

King Phelim O'Connor and the Dominican Priory

King Turlough passed his favour of patronage of religious foundations to his son **Rory, last High King of Ireland** who founded Cong Abbey and died there in **1198**, also Rory's brother **Cathal Crovedearg, King of Connacht** founded Knockmoy in 1189 and Ballintober in 1216 supported the recently arrived **Dominicans** with a site in Roscommon just a short distance downhill from **St. Coman's Church**. He was buried there in **1265** and his effigial slab and the gallowglass protective tomb surround ranks as one of the best in the country. It is significant in being only one of two Dominican foundations founded in Connacht by native Irish chieftains. The other was Cloonshanville near Frenchpark founded by the McDermottroes in 1385. The first Dominicans reached Ireland in **1224**. They tended to make foundations in **Norman centres**; even in Connacht, out of five centres founded between **1241 and 1274** all but one had Norman patrons. They were mendicant friars, had to beg for their bread and there were limits to which friars could preach and beg, usually around a twenty mile radius. It would transpire that the Dominicans would have an unbroken presence in Roscommon through the centuries, often through times of great vicissitudes down to the nineteenth century. One of the Dominicans last postings was the parish of **Fuerty in 1812** where a Louvain educated man, **Fr. Bartley Keelty** build the chapel there at that time. It is interesting that the **College of St. Anthony, Louvain in Belgium** was founded by the famous **Roscommon man and Franciscan, Flaithre O'Maolchonaire** (Florence Conry) about **1600**.

It is significant that of the few places in Roscommon visited by **St. Patrick** himself, Fuerty and Oran within a few miles of the town, are mentioned, he establishing Justus at fuerty. With St. Kieran of Clonmacnoise having a reputed birthplace in the same area, **St. Coman** was indeed following an illustrious tradition when on his travels in Ros Comain twelve hundred years ago.

FURTHER READING SOURCES: