland. It would seem that when she died, they were offed to the continent or to Wales. Average Flemings were moved to join their countrymen on the Marsh along the Trail of Saints. Henry had them in one place - does that sound "English"? The strong Flemish leadership, hands for work, a source of income for the landed gentry, and potential military to take up the sword when required.

But Flemish royalty, once in the Isles, felt they need protection against the Angevins and called on the house of Boulogne and kinsmen - men like Walter the Fleming (now Seton), Gilbert of Ghent/Alost (now Lindsay), Robert de Comines St Pol (now Comyn and Buchan), Arnulf de Hesdin (now Stewart and Graham), the counts of Louvain (now Bruce), hereditary advocates of Bethune (now Beaton), hereditary Castellans of Lille (now Lyle) and their followers.

This Boulogne line continued on the Scots Throne until the death of Alexander II in AD 1286. Wars of Scottish succession were concerned with the Flemish. Flemings had married Flemings, and south and east Scotland were largely populated by people whose ancestors had come from Gent, Guines, Ardres, Comines, St Omer, St Pol, Hesdin, Lille, Tournai, Douai, Bethune, and Boulogne. They supported one another – Flemings / Frisians – Wales / Scotland - as long as they could. The city of Boulogne goes all the way back to the Romans, beginning as a fort. It is now in northern France, however it was part of Flanders in the middle ages.

The AD 1290 break in the Scottish - Boulonnais succession allowed the Plantagenet - Angevin monarchy in England to annul the Charlemagnic descent. The clans emerged from the turmoil of subsequent centuries having pacified rebellions in the North and re-conquered areas taken by the Norse.

Robert the Bruce was directly descended by several lines from Charlemagne and Queen Maude and was eligible for the Scots Throne - if you ignore the fact it had been annulled. His ancestor had come to England carrying the azure Lion of Louvain and Maude de Louvain was the wife of Count Eustace I of Boulogne. The Conqueror had many Flemish Knights in his army, and Boulogne was part of Flanders at that time.

Two major Arms of the Roche surname have a Lion or Lions, it is not difficult to imagine how that came about. We are left to explain the Fish, but I think we have done that, and now have the sheep in one pen and the goats in another!
Nowhere in Wales was control stronger than in south Pembrokeshire, (Vol. V, West Wales Historical Records (pp. 271-290). Castles from Roch to Tenby, supported by lesser fortresses along the foothills of the Presley Hills were secured by the great castles of Carew, Manorbier and Pembroke. Control does not mean abuse with a few notable exceptions. Rhys Gruffydd recovered south Pembrokeshire in AD 1189 from de Clare, and Llywelyn the Last in 1277 overran the Marcher Lords. Pembroke was never taken! The French can't fight - but Flemings and Frisians can.

Roch Castle looks ominous, a fortress, consistent with the image of a Marcher Lord, but the de Roch preferred relative seclusion at Benton Castle or Pill Priory - some of the family were even buried at Pill, it having been endowed by them. With Pill, they did not use an old site, they showed respect for Celtic Saint Budoc and they encouraged the Welsh to join the Tironian Order who they had brought in to run the House.

Pill was in ruins until recently and has now been bought by a long-time Welsh resident of Flemish descent, Rudy Peleman. The Priory is again in good hands and, I think, as with Roch and Benton, restored. It should rightfully be considered a national treasure!

Documents show Adam de Rupe endowing Pill to the Order of Tiron, witnessed by Bishop Peter de Leia, St David's [1176-1198] which sets the timeframe. The original charter has been lost, and the sole remaining source is an inspeximus from AD 1294-5, which reads:

"For the monks of Pill. The king etc....We have inspected a charter which Adam de Roche made to God and St Mary and St Budoc and the monks of the Order of Tiron....in the monastery of Pill in these words.....I, Adam de Roche....founding a monastery in my land of Pill....with the consent and assent of my heir, my wife Blandina....have given, granted and by this, my present charter, confirmed to God and St. Mary and St Budoc and the monks of the order of Tiron there....etc., etc....'"


Of course much happened later. When the Kings in England decided to cut the families who had become to close to the Welsh (as with the Irish later) down to size, they started in on the Roches in Rhos - who ignored them and continued to act as they always had - as landed gentry. This turned some into what the British called criminals. David Roche even was taken to task for collecting what he considered his due from Pill.

He was unaware that there was only a little sand left in the family's hour glass there under Henry V. We don't know his fate, but we can guess and I doubt it was "living happily ever after." Pill's motherhouse was linked to St Dogmael's and they in turn were linked to the continent - Norman France. Maybe the family died out for want of male heirs because they were all buried at pill - have suffered a premature and undocumented death?

Roch Parish in the Barony of Rhos was theirs to the extent that it could be under the feudal system in which the King owned all, and Roch Castle did remain their caput baroniae, even though they leased it to another family and spend most of their time at Benton or Pill. Benton, being in Llangwm, may have at times fell under the Welsh land tenure system, and may have even been preferrable to the family, especially in the time that their overlord de Clare was out of favour with Henry II.

Pill met other needs for a people who have always shown a strong spiritual inclination. Benton is rather remote, surrounded by forests and farm lands, and, most importantly, close to salt water, which must surely run in our veins. Both Pill and Benton were good places to be if some enemy [including a representative of the King - often not a good sign] were searching for you at Roch!

Pill shows that the de Roch were respectful. Not only did the de Roch family not use an existing foundation, but Pill was the first Abbey to recruit Welsh monks. Their total contribution to the Church in various forms over time, was outstanding. Pill's mother-house was St Dogmael's Abbey, and its sister house was on Caldey (Ynys Byr) Island - they were to benefit the Welsh.
Most Catholics would know that the Rosary had been attributed to St. Dominic (c AD 1500). Many might not know that a member of the Dominican Order, Alan de la Roche, in his writings promoted the Rosary. He tells us that Dominic had tried unsuccessfully to win converts in France. In frustration, he went into seclusion near Toulouse and prayed for three days and nights. During his retreat, de (la) Roche reports that Our Lady appeared and taught Dominic to say the Rosary. She asked him to teach the people her prayer. Dominic later went to the Cathedral and began to preach. A severe storm blew up during his sermon, and an apparition of Our Lady appeared. People were frightened, but Dominic prayed and the storm abated. They got the message.

Alan de la Roche began Rosary Confraternities, and in AD 1520, Pope Leo X officially approved its universal use. Originally, the Rosary was called "The Psalter of Jesus and Mary" because the Book of Psalms has 150 entries. The original Rosary had 150 "Hail Marys". The word "Rosary" comes from the Latin "rosarium", a bouquet of roses.

But Pill Priory was also devoted to the Blessed Virgin, as well as a Saint of the Celtic Tradition, Budoc. Sister Catherine - Coincidence? Likely, I am open to the possibility - does that mean I am no scholar? Given their apparent inflexibility of thought (logic), I will gladly lay no claim to being one!
Operation Ireland

I use the term, "Operation Ireland" to describe the tiny slice of history carved out by the renegades, MacMurchada and de Clare. It was Irish King Diarmait's Civil War to win or not; and he needed outside help. The Anglos would not touch it with a barge pole. He bought his foreign allies by contract or treaty with de Clare, throwing his daughter in for good measure - always a "hard truth" for many "Gaelic Irish" to accept.

In the interest of historical accuracy, therefore, it's OPERATION IRELAND. That term more accurately describes what happened between 1166 AD and when Cambro-Norman expansion ended - or began its precipitous decline - generally agreed to be about AD 1270 - only a century or so after they first arrived from Wales.

Of all the Cambro-Norman and allied families of European extraction, the Roches were (for better or worse) to be among the first in Ireland at the time of the so-called "Anglo-Norman Invasion". This supposedly triggered centuries of tension between the Emerald Isle and England. If so, it was the doing of an Irish King - Diarmait MacMurchada, King of Uí Cheinsealaig and Leinster (Laigin) - and not "the usual suspects"! Granted, it takes two. And Richard Fitz Gilbert de Clare, a Cambro-Norman, was out of options in Wales. So a deal, of sorts, was struck.

Like many of their kind - Sir Richard FitzGodebert and his brother, Rodebert (not Robert) - were not easily "recruited" into an Irish Civil War. It was a feudal duty after Irish King, Diarmait MacMurchada [a.k.a.Dermot McMurrough, AD 1100-1171], son of Donnchad MacMurchada, former King of Dublin, struck a deal with their overlord. Liking or disliking the men who cast their fate; liking or disliking the prospects of the venture; the possibility of winning or losing was ultimately not their responsibility.

They had done their best to meet the Welsh half way. And this was no Trojan War. Truth be told, Diarmait had succumbed to the temptations of a fair maiden, Dervorgilla, wife of a neighbouring chieftain, Tiernan O'Rourke (Tighernán Ua Ruairc) some years earlier. Worse, having run off with her, he grew tired of her, and sent her back! The two men - MacMurchada and Ua Ruairc - were of equal stature in the Gaelic hierarchy - Irish chieftains. Diarmait establishing himself as King in Leinster and Tiernan as Prince of Breifne. But Diarmait was always making trouble.

In AD 1166, Tiernan allied with Rory O'Connor, King of Connacht and High King of Ireland, and the two raised an army to attack MacMurchada at Ferns. They banished him from Ireland. His home was burned - some say by his opponents, and some say by Diarmait himself to deny them the satisfaction. Because of prior positive exchanges with royals in other places, Diarmait fled to England, and landed in Bristol, along with wife, daughter and a few loyal followers. There he learned what many have, for centuries, found it expedient to forget - the King was where you might expect him to be - anywhere but England.

Undaunted, Diarmait set off to find Henry II on the continent and to ask his help in recovering his kingdom. But Henry had his own problems, and declined to become involved in Irish "issues". He did give Diarmait a letter that said (and there are several versions):

"Wherefore, whosoever within the bounds of our territories shall be willing to give him aid, as our vassal and liegeman, in recovering his territories, let him be assured of our favour on that behalf".

Henry II was one of the most successful Kings of England - but that did not make him Anglo or English. He and his successors were Angevins, not English. Thus even "Norman" is something of a misnomer when thrown around loosely. These people seemed to have what it took to hold power in a ruthless age.

In October 1171, Henry II had brought a largely English (Anglo-Saxon) army of 4,000 with him to Waterford. He did not trust many of his own people by then and, except for some senior positions which he filled in Ireland with hand-picked (Cambro-) Norman supporters, he left behind as "settlers" in Dublin men from Bristol. These were to replace the Danes, either killed or run off in battle earlier, but most of the English he took away with him. He did cement his power and position in Ireland by gaining
Strongbow's pledge of allegiance and gaining the support of Irish leaders, Civic and Religious.

And though everything that happened afterwards in the sad history of England and Ireland points to the conclusion, as some people see it, that this was the moment when Ireland lost her freedom, no one at the time saw it that way. Irish Kings did homage to Henry as they would to any High King, building the ritual hall through which they entered - the Gaels promising him one of every ten of their cattle hides in tribute. They saw him, not as imperial conqueror, but as insurance against the "foreigners" under Strongbow.

Within two or three generations, northern and eastern Ireland had been totally transformed from a pastoral country surviving on herding and ruled by clans to a place of knightly manors. Land taken was divided and given to knights and Irish allies (as were titles and other benefits) as a reward for service.

All this was possible because the Cambro-Normans and their Norman King ostensibly intervened in Ireland at the Pope’s behest, carrying as authority the Papal Bull Laudabiliter by which Pope Adrian IV, an Englishman, a.k.a. Nicholas Breakspear, elected in AD 1154, that claimed 'all islands were to belong to the Roman Church' [1155]. Henry II did not act on it for years, because, apart from the fact that it might have been forged, and the Pope responsible was dead by the time Henry decided to "enter the Island," and there were conditions. Had Henry not needed to mend fences with Rome - he would never have seriously considered being any Pope's errand boy. Amazingly, the Church which he hoped to appease for the murder of Thomas a Beckett on his watch issued a second Bull.

The Bull Laudabiliter by which a dead Pope gave a Norman King permission to enter Ireland makes interesting reading. Note the wording "King of the English", not King of England or English King. Henry was an Angevin and his home was not in England. Every Irish person should absorb what the English Pope and his successor said and, therefore, thought of them - as it was apparently accepted by Irish leaders of the day as well as those charged with implementation of the Papal directive/s.

Bull Laudabiliter

Adrian, bishop servant of the servants of God to our well beloved son in Christ the illustrious King of the English greeting and Apostolic Benediction. Laudably and profitably does your Majesty contemplate spreading the glory of your name on earth and laying up for yourself the reward of eternal happiness in heaven in that as becomes a Catholic Prince you propose to enlarge the boundaries of the Church to proclaim the truths of the Christian religion to ... a rude and ignorant people to root out the growth of vice from the field of the Lord; and the better to accomplish this purpose you seek the counsel and goodwill of the Apostolic See.

In pursuing your object the loftier your aim and the greater your discretion the more prosperous we are assured with God's assistance will be the progress you will make: for undertakings commenced in the zeal of faith and the love of religion are ever wont to attain to a good end and issue.

Verily as your excellency doth acknowledge there is no doubt that Ireland and all the islands on which Christ the sun of righteousness has shone and which have accepted the doctrines of the Christian faith belong to the blessed Peter and the Holy Roman Church wherefore the more pleased are we to plant in them the seed of faith acceptable to God inasmuch as our conscience warns us that in their case a stricter account will hereafter be required of us.

Whereas then well beloved son in Christ you have expressed to us your desire to enter the island of Ireland in order to subject its people to law [Papal Cannon Law] and to root out from them the weeds of vice [the ancient Culdee faith] and your willingness to pay an annual tribute to the blessed Peter [the Pope] of one penny from every house and to maintain the rights of the Churches of that land whole and inviolate.

We therefore meeting your pious and laudable desire with due favour; and according a gracious assent to your petition do hereby declare our will and pleasure that with a view to enlarging the boundaries of the Church restraining the downward course of vice, correcting evil customs and planting virtue and for the increase of the Christian religion you shall enter that island and execute whatsoever may tend to the honor of God and the welfare of the land; and also that the
people shall receive you with honor and revere you as their Lord provided always that the rights of the Church remain whole and inviolate and saving to the blessed Peter and the Holy Roman Church the annual tribute of one penny for every house.

If then you should carry your project into effect let it be to your care to instruct that people in good ways of life...that the Church there may be adorned that the Christian religion may take root and grow... that you may deserve at God's hands the fullness of an everlasting reward and may obtain on earth a name renowned throughout the ages.

Nevertheless, Diarmait found there were no takers in England (no Anglo-Saxons would go to Ireland). They were too busy trying to co-opt the Normans and their mostly-absent Kings. Diarmait was advised to try to find "adventurers, free-booters, and mercenaries" in Wales. The English knew there were Earls and Barons, Cambro-Norman and "Flemish" there with good reason to be rowdy, and that the Welsh might "throw in", if the price were right. Some, like Earl Richard de Clare, might take any offer that allowed them to escape the Marsh, the frontier, the forgotten war and find better prospects.

Rhys ap Gruffudd or 'the Lord Rhys' had had great success re-establishing the kingdom of Deheubarth. Between AD 1136 and 66, he and his brothers had freed Ceredigion, Ystrad Tywi and much of Dyfed from Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Strigoil, (Richard's father), and, as of AD 1138, Earl of Pembroke, better known as 'Strongbow'.

Later, de Clare, having married one of Henry's old mistresses (never a good idea), had sided with Henry's daughter, the Empress Matilda [AD 1141], in temporarily overthrowing his successor, King Stephen. Stephen regained power in about a year, and you can imagine where the de Clare family stood in the minds of succeeding Norman Kings.

Assuming his father's titles upon his death in AD 1148, Richard Fitz Gilbert de Clare did no better. In fact, he made a mess of things. Within less than two decades, he lost a large a part of his holdings to Rhys; was out of favour with King Henry II; and was deep in debt. When approached by Diarmait, he was keen to listen and agreed to help, in return for a "home" in Ireland and the hand of Diarmait's (young) daughter, plus the promise of being named King of Leinster, when Diarmait died ... all on the condition that Henry II approve.

Encouraged, but impatient, while de Clare dawdled, Diarmait continued his search for mercenaries. He discovered that Rhys ap Gruffudd had captured and imprisoned a number of Normans, among them Robert FitzStephen --- Cambro-Norman son of Welsh Princess, Nesta, and Stephen, Sheriff of Cardigan.

Nesta was quite liberal with her "favours," and in addition to having bedded Henry I, had done so with others. It was mostly her half-sibling sons who went to Ireland in key positions with de Clare. They were all held in "equal esteem" by the Angevins, who had no reason to be so haughty given their own behavior, but that is not how things go - is it?

Rhys realized he could free Fitz Stephen on the condition that he go to Ireland. From Rhys' point of view, this not only solved the immediate problem of what to do with captives (of rank) that he was loathe to kill, but weakened their hold on Wales. The Irish Proposal offered the prospect of removing Nesta's brood and a good number of Norman and Cambro-Norman knights who might otherwise be a future source of formidable opposition. He understood that under feudal law, some of the landed Flemish would have to go as well.

It was also, he hoped, a gesture of good will to the Irish of Leinster, with whom Wales historically had had positive relations. The agreement was, therefore, important to the Welsh. The foreigners could leave to seek a more secure future in Ireland. Rhys would support Henry II during the rebellion by his sons in AD 1173 - an excellent political move. And Rhys might remain secure in his own country.

"The Hidden Annals" report that, after striking an arrangement with de Clare, MacMurchada took the road to St. David's and enlisted Knights FitzGerald, FitzHenry, Carew and de Barri (Nesta's sons). Then, he turned south and inland to Rhos in Dyfed to find and recruit the Flemings - de Prendergast, de Roch, Cheevers and Synotts - a small, but powerful, colony only a century of so in the area. He then returned home with a small group of men at arms led by Richard FitzGodebert (de Roch).
The proposal accepted by de Clare put Sir Richard Fitz Godebert and others (including hundreds of Welsh archers, recruited by Fitz Stephen, “the flower of the youth of Wales”, in league with Diarmait. Under feudal law, these Knights were bound to de Clare by "Knight's fees" and had no choice but to join him in Ireland or anywhere else. In this case, it happened to be Ireland to help settle Diarmait’s feud with the O’Connors and O’Rourkes. If successful, never having been completely comfortable in Wales, they were promised they would always have a "HOME" in Ireland, and it would be permanent.

But, let’s be clear about this. The "Anglo-Norman Invasion" was not "Anglo-Anything". It simply never happened! Theoretically, becoming mercenaries for the Irish King of Leinster would have been voluntary, but we know that the de Prendergasts "persuaded" Richard and Rodebert to accept Diarmait's invitation and promises. On the other hand, since many of the Normans and Flemings in the region had fallen into disfavor with the Plantagagent Line of Kings, there was a possible upside and little apparent downside to some, not all, of the family, in taking a chance on Ireland.

In truth, the de Roch simply tagged along, pawns in a treaty struck by those of higher standing. As a contemporary historian recorded, the Normans were "a war-like race, moved by fierce ambition..." and their Normanized Flemish likely had some of that rub off on them. Tag along, we did, but Richard Fitz Godebert was at the front and first in Ireland with Diarmait. He was not first, of course, when the rewards were being parcelled out, but that is still our way.

Source: Old Pembrokeshire Families by Henry Owen, 1902 -- pp. 67-80), and elsewhere as Rodbert. The Father of these FitzGodeberts was Godebert Flandrensis (the Fleming) of Rhos.

The Gaels, for certain, were a wild lot....men in power often got there over the castrations and blindings of even their own family members. Prisoners given in ransom to seal some bargain among men of power often suffered a similar fate, and then death. The Gaels also had their own brand of Christianity - St. Patrick or no St. Patrick. Celtic Christianity allowed divorce, secular marriage, fosterage and community property (the commons), and it remained extant until the Reformation throughout the Isles where they held sway (unless suppressed).

Yes, Cambro-Flemish mercenaries, not saints by modern standards, but neither were their contemporaries. There are no clear "oppressors or victims" in this drama. The lines are all blurred. The "foreigners" were good administrators, builders, lawmakers, farmers and churchmen...as well as warriors. They made a real contribution to the Irish way of life, as they had in Wales, England and western Europe. But they tended to do things the hard way - fighting among themselves while trying to deal with outside threats and challenges at the same time! Diarmait and his small band of supporters tasted defeat almost right away by the O'Rourkes and the O'Connors at Kellistown near Carlow in 1167.

At this point, we lose sight of Richard FitzGodebert (de Roch). But it is suspected that he stayed in Ireland scouting suitable landing sites and ensuring the Irish would back Diarmait in preparation for the larger landing in AD 1169. The remainder of the party returned to Wales.

In May, AD 1169 Robert FitzStephen with 30 men-at-arms, 60 in half-armour, and 300 archers and footmen (Normans, Flemings and Welsh) landed at Bannow Bay from Milford Haven in three ships. They were followed the next day by Maurice de Prendergast from Rhos with 10 men-at-arms [likely de Rochs among them], and many Welsh archers in two more ships. They were then joined by MacMurrough's own son in law and his army of Irish supporters (in the hundreds) --- not an Englishman in sight --- just Normans, Welsh, Flemish and Irish. Further landings followed. The fact that their point of departure from Wales was Milford Haven is significant. It is near the epi-centre of Flemish population, a market-town and sea-port, in the parish of Steynton, county of Pembroke. As an anchorage, it was the best and safest in Britain.

Diarmait soon had most of his old kingdom of Leinster, including Wexfordtown. By 23 August 1170, Strongbow was ready to follow, landing at Passage on the heels of an advance party (sent in May) under Raymond le Gros FitzGerald. Raymond had paved the way for the cautious Earl by holding and then winning a battle for Baginbun, (the Earl led the fourth landing). Within a month, Dublin had fallen and the Danes killed or driven off. Behind all this, MacMurrough's
feud with the O'Rourkes and O'Connors, and his banishment. Seeking revenge, he succeeded with outside help, in eventually defeating his old adversaries, at a price.

He may have thought he was simply hiring mercenaries, and that promises were made to be broken, but they had other plans. MacMurrough died in AD 1171 at Ferns by which time his allies were in Ireland in force. Names like FitzStephen, FitzHenry, Monte Marisco, FitzGerald, de Barri, le Gros and de Clare figured prominently. Lesser known families, like Fitz Godebert and de Prendergast were either Flemish, Normanized Flemish or Welsh archers.

Godebert and his family were well-connected politically, gaining vast tracts of land in Wales. It was William's son, Phillip, who talked Godebert's sons, the FitzGodeberts (de Roch), into taking part in "Operation Ireland". I have no doubt promises were made - including peerages and land.

Wherever the Prendergasts went, the de Roch (de Rupe) family, was there...in western Europe, England, Wales and Ireland...and who knows where else before? Fernegenal (Shelmalier East) was originally granted to Philip, but passed to the Roches AD 1180.

Duffrey in northwest County Wexford had gone to the de Prendergasts through marriage, and they moved there c AD 1190. This was an area originally granted to Robert de Quincy for five knights' fees. Shelmalier West went to the Furlongs, another of the families which had traveled with the de Roches over the centuries. This double (or triple) transaction would of course keep the families in arms (Knights' fees), in trouble and often unable to oversee their estates for far too long...such was the feudal system.

Maurice de Prendergast, Philip's father, had married a FitzGerald (one of Cambro-Norman "Geraldines", closely associated in history with Henry II and Nesta). He became Governor of the County and City of Cork, and built Ardfinnan Castle between AD 1199 and 1216 on the River Suir. He also had extensive grants in Counties Tipperary, Waterford, Wicklow and Wexford. Then he did what these "foreigners" were often known to do in old age. In AD 1177, he handed over Castle de Prendergast in Pembrokeshire to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the Hospitalers, and died a Prior of the Order at Kilmainham near Dublin in AD 1205.

Not to be confused with the Knights Templar, of which Marschal was a member at the time of his death, Knights Hospitalier were the "flip side", also known as Knights of Rhodes and Malta. They were a brotherhood for the care of sick pilgrims in a hospital at Jerusalem following the First Crusade. Hospitaliers built many castles in Syria and established branches in Europe. They, like the Templars, became wealthy. Monastic Hospitaliers were founded following that Crusade and acquired considerable territory and revenues, some from the Templars, after they fell into disfavour. In contrast to the Templars, the Hospitaliers wore a black surcoat with a white cross. After the fall of Acre in AD 1291, they sheltered in Cyprus, later taking the Island of Rhodes in AD 1309. During the French Revolution, however, the Hospitaliers followed in the footsteps of the Templars to a degree - their assets were seized in AD 1792. Malta was captured by Napoleon in AD 1798, and the Knights were forced to shelter in Russia (St. Petersburg). By AD 1834, however, the revived Order was in Rome. It still survives today as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta; the Templars are long gone; so remember ... always bet on the black!

Philip de Prendergast, the eldest son, who had originally accompanied his father to Ireland, married Maude, daughter of Robert de Quincy, Constable and Standard Bearer of Leinster c AD 1190. He received the town of Enniscorthy in AD 1217 (not 1205 when castle construction began?), and he died in AD 1226 (just as work was being completed). He had only one surviving son, another Philip, then Lord of Manor of Drangan, Co. Tipperary. If Phillip Fitz Philip was in Tipperary, who took possession of Enniscorthy Castle?

Maurice also left a younger son, Gerald, who founded a branch of the family in Co. Mayo [known by the Irish as MacMaurice of MacMorris], represented in the Castle Macgarret branch by Lord Oranmore. His youngest son, William, acquired lands in New Castle near Clonmel in Co Tipperary, the family seat for several centuries. De Roch grants north of Wexfordtown ran all the way to Enniscorthy...de Pendergast influence undoubtedly played a large part.

These transactions would of course keep such families in arms (knights' fees) for centuries...unless the line died out. But the de Roch had too much to handle under the circumstances, so they shared with David Sinnott. The name Sinnott (Sinnott, Sinnat, Senett, Sinnett, and Synnot), is found in England and of
supposedly British origin, it is far more widespread in Ireland, Gaelicized as "Sionoid". The name appears as "Synodus" c AD 1095 in Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmund's (Suffolk), but has been prominent in Co. Wexford since the "foreigners" arrived. They were supposedly the most numerous Anglo-Norman families in Wexford after the 1170 and until the advent of Cromwell. I assume, therefore, that they were among the few loyal Anglos left behind by Henry II after is visit.

The Sinnott's possessed extensive estates and held important public offices due to their loyalty to the Crown. That would have put them in league with the de Roch, de Prendergast, Marschals and other men of that ilk who believed in the Feudal System - warts and all. They, too, would become grist for the mill during the Reformation and the Cromwells' time for mischief-making. The first recorded spelling of the name in Ireland was for John Synod, AD 1247 in the Barony of Forth (with the Flemish?). Surnames became necessary with personal taxation - in England, the Poll Tax. And, if we have one thing in common, it is mangled spellings of the surname. "Colonization," like that by the Synods, continued after Strongbow was appointed King's Viceroy in AD 1173, and a large number of Norman, Flemish, English and Welsh settlers were brought into Ireland. The leaders needed settlers as a source of revenue - for rents, market tolls and court fines, and eventually, personal taxes. This would provide the money to run the feudal system and subsidize its defense (when necessary) - and for expansion (when possible).

Maurice de Prendergast was "on the ground" in Ireland immediately after fitzStephen in AD 1169, and we can safely assume that the de Rochs were with them. Their names appear as co-signatories to various charters and other documents shortly thereafter. Apart from Artramont, this had been their old stomping ground, yet I had no sense of it, as I had at Ferrycarrig. Integration was quick in some cases - first by the sword (under treaty) and then by religion (Churches and Abbeys), by marriage and by integration (adopting the local language and culture).

King John endowed Fitz Stephen and de Cogan with lands around south Cork (now considered to include other counties). They, in turn, bestowed the town of Rosscarbery (anciently Ross-Alithra, the wood of the pilgrims) and Ross Lehir [Rosalithir] in East Carbery, and all the lands of Ross (save those belonging to the bishop) upon Adam de Roche.

It is not clear what happened after Henry II's grants lapsed (possibly including one in AD 1177 to Adam due to a break in the line of inheritance of the first two grantees or the reclamation itself) and their re-granting by King John in AD 1200 to David and/or Adam de la Roche. It seems at least a question worth research as to whether North Cork was included. Which de Roch grantees in AD 1177 & 1200 are we talking about, and are they the same or different parts of one Cork grant? I assume this has been done in the past, but the conflicting information remains conflicted.

Now these, I suspect they are the people who went back to Pembroke in time because the grants are all in Co Cork, the fact that some sources say they were made to a David, not Adam de la Roche, notwithstanding. Some followed the de Roch(es) as far north as Enniscorthy (prior to their additional grant in AD 1180). They either lived in towns and enjoyed trader or artisanal status or near population centres as farmers, where they were considered burgers, an attractive prospect for many. But Henry II had put those who were Flemish in Ireland because he simply did not like them. This is yet another example of a relatively peaceful component of "Operation Ireland". It shows that Henry II's belated impact, or the impact of decisions made while he was in Ireland, lasted for centuries. But there were no major battles; migration is hardly invasion.

There is no question that some of the de Roch family later fell in with King John and his son, Henry III. That we did (if we did) is a blot on the historical copybook, if ever there was one. Whomever it was even went against the Earl Marschal and later his son at the behest of the Monarch and his son in turn. Marschal was loyal to King John, supporting him against his many enemies. He even ensured the Throne for John by convincing those with doubts that John was most capable of standing firm against the French.

But one strange story is told about the son of Alexander de Roche (David) and Philip de Prendergast (this story seems to apply to Adam de Rupe, David's Uncle? I can't sort it out!). It is said that King John had given Philip a large grant of land in Cork, and, of course, even in this the Roches would share. But the "Histoire de Guillaume "le Marshal" tells of the two
plotting against the Earl. Specifics are not given, but we are told that within the year, they met Marshal at Glescarrig and were forgiven.

This David may have been the son of Alexander and grandson of Richard FitzGodber de Roch, but that was not a smart move. There is likely no getting to the bottom of this one. I'm sure, antiquarians (or worse) have had a hand in it all. As with records regarding FitzStephen and Adam de Rupe in north Cork (Fermoy), this incident is variously reported to have involved either/or David or Adam, depending on the source/s. There is a minor discrepancy in dates as well, so anyone who "knows", does NOT know! But when Rochs appeared in Wales claiming descent from Adam in Cork with Lions on Arms, centuries later, something had to have been awry.

I am not alone in being unclear in my understanding of what has been written (partly because of King John's tendency to change with the wind and often grant the same territory to more than one favourite of the moment, and just as glibly strip it within a short time). Alternatively, he would issue double grants and leave it to the two to fight it out. His tendency to whimsey caused no end of trouble between contending families. Both the above accounts can be understood to be well (and perhaps deliberately) shrouded in the mists of time.

I simply remain leery of people who have strong opinions on such issues - because there is little, conflicting and sometimes no real evidence on which to base informed conclusions - no matter how much puffery is used to defend them. Add a King notorious for using "divide and conquer" strategies, and even objective researchers can be left in doubt. At the other extreme, vested interests can document contrasting claims - not as important now as in ages past of course - but at times frustrating for those who like to document their research. Suffice it to say that much damage has been done and confusion wrought by people with peerage and property interests at stake - before it became a practical irrelevancy. Even now, for false pride and puffery, people can easily work themselves into a lather about lineage, arms and peerage rights. The fact that Ireland is a Republic, seems not to have registered - some things and some people never seem to change!

After Diamairt's death, Strongbow succeeded him, in right of his wife, Diamairt's daughter, by whom he had an only surviving heiress, Isabel; their son, Gilbert, having died in childhood. Strongbow's widow quickly married one of his Cambro-Normans.

Daughter Isabel later married the more trustworthy William Mareschal, Earl Marshal of Ireland. They married in London and Mareschal succeeded to Strongbow's possessions and titles both in Ireland and Wales [Leinster and Pembrokeshire]. Beginning penniless, William Marshal rose to become an important figure, respected by Henry II, Richard I and King John...the latter failing to act like it. At the age of at least seventy, he led forces against Louis of France to assist nine-year old Henry III retain his throne. At the age of five or six, William had himself been given to King Stephen as hostage, but Stephen saved him from an early death. He later trained as a squire with the Tancarville family in Normandy.

Iironically, William Marshal was the son of a minor knight, John le Marschal (spellings vary) by Sibylle, sister of Patrick, Earl of Salisbury. John was known as a crude and boorish thug of little conscience. He rose to some repute through a rear-guard action in a war between Stephen of Boulogne and the Plantagenets which flared up in AD 1138.

Marshal and another Norman knight (de Roche of course) protected the flight of Plantagenet Queen Matilda, daughter of Henry I, from the prior and future King Stephen. The two held off her pursuers while she rode to safety. They retreated to a nearby church which was then set ablaze by Stephen's men. Lead sheathing from the roof began to melt and drip on the two heroes, splattering them with molten metal. A drip of liquified lead burned out one of Mareschal's eyes, but when his comrade wanted to surrender, Mareschal said he would kill him before he would let him do it.

Thinking the two dead, Stephen's men withdrew. Three days later, Mareschal was in another battle! Whatever else, he was tough, and he was loyal - but on the wrong side - as things turned out. This event might explain the dastardly way King John treated le Marschal's grandson in Ireland, setting him up for slaughter in a plot. Would that the Plantagenets, or any King of that time, did anything based on principle.
King John had motives - spite - based on who knows what slight by Sir William, supporter of his gaining the Throne and protector of his young successor, Henry III. Later John's Marshal and Isabel de Clare had ten children. When they married in AD 1189, he was forty-three and she was seventeen! Of five sons, none lived past forty, and none had children. William, Richard, Gilbert, Walter, and Anselm became, in succession, Earls of Pembroke, and lords or princes of Leinster; but all died without male issue, and the male line became extinct.

Five daughters Marshal-de Clare married into noble families in England, and the different counties of Leinster were divided amongst them and their posterity. This was typical: even when the foreigners were rewarded as promised, things often did not go as planned. In Cork, for example, De Cogan was killed in AD 1182, leaving only a daughter, Margaret, who married three times, while fitzStephen left no "legitimate" heirs. Translation - no line of succession by either.

(Source: "Hammer's Chronicle;" and Finglas's "Breviate of Ireland," in Harris's "Hibernica").

Mareschal, who would suffer the same fate, was not only a great Knight, standing over six feet in height, but he was the equivalent of a modern superstar at the joust. When Normans weren't fighting each other for real, they engaged in jousts. They were very close to the real thing, and lands often changed hands at such events - loser to winner. Mareschal was rarely, if ever, bested. Once, he was nowhere to be found, and was in a blacksmith shop with a worried smith trying to remove his helmet. It had been bashed in and his head was caught inside. To get it off without causing injury and creating a rather large problem for himself must have been the biggest challenge of the poor man's life.

They were and are a scrappy and adventurous lot - Normans. These people tried to stand with the winner, but it was every man for himself....not the recipe for long-term success. The Normans in England retained Frankish ways - with some having or claiming connections to Charlemange - that may well be where the arms of the Lion come into play - and they were estranged from their Anglo-Saxon subjects for a long time.

It is from this that the Norman/French connotation to the surname (de la) Roche derives credence....damn that ROCK!

Reaney in his "Dictionary of British Surnames," University of Sheffield, 1958 reports a John de Roches, as well as a number of de la Roches and Roches, living in England during the 11th century...before Godebert had been born in Wales and before the the Cambro-Norman and Cambro-Flemish in Ireland became Roches.

Under the feudal system, all land belonged to the Monarch and was parcelled out from the top....of course there was often money involved as well. So de Clare had what he could hold "of the King"; he in turn divided it among his lieghmen. In the first instance, in Wales, this was the de Prendergasts, and then a very large portion passed to the family that would become de Roche. In a close relationship, this transfer could have been freehold or tenure, but not without strings - honour!

There was trust sufficient for the families to rely on one another no matter what. It was the latter in this case. De Roch and de Prendergast remained hand-in-glove for generations. Diarmait and de Clare had to follow through with promised rewards for their fighting men ... given with the proviso that the grantee had to take the territory from existing occupants by force of arms or other strategies - political, economic, religious or marriage. The fate of many of these family lines was to simply die out, with their holdings reverting to the Crown or, if there were surviving females, transferring to other men of other names and ethnic backgrounds.

Philip de Prendergast and Robert FitzMartin were granted lands east of Cork; David de Rupe (de la Roche/de Roch) was granted the cantred of Rosalithir; while Richard de Cogan (son of Milo's brother, Richard) was granted Múscraighe Mittaine, the baronies of east and west Muskerry and Barretts.

So what Ireland sees as 800 years of injustice, the other side (which has varied) has often wondered, having gotten themselves into it, how to disentangle themselves. Certainly, de Roch and de Prendergast - unlike de Clare - seem to have been in reasonably good shape in Wales. Why Ireland, they must have thought? The whole thing was an historical sideshow....until the English really did become
involved centuries later. As the Romans and Anglo-Saxons had thought, and the Danes had found out, Ireland could take more than it gave, and was just not worth the trouble.

The fact that the Irish were as much or more to blame for the mess known as the "Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland" may explain how "invasion and oppression" became a justification for their own complicity. Anglo-Saxon fixation with Empire might explain their later willingness to take part in this historic charade.

In fairness, it should be acknowledged that the best of the foreigners made a contribution to Ireland. Those mercenaries who stayed on after AD 1172 (as had been agreed), integrated to the point at which it later became a concern to England. Yet the invasion myth persists. These "outsiders" fought the Irish; they fought each other; and they believed, mistakenly, that they had found common cause with the Irish against the English. Their position was impossible from the beginning.

Rodebert de Roch's sons, by some interpretations, went on to found the three major branches of the family in southern Ireland. Adam is credited by Sir Bernard Burke, C.B., LL.D, Ulster King of Arms, 1866, with founding the Fermoy dynasty (this is contested by others who say it was David, the son of Ralph de la Roche - the latter, associated with Glanworth, a different line - even if related).

Another David, as we now know, was given grants in Southwest Cork by King John. Trying to sort these men one from the other is simply beyond me, and, apparently others, who just don't like to admit it. But the Roches of Fermoy and the Castles there - like Glanworth - are a study most Byzantine.

Once established in Ireland, Richard's de Roch's brother, Redeber, in AD 1169, was granted part of the barony of Shemaler East, northwest of Wexfordtown. It became known as Rochesland. The family settled at Artramont (Castlebridge), a functional structure, but not luxurious by any standard...in an area that is today a small Electoral Division. The original family seat was Artramont, the very name taken from Wales - from St David's, Pembrokeshire. Until the King's Herald appeared in AD 1618, David de la Roche's descendants were "Lords of Rochesland" at Artramont, their castle a prominent landmark on the west side of the inner harbor.

Sir Richard de Rupe (Roche), one of the original "foreigners" of 1167/1169-72, Sir Richard FitzGodebert, was later Lord Justice of Ireland (Journal of the Old Wexford Society, November 2, 1969).

So Artramont remained in the possession of the Roches for hundreds of years, but was eventually "granted" to the Le Hunte family by Cromwell, after the allies of the Cambro-Normans had fallen from favour over religion and their attempts to accommodate the Gaels. True to historical tradition, there are two versions of how that transpired.

(Note: I have long ago decided to forego deciding on the correct version of events, unless one or the other/s is clearly supported by evidence of some kind, or the other patently ridiculous. I now simply record both - or more - versions for the record). Our reduced status in Co Wexford also resulted, it is reported, from a Heraldic Visitation by Sir Daniel Molyneux, Ulster King-at-Arms, who was sent to examine family pedigrees and weed out those the English considered poseurs.

A full five years earlier, at the assembling of Parliament in Dublin, AD 1613, it was suspected that Peerages were on the table. Word was leaked that the session was for the purpose of sanctioning the confiscation of estates owned by Catholic proprietors, and Sir John Everard was proposed as Speaker by the Catholic Party. Sir John Davis was candidate for the Protestant Party. Everard was to have the Chair. When this was denied, a riot resulted, in the course of which Everard was violently dragged from the Chair, and Davis seated in his stead.

(Source: Curry's Review of the Civil Wars, pp. 78-9).

As a consequence of "unjust treatment," Catholics then, foolishly, I must say, sent a deputation to England to lay their complaints before the King James I. Everard was a member, and Sir David, Lord Barry, Viscount Fermoy, was leader of the group. (Ib. j. 80, footnote.) And people wonder why today, my advice, in dealing with government about matters of injustice is never to play by their rules. Logic never carries the day. It's all about money and power. But advocates still waste time and energy going through the motions, playing by someone else's rules, and
wondering why their brilliant logic is never accepted at face value. If they would only read history...sigh. The chairman questioned Everard's having been deposed in such an undignified manner in Dublin; but the House had by then proceeded to transparently vote Supply with such good grace and readiness that the King returned his thanks by special letter to both houses.

All the King wanted from Ireland was money - the Protestants understood. The King’s response sent a clear signal to the Protestants in Dublin that he approved. Had they been more astute, the Catholics would have realized he wouldn't have cared if there were a monkey in the chair, so long as he received his revenues.

The active removal of Peerages from so-called "Old English" families was a determined strategy at a time when the British thought they might be successful in their attempts to do so without having to themselves endure a backlash of unrest against their own "planted" citizenry - or their representatives - if planters were absentee landlords. This was not confined to Ireland.

It had the effect of turning many formally loyal families into criminals. They continued to collect their due in kine (kind) as in the past. This the British saw as predation. It was acceptable for a Peer to keep their tenants in what amounted to slavery, but unacceptable for former peers or those Irish operating under Brehon Laws to do so. The only ones who might have noticed the irony in all of this were the peasantry, and all they could do was vent their anger and frustration in rhymes (as we do in late night television comedy and blogs today).

Thus in AD 1537, one John Roche of Wexford was a member of the Jury for the Body of the Shire (Wexford), and in less than a century, his descendants would be among those who spent most of their time answering to serious "crimes" before similar tribunals. But even earlier, there were huge issues across Ireland outside Dublin. These situations don’t develop overnight.

Not only had the Roches and others taken Irish wives, they were doing business with the Irish. They were also fighting them and each other. Some had adopted Irish ways; some tried to remain aloof. But when Henry VIII changed religions, even loyalists were in trouble. Irish religion was uniquely Celtic and definitely non-Roman (despite Henry II and the Pope), and that was contradiction enough, but now the King was Protestant. Loyalty to Rome and/or Ireland balanced against a duty of loyalty to a foreign King of another religion was too much for any psyche in a land of such chaos to integrate.

The Roches demise socially in Wexford had already begun in Henry V's reign. One William Etle Roche and Irish allies raided Walter McThomas in Wexford and took horses, other animals, goods and murdered his wife at one point. They thought they were still Peers/Lords/Land Owners; still within their rights. Like today, they had not noticed that the rules had changed, and the plan was to "take them down a peg or two" and to garner as much wealth as possible for "the few."

The Roches and Cautons (Condons) were still at each others throats (that had begun in Wales) in both Wexford and Cork, and any place else they crossed paths. Walter, son of Nicholas, burned Robert Caunteton's moat and a town owned by the Sinnotts and Meylers, and then charged them for the right to re-build.

Alexander and other Roches were holding up people on the roads and taking their property, even taking them captive for ransom. Sometimes called up for military service, they still had to tend to properties in Wales - in Devon and Cornwall - as well as Ireland - there they had identical problems. It is difficult to run a manor with a sword always in hand from some distant place.

I should perhaps have made mention that their descent in SW England from Ireland is documented in Archivium Hibernicum (The Irish Historical Record) by the Catholic Record Society of Ireland; 1960; Item Notes 23-7. However, there were numerous Roches - with incredible large holdings all over the British Isles - some in Scotland - and they were in difficulty almost everywhere. They were not as quick to pay the Monarch as their Anglo counterparts. Rule #1 - keep the rich, rich or getting richer, or suffer the consequences!
I had considered listing all the names and relationships that are documented in Jury Records in Ireland alone but, it would, apart from the examples above, be futile. I can understand why a pedigree might have become mangled rather badly in Wexford - there were so many Roche males.

Each, as any family historian even today can attest, took the same name from father or grandfather; uncle or great uncle, so that where the right to a given title for property might fall would be almost impossible to determine at times, and the person decided upon might soon be dead in any event. The females, thankfully, married well and further afield. Most did not concern themselves with Ireland (especially Wexford), or with Wales, having taken other names, and even ignoring inheritance rights they had themselves. In England, they could see the game that was being played and Roche women are astute!

Even after Roche claims to Arms in Wexford had fallen, other members of the family and the name were busily taking up the same arms elsewhere and halving, quartering and differing them as if they still held formal status....which in one sense, they did and do. Even in Fermoy (Armoy), things have been "messy," but eliminating the Viscounts over time solved that little problem for the English.

There are several confused versions of the founding of the Fermoy dynasty in North Cork. One has David de Rupe, about AD 1300-02, having wed Amicia de Cauteton (Condon), heiress of Fermoy, being ordered to deliver to brother-in-law Maurice de Cauteton, lands and rent in Glennoure, Ardlathe, Rathleglas, Fegmor, Gortnebolla, Lenagh and Lysdonewyth. After her death, David held title to these lands, and supposedly passed them in turn to one of their sons, Alexander, whose own sons predeceased him. Suits and counter-suits continued for years - great discord prevailed between the Roches and Condons.

Eventually the cantred was taken into the King's hands. David did fealty to the King in full court; Maurice was ordered to cease further interference; and yet there is another version of how Fermoy came under a Lord Roche.

It features Adam (and experts have long observed that there may have been more than one man of that name because deeds attributed to him seem entirely too much for one). Their supposition, is fact turned out to be correct. After a considerable amount of digging about in the archives, proof is found in the document by Lord Gerald de Rupe (AD 1210) dividing Roche's land in Wexford with by deed, not dated, based on a request by Piers Sinnott, gent, granting to David Fitz-Adam Sinad, his kinsman, "for his homage and service all the land lying between John de Rupe on the one side and the port of Wexford ... to hold to him and his heirs at the rent of one bezant of gold.

It is clear by the signatories the date at which the deed was put in place, but it was not registered from some reason until AD 1617 - the very year before the Roches were stripped of Arms by the Herald in Dublin without his ever having left the safety of the Pale. Even more strange is the fact that the Sinnotts were allowed by the Herald at that time, Daniel Molyneux, to retain Arms, which the Roches, who had rented and shared Roche's- and Sinnott's-land with them as landlord-tenant (presumably in mutual self-defense], and having intermarried, were not allowed equivalent privilege.

As for the witnesses which proved the existence of a second and third Adam de Rupe, one the son of Richard and one of Redebert, the third simply a witness, I will list all names associated with this document that I have at my disposal - quoted in turn from "The Presentations of Juries of Kilkenny & Wexford, Etc." during the Reign of Henry VIII.

Also listed in the Archaeologia Cambrensis - next to the document in question for some unexplained reason is reference a reference to David de Rupe, Lord of Fermoy, in the Reign of Edward III, dated AD 1358, which contains proof (and therefore shows] a surviving link back to Wales. It constituted William de Rupe of Wales; David de Rupe, merchant of Wexford; and one Richard de Rupe as his Bailiffs to take seisin in his manor of Manor Bir (often Bir refers to a surname and might be de Barri) and Penally at Tenby (certainly within the Roche domain in Wales) to hold courts, levy rents, etc. Thus by 1358, David was an absentee landlord of manors in Wales.

Similarly, Adam de Rupe, described as one of the earliest invaders of Ireland, is one of the witnesses, with Lord Eustace de Rupe, of a charter to Donnybrook to one Walter de Ridlesford [Registered - All Hallows, pp 67-8]. Eusatce, later killed by the Condons (de Cautetons), is an unknown entity except by circumstantial evidence (below), except for the fact...
that he is listed as Lord (Dominus) - and indication of high rank.

Perhaps even more important historically than the above is that the list of principles and witnesses to the Roch - Sinnott deed contains many de Rupes (Roches) which open the door to try and connect a few in the next few generations from the first in 1169-72:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sir Richard de Rupe (de Roch)</th>
<th>Rodebert de Rupe (de Roch)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Already a Knight in Wales Squire; Richard’s brother - Knighted in Ireland -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Henry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a third Adam de Rupe in Ireland post AD 1169-72 (charters) whose brother was Gerald.

And there was also a Lord Eustace de Rupe, killed by the de Cautetons. Whether the well-known Alexander, founder of Selskar Abbey in Wexford (c.1190) was his son, one can only surmise. Alexander also had at least one son David (flying in the face of the old fable about the Crusades/Chastity Vow).

David supposedly married Elizabeth de Clare, paternal granddaughter of Richard de Clare (Strongbow) by son Gilbert and, on the maternal side, of Edward I and Princess Joan (perhaps born before he ascended the throne in 1272) - but dating here is more than a little tight.

One of the two Henrys above had heirs - Gilbert, Henry, John and William. And there was a later Adam, brother of Gerald, living during the Reign of Henry III [1216-72]. Gerald m. Rose de Boutillier (Butler) and had a son George and grandson John. It was Gerald who shared Roche's land in Wexford (undated, but registered in AD1617) with kinsman David FitzAdam Sinad.

This created Sinnott's land between the estate of grandson John and the River Sow at a rent of one bezant of gold - George (or a grandson of the same name) was killed AD 1346, after attending Parliament with William de Rupe (of Henry) in AD 1309.

As always, the use of repeating names makes the truth slippery. Of interest above is Sinnott's registration of Sinnott's land - as the Roches were left forfeit of Arms by Herald Daniel Molyneux inside the Pale (AD1617-18).

This chart shows that Gerald de Rupe was Lord of the lands north of the Slaney which runs into Wexford Harbour - and centred at Artramont - although they did build the first fort in Ireland at Ferrycarrig. As an aside, King John later made Sir Thomas FitzAnthony de St Legere, Seneschal of Leinster. He had five daughters, the eldest of whom, Helen, eventually married Gerald de Rupe.

Gerald is found in the Gormanstown Register (Landsdowne Manuscript), and later is shown married to Rose south co-heiress of John de Botiller (Butler) and finally Mathilda, daughter of David, Baron of Naas, by whom he had a son George, who in turn had a son John.

The difficulty here is wording (on which I stand to be corrected). It may be that there was a generational repetition of the first name and a son or grandson married lady two and/or three. By writ from the Crown [Edward II, c 1309], George was summoned as a Peer to Parliament with one William de Rupe. His services to Edward received special acclaim in the 13th year of Edward's reign for his actions during the Bruce invasion. But since my source goes on to say he was killed in AD1346, this second reference may be to a son, grandson or a very aged warrior. (Source: Printed Rolls, 15 Jac. I, p.327).

As from the beginning, the Roches were under feudal law subinfeudiated to the Earls of Pembroke - whom after de Clare and Marschall passed had from the scene - changed rapidly by virtue of coming into the daughters' shares and arbitrary re-allocation by various monarchs. At this time, one Aylmer, husband of one of the earlier Earl's daughters, was in line of partial succession, as best I can determine.
Large possessions accrued to them, but under feudalism, they had to pay 10 pounds "scutage" plus five knight fees in Fergenal and nine pounds plus 9 1/2 knights fees in Schryrmal & Kynalo (as spelled in the document). One of the great magnates, he was continually summoned to war in Scotland - 1299; 1302; & 1315. His 1/3 share of the barony of Naas was eventually willed to two daughters and thus their husbands.

Sir William Fitz Eustace de Rupe, Knight, succeeded to Roches land, becoming Sheriff and Constable of Ferns Castle. These land were later forfeited for non-payment of fees, Even though John Roche and Thomas Synnod were Commissioners in the cantred Fergenal and Shelmalier West at that time.

By now we are up to the 1500s, and I assume you are getting the idea. In 1516, Walter Roche had died, seized in fee of manors at Ballytorrin, Horetown and Artramont, now held by and thus from the absentee Lord Shrewsbury. His son Alexander, at 18 years of age) was placed under the Earl's guardianship who, in turn, had him committed to the his Senechal. John Brechet.

That said, Alexander married Alison Devereux, an equally prominent family, but Henry VIII (Cromwell) made the mistake if seizing Alexander's lands in Wexford. By then there were many Roches extant and related in Wexford, including Alexander's brothers, Edmund and William. By then, their opinion was that they need not adhere to any such directive from an English King.

They either used Brehon Law or ancient rights granted by their own Kings and continued to act as Lords of their earlier domains. This, of course, led the English to dub them rebels, past loyalties meaning nothing to men like Henry. Their transgressions against English Law no doubt continued for a few generations as recorded in The Presentations of Juries, about which, the English trapped inside the Pale, could do nothing.

One can assume, I suppose, that their descendents, may have been of like mind and continued, and this might explain Molyneux' wise decision to stay in the Pale and render his decisions. A trek to south Wexford might not have been a good thing for him to have undertaken. By AD 1618, the Roches and many of the so-called old English, might have been deemed to have gone rogue, when, had their historic rights been recognized, things could have gone much better in Ireland from that time onward. I am guessing here to some extent, which is why I would like to see the documentation.

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**The tax of scutage or escuage, under the feudal system, allowed a knight to "buy out" of the military service due to the Crown from the holder of a knight's fee. Its name derived from the knightly shield (Latin: scutum). The term sometimes loosely applies to other monetary levies based on knight's fees.**

**Under Henry I [1100–1135] and Stephen [1135–1154], it occurs as scutagium, scuagium or escuagium. The creation of fractions of knights' fee probably hastened its introduction: the holders of such fractions could only discharge their obligation via scutage. The increasing use of mercenaries in the 12th century would also make a money payment of greater use to the crown.**

Separate levies received the names of the campaigns for which they were charged, as "the scutage of Toulouse", "the scutage of Ireland", etc.
Fermoy had equal difficulty surviving the Enlightenment. But their blood line certainly did die out, whereas in Wexford arms and property were simply forfeit. One version says he was with FitzStephen; they went to North Cork; and founded Castletownroche near Fermoy in AD 1196. FitzStephen had or assumed the power as his right to grant land and titles. Which of the three Adams, this might have been of course is a mystery. But there is a difference in the probability of survival of the bloodline between Wexford and Cork that no Sheriff hiding in Dublin can expunge.

FitzStephen was one of Nesta’s half siblings - of Royal Cambro-Welsh blood - and it was part of the spoils of supporting Diarmait and de Clare in turn as Kings of Leinster. I have no doubt that he had cut some sort of deal with Henry II during his visit; so Adam accepted.

Dun Cruadha [Castletownroche] was an ancient dun (fort) overlooking the area to the west of Awbeg. The ruling O’Learys (Hi Laeghairi) were displaced by the Roches who, in return for tribute, presumably to Fitz Stephen and thus to de Clare or Marschal, officially became Cambro-Norman Lords, Viscounts of Fermoy, a line that died out, the last being Ulicke/Ulrick.

(Source: The Cork Historical and Archaeological Society [Eithne Donnelly]).

Sir Bernard Burke in "Dormant, Abeyant, Forfeited and Extinct Peerages", AD 1883; agrees with the second version, but says it was Adam’s descendants who became Lords (Viscounts) c AD 1250! The Complete Peerage [CP] - implies that in AD 1169, the Fermoy Roches were direct beneficiaries of military expansion into Munster, as opposed to right of inheritance by marriage. But one of the first Adams, son of Richard or Rodebert, was there with Fitz Stephen, and they did claim it.

There are genealogies back to c. 1200 in the Genealogical Office in Dublin that begin with David Roche (The Great) who died before AD 1488. By this stage, the family had assumed the title, Viscount, though there seems to be NO available British evidence of why or how. Well knock me over with a feather :-) Later, after the Viscounts were eliminated, there was a gap of over a century and a little more British legere de main. As a result, a Member of Parliament was appointed Baron (he tried unsuccessfully for Viscount). But he had no bloodline and the Brits had a quota system for the Peerage. He in fact was a Roche of Traboglan, descended from a merchant from Cork City in the 1500s. His pedigree would never have stood, that is for certain.

For starters, these original fellows were Knights, and they had property in Wales, England and Ireland; Adams Uncle, Sir Richard FitzGodebert, was King’s representative (Sенeschал) in Ireland for a time. There may not be direct evidence on paper sufficient to satisfy bureaucrats in London or Dublin (inside the Pale), but one would have to be from Mars to think there never was a family of the name entitled to lands and arms - before their arrival in Ireland. This family was in the original group with Diarmait, even in AD 1167, and there were guarantees of land and titles in place, under Brehon and/or Norman law, it is inconceivable that, in addition to grants in Wexford, as they spread out in Ireland with FitzStephen, de Prendergast, and others, there would not be more. It defies common sense (something of a habit with the English) when convenient.

The de Clares and the Marschals had the right to grant land and titles for Knight’s fees, and they would have done so. And grants to the higher positions (the Peerage) by King John, not to mention his predecessors, may well have been done "on the fly" with Henry II or some other King leaving the paperwork to others.

As the Peerage disdainfully puts it: "...of the mode of this creation, if such ever occurred, nothing is known. This seems to be a case of audacious and successful assumption of higher titles, which could hardly have occurred anywhere else but Ireland." They say further, "the pedigree of this family is extremely obscure and affords no trustworthy information as to their succession in the earlier period."

Consistent with Norman strategy for making war, the FitzGodeberts (de Roch) built motte and bailey timber defenses after their arrival. Later, they replaced wood with stone to create the typical Norman fortress/castle. These in turn led to endowments to a number of Abbeys...not out of some kind of guilt or penance, as has been suggested...but, just as often, because instilling or reinforcing religious faith was another proven method of exercising control.
It is said that from Rodebert's three sons - David, Henry and Adam - are descended the branches of the Roche family in Ireland today, Source: Richard Roche, "The Roches of Wexford", Journal, Old Wexford Society, No. 2, 1969.

Two other Roche names, Eustace and Gerald, appear in charters and grants along with Richard and Rodebert. Whether they are the sons of Richard or other sons or relatives of Godbert is unknown.

And their location of origin in unknown. All we know is that they were foreigners. He makes no comment on the fate of Eustace and Gerald or other Roches within this context. They may well have been future casualties, but there is simply no way to know for sure.

As noted above, there were de la Roche (and similarly named) families all over western Europe and the British Isles by 1170, not to mention the Channel Islands. To suggest that no other de la Roches or de Rochs, later to become Roch(e)/Roach(e), arrived in Ireland then or later from locations other than Pembrokeshire, Wales is a bit far-fetched.

Cromwell's Expeditions into Ireland in the mid-1600's included at least two among his retainers. Huguenot migrations out of Europe between the late 1500s and the early 1700s also resulted in "naturalizations" (1681-1712) and included Roch, Roach, de la Roche and derivative surnames in their number. French Huguenot refugee merchants had settled in both Dublin and Waterford as early as 1605-1613. Huguenot influence in trade, the professions and Irish social life in Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Portarlington, Dublin and western Ireland is supported by the biographical and genealogical records of the more successful Huguenot families who settled in Ireland following revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Among them was Charles De La Roche, a minister of the French Church from 1700-1702 at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Prior to that, he was an assistant to Rev. Balaguier in Portarlington; then he served at Clonmel in 1699; and in 1706, he was chaplain to Col. Fontjulian of Lord River's Brigade.

A third group to leave a mark historically were Palatines. After the extinction of the male line of the Electors Palatine, Elector Charles, who died in 1685, King Louis XIV claimed the greater part of the Palatinate. The unfavourable impression produced in Protestant Europe by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes led to the League of Augsburg against France and an alliance of the Kings of Sweden and Spain and the Electors of Bavaria, Saxony and the Palatinate.

Following the revolution England in 1688 which placed William [III] of Orange (1699-1702) jointly with Mary II - House of Orange and Stuart - on the throne, France invaded the Palatinate and controlled it for a time. Much destruction was done to its castles and rich corn plains on the Rhine. Many cities, market towns and villages were destroyed, including Heidelberg, Mannheim, Worms and Speyer; and thousands of Lutherans fled into the British camp of the Allied Army.

In 1709 England's Queen Anne (1702-1714), a staunch champion of Protestantism, sent a fleet to Rotterdam and brought to London about 10,000 refugees whom the French had displaced in the Southern Palatinate. Two thousand of them were Catholic, and they were immediately returned home! Even the Protestants were not welcome in England. The question of disposal became a political issue, and the government decided to ship several thousand to British settlements in North America and the remainder to Ireland.

The case of the Palatines was raised in the Irish Parliament in August 1709. The Irish House of Commons unanimously adopted a resolution that Protestant Palatines would strengthen and secure Protestant interests and the security of the Kingdom. At the time, poverty was widespread. A series of laws had left the Irish in misery, and the Government did not feel secure. An extra justification of the expense of relocating Palatines to Ireland was that it would "help against any possible French invasion".

The Irish Government provided a subsidy of 25,000 pounds (today - about half a million pounds), and a number of Irish landlords agreed to settle newcomers on their estates. During the Autumn of 1709, over 3000 people landed in Dublin and were sent to Kerry and other parts of the country. It was on the estate of Lord Thomas Southwell in Rathkeale, Co. Limerick that most settled. However, more than half, dissatisfied with conditions in Ireland, left for America within a few years.
By 1711, the Irish House of Lords complained of "the load of debt" that bringing over useless and indigent Palatines had caused. Each Palatine man, woman and child received eight acres of land at a nominal rent of five shillings an acre and at leases of three lives. Each family was granted forty shillings a year for seven years to buy stock and utensils.

At the same time, Irish tenants were paying rents of thirty five shillings an acre. Later the Government agreed to pay the Palatines' rent for twenty years and to present each household with a Queen Anne musket for protection. The men joined a local Yeomanry under the title "True Blues" or "German Fusiliers", quite unnecessary, as they were never threatened by the Irish....although most to this day say they were not treated well.

Many Palatines settled into their new environment. The majority were Co. Limerick, while smaller groups went to Castle Island, Co. Kerry and Six Mile Bridge in Co. Clare. A few families settled counties Carlow, Wexford and Tipperary, but have almost disappeared. The majority were farmers, but they were also carpenters, smiths, wheelrights, bakers, masons, shoemakers, weavers, cooper, schoolmasters, tailors, herdsmen, butchers and surgeons. To this day, their names have changed only slightly and are characteristically German - Baker, Barrow, Barkman (Bartman), Bowman, Coach, Cole, Dulmage (Delmage), Lowe, Mich, Millar, Ruttle (Ruckle), Smythe, Shier (Shire), Stark, and Switzer. For our purposes, it is possible that Rouch, Rauch, Rup, Rock, Resch, Roth and Rose in their number could very easily have become Ro(a)ch(e) over time. Those who did stay have not lost their ethnic identity - there is even an Irish Palatine Association located in Rathkeale, Co Limerick.

By the early 17th century, the family was represented by another David Roche (AD 1573-1635) who was a Loyalist poseur and, as a result, suffered many losses during the Nine Years War [also known as King William's War]. He was the first to proclaim for James I, Stuart King of England, and served as MP for Cork in AD 1623. He died at Castletownroche, west of Glanworth Castle, in AD 1635, having married Joan, daughter of James FitzRichard Barry, Viscount of Buttevant. The area by then had also become known [like several others in Ireland] as Roche's Country [Croich Roisteach]. Whether, Joan had brothers who outlived her, I neither know nor care, but if - and I say if - so, then Roches were also Viscounts of Buttevant.

Maurice’s wife, Catherine (nee Power), was even more unfortunate. After gallantly defending Castletownroche in AD 1641, she was hanged by Cromwell for the murder of an unknown man on the evidence of a "strumpet". Her husband fled to Flanders and joined the army. At that time, the future Charles II was also on the continent and the Roches shared their army pay with him. But when he regained the Throne, Charlie forgot all about that and did the Roches no favours after Cromwell and his son were no more. And they dare challenge the Viscountcy! Given the flight of Maurice to Flanders and the hanging of his wife, Ellen (Power) Roche at Castletownroche, followed by failed appeals to Charles, the extended family is said to have declined into genteel poverty, with occasional handouts from wealthy sympathizers.

But there is a body of opinion which claims that the main line at Fermoy became extinct only when Ulick Roche died in AD 1733 - during the reign of George II [1727-1760]. Various reputed cousins appear around this time, as must have been the case previously, and there is evidence that other branches of the family held land in the area late into the 1700s. There was no shortage of pretenders. But, nobody can dispute, when Ulick died in abject poverty, refused help by his gracious Majesty, it was endgame for the Viscounts of Fermoy - even in the abstract.

The Civil War of AD 1641 and the Cromwellian intervention in Ireland saw Maurice treated with suspicion, and he was even imprisoned for a short time in AD 1624. He chose the Confederacy side in the 1640’s, and suffered a major land confiscation, valued at £50,000, in AD 1642. He was later offered in exchange an obscure land grant in Co. Mayo, which was never taken up. He attempted to regain his land through "his friend" Charles II (AD 1625-1649) after the Restoration, but was apparently unsuccessful.

The Books of Survey and Distribution suggest that some of the lands owned by Morris (Maurice), Lord Roche, were granted to a Sir Peter Courthrope. However, there is no independent surviving documentation for the confiscation or grant. The
same people who dismiss Roche rights to the Peerage rationalize this being due to the Fire of London in AD 1666 and another at Dublin Castle in AD 1711, as well as the better known destruction of the Four Courts in 1922. Thus, life is farce. All you need is black humour, with which, thankfully, many of us are blessed, so nothing sticks! Courthrop is on solid ground because his records burned; Roche is not because there is no written evidence. It could not possibly have burned like Courthrop’s? How can anyone take this seriously? No problem - we are not rational beings - but you must admit, looked at in the right way, the whole thing is entertaining!

Note: The Books of Survey and Distribution - in large part, if not in whole, are available. Acts of Settlement, passed in AD 1662, and the Act of Explanation, passed in AD 1665 by Roche’s old friend, whom they helped not starve in Flanders, Charles II [1660-1685] - House of Stuart Restored - made provision for confiscated lands to be administered by the Court of Claims.

The Decrees of Innocence issued by this court were recorded in abstract form in the Books of Survey & Distribution, a record of landowners & their respective estates, used to impose the Quit Rent, an annual rent paid on land granted under the Acts of Settlement & Explanation.

This information is complemented by the Lodge Transcripts of Records of the Rolls, available in the National Archives. Volumes XI, XII, & XIII give the names of new owners, the townland & barony, the number of acres & rental imposed under the terms of the Act.

The Courthropes supposedly arrived in Cork by the c AD 1630 and received their grant for "loyal defence and alliance" with Cromwell during his campaign and in the later administration of Munster. No record? And why would Charles reward a supporter of Cromwell’s? Money and power maybe - what do you think?

Exactly what the Roches did during the time period from Maurice to Ulick is mostly a mystery - but it was not good. The time between the latter and the creation of a new peerage for Edmund of Trabolgan saw many claims, none valid. The line died out (with much help from their friends). Even the Gaels admit it was shameful!

The Roches of Trabolgan, South Cork, seem to have been in the second rank of the Cork elite who ran the county in the Cromwellian and Restoration periods. Never of the Peerage, these landowners ran Munster on behalf of Dublin and provided MPs until the Act of Union. They tried for Viscount and settled for Baron - reasons unspecified - and succeeded in the later. Even they claim no blood connection to the earlier Viscounts - not so, some of their extended relatives.

Meanwhile, the "strange" developments in and around Fermoy, involving the Roches of Trabolgan, Rochemount & Kildinan, south Cork, continue to partly mystify. The family supposedly goes back to AD 1533 to one Edmund Roche, b. that year; spouse unknown; d.1576.

The proposed line of succession includes: Maurice b 1558; spouse unknown; d. 1611; Edward b. 1588; spouse unknown; d. 1626....and a Cork merchant named Philip at some point, a little too murky for my liking, but there it is! One issue of Burke's Peerage has them, ignoring Ulick, with the last Viscount in the Sardinian Army, his end being assessed as c AD 1746, after which they claim the title was never assumed. Other reports have him being captured by the other side in that war, treaty royally and returned unharmed to the Sardinians. Of the Trabolgan Roches, Burke’s say, they go back to a Cork merchant named Philip who purchased the Estate of Gerald, Lord of Kinsale, in AD 1554. One of the Edward’s supposedly three offspring by his unknown spouse: Edward, Francis and Morris - AD 1608-10-12; Francis became Sheriff of Trabolgan, d. 1669. Francis, also with spouse unknown, is reputed to have three offspring: Francis, Edward and Edmund (1643-5-8) - yet another problem.

Eamon, Edward and Edmund are essentially the same names in Irish. But Edward - whose line is followed by those supporting this pedigree - in AD 1672 - married Catherine Lavallin, b. 1649, Walterstown, Cork. He d. 1696 leaving one heir: Francis, b. 1673 who m. in 1739, Lady Dorothy Burke of Clanricarde, Cork b. 1673. They were quite fecund and had: 1. James (b.1695), 2. Maurice (b.1697), 3. Catherine (b.1698), 4. Anne (b.1703), 5. Mary (b.1709), 6. Margaret (b.1711) & 7. Edmund Roche (b.1714). It may have been at this time that the family felt comfortable asserting its designs on Fermoy - as did many others - and while not qualifying for arms, per se - they began to use a Roche Ex-Libris, or bookplate, to mark books
They may have used historic symbolism in other quasi-official ways as well and continued to do so until they successfully laid claim to Fermoy, with no reference to the past, over a century later:


Suffice it to say, that majority opinion rests with the Viscouncy ending without male heirs in AD 1733! The Viscouny of Fermoy - extinguished. A new Peerage, 123 years later, was a Baronetage! The two are separate and distinct. Yet there was a transfer of assets. This is the sort of thing only the British can rationalize, involving as it did considerable holdings and wealth, and their eventual "transfer" to England.

The newspapers of the day provide interesting insights into what appears to have been quite a lobbying effort - Cork to London:

THE TIMES, WEDNESDAY, JULY 2, 1856
COMMITTEE FOR PRIVILEGES (sic)
HOUSE OF LORDS, JUNE 30
LORD FERMOY'S CLAIM

Their Lordships sat this afternoon at 4 o'clock in order to take into consideration the claim of Lord Fermoy to vote at the election of representative Peers for Ireland.

The LORD CHANCELLOR said that looking at the construction of the Act of Union, it appeared to him, as well as to the majority of the learned judges who had given their opinion in answer to certain questions put to them by the House, that the extinction of the earldom of Montrath was not such as extinction of a peerage of Ireland as, in conjunction with the extinction of two other peerages of Ireland, would entitle the Crown to create a new peerage for Ireland. In his opinion, therefore, the petitioner had not made out his title to vote at the election of representative Peers in Ireland.

The Earl of Derby said, that it was quite clear, on looking at the Act of Union, to see that the intention of the Legislature was to regulate the number of Peers, and not the number of Titles. The extinction of three of the latter, therefore, would not entitle the Crown to create a new Peerage; and, as, in the present case, the number of Peers had not been reduced, he considered the Crown had no power to create a new Peerage.

Lord CAMPBELL said, he also concurred in the opinions that had been just expressed by his noble and learned friends.

The prayer of the petitioner was therefore rejected.
The Dublin Gazette of last night announced that Her Majesty's Letters Patent have passed the Great Seal of Ireland, granting the dignity of Baron of this part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, to Edmund Burke Roche of Trabolgan, in the Count of Cork, Esq., and the heirs male of his body lawfully begotten, by the name, style, and title of Baron Fermoy, in the County of Cork.

The human face of this maneuver was the Edmund Burke Roche who died on 17 Sep 1874 in Trabolgan. He had married Elizabeth Caroline Boothby, b. 1823; d. 26 April, 1897 in Windermere, Torquay, daughter of James Brownell Boothby and Charlotte Cunningham, 22 Aug 1848, West Twyford, Middlesex. Baron Fermoy [as opposed to the older title and line of Viscount] is listed in the Peerage of Ireland. It was created in AD 1856 for MP Edmund Burke Roche who represented Co Cork and Marylebone in the House of Commons.

Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-1997) was a great granddaughter of Edmond Burke Roche, 1st Baron Fermoy (1815-1874) through her mother, the former Frances Burke Roche [b. 20 Jan 1936 in Park House, Sandringham, Norfolk, UK]. Her maternal grandfather, 4th Lord Fermoy, was a friend of George VI and the elder of the twin sons of the American heiress Frances Work and her first husband, James Boothby Burke Roche, who, after their divorce, became 3rd Baron Fermoy. Diana's maternal grandmother, Dame Ruth, Lady Fermoy DCVO, (née Ruth Sylvia Gill), was a confidante and lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother). But Diana was only a Lady by virtue of her marriage, or the Spenser side of her line, and that issue is confused by the status of peerages after divorce as well. If I had a dollar for every approach I have had from someone convinced they were related to Diana and the Roches of Fermoy, I'd be a rich man. And to ask, "Which Roches?", as I am wont to do, usually brings nothing but howls of consternation.

Creation of a new Baron and the inconsistent transfer of some, but not all assets, potentially provided an opportunity for - property, riches and power; the potential gem at the centre being the Roche caput baroniae, Blackwater Castle. Other Castles might be so designated with some legitimacy, however Blackwater has been sold and the proceeds have left Ireland. Thus, the Fermoy Roches of today are not the original family, founders of the dynasties at Fermoy or Glanworth. I see this as another example, and a lesson in history and politics, for all with eyes to see (many don't - judging by the e-mails I get).
Sources

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Seary's "Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland (Memorial University);
Dr John Mannion's "Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada" and "The Peopling of Newfoundland" (U of T Press);
Transportation Records (1788-1868) Ireland-to-Australia;
The Irish Relief Commission Papers (1845-1847);
Papers of Governor Sir John Harvey who served in all four eastern BNA provinces (NL when my forebears appeared in what is now Canada);
The 1871 Ontario Census and other Census records in Canada and the US;

The material in this article was originally on Jim Roaches website which is now inactive:
http://www3.sympatico.ca/jfroache/

This article was edited by Peter Roche and can be found on Roche Lineages:
http://rochelineages.wordpress.com/

July 2011