over a wide area west of Howth. Much of the combat took place near or among the wharves and piers along the Liffey, which had been built to accommodate the large trading vessels that called at Dublin. A grandson of Brian named Tairrdelbach drowned after he was knocked unconscious under a weir. The outcome was decided late in the afternoon when the cohort from Dublin was broken at *drochat Dubgaill* (Dubgall’s Bridge), probably at the site of “Old Dublin Bridge” from Bridgefoot Street to Oxmantown. After Sigurd and Máelmórda were slain, the Viking forces tried to escape to their ships along the Liffey, but their retreat turned into a slaughter. They had beached their boats above the high-water mark, but an unusually high tide floated the ships into the middle of the channel.

Disaster struck the Irish as well. Brian’s son Murchad was slain in the battle, and Brian was cut down by escaping Vikings led by Brodor of York. The tract *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* (War of the Irish against the Vikings) has a story that the Vikings were passing by Brian, believing him to be a priest, when a mercenary previously in his service recognized him. The chronicler Marianus Scottus claims that Brian was at prayer when he was slain. Although Brian’s troops held the field, with Brian and Murchad dead they were unable to proceed further. They were too decimated by the slaughter to storm the fortress of Dublin. The survivors waited on the battlefield for two days until Donnchad returned on Easter Sunday. Their return home was hindered by fighting within their own ranks together with opposition from Brian’s subjects, who now rose in rebellion.

Who won the battle of Clontarf? The insular records claim it as an Irish victory, even though Brian’s objective, the capture of Dublin, was not achieved. A contemporary Viking poem, however, flatly states that it was a victory for the Vikings. From what is now known, perhaps the most fair assessment is that the battle was a stalemate that exhausted both sides.

The battle of Clontarf demonstrated the military power of the Irish. Fighting an evenly matched opponent, Brian’s troops held the field against an international force led by, in the case of Sigurd, one of the premier warriors of the northern world. Stories about Clontarf circulated throughout Europe, from Iceland to Francia. Brian passed into legend as the great hero-king of the Irish. Nevertheless, the victory at Clontarf failed to unify the Irish, and ambitions towards national monarchy would be temporarily obscured by factionalism and dynastic rivalries.

**Benjamin Hudson**

**References and Further Reading**


See also Amlaíb Cuarán; Brian Boru; Dublin; Dál Cais; Fine Gall; Gormlaith (d: 1030); Laigin; Leinster; Máel Sechnaill II; Scandinavian Influence; Ua Briain; Úi Néill, Southern; Viking Incursions; Weapons and Weaponry

**CLOTHING**

Our picture of clothing in medieval Ireland is derived primarily from figurative scenes—particularly those from carved stone crosses and effigies and from illuminated manuscripts—but also from descriptions in contemporary literary sources. Additionally, there is a body of surviving textiles: a small assemblage dating to the early medieval period and more extensive collections recorded from medieval urban excavations in Dublin, Waterford, and Cork. While most of the extant textiles do not compose entire garments, they do provide useful supplementary information.

Society in Ireland throughout the medieval period was hierarchical in nature, with clearly defined social grades. In this context, clothing had a primary functional role to protect the wearer from extremes of climate, but could also act as a signal of the wearer’s status or cultural origins. The Irish law tracts made some attempt to regulate dress styles by imposing restrictions on the number of colors in garments worn by various ranks. The prevailing style of dress in the early medieval period comprised a *léine* (tunic) worn under a *brat* (cloak). The *léine* was an ankle-length, sleeveless garment worn next to the skin and made of...
either white or gel (bright) linen. It was secured at the waist by a belt and could be hitched up to allow greater freedom of movement.

The brat was rectangular in shape and made from wool, and was sometimes large enough to wrap around the body five times. It could be brightly colored, with ornate decorative borders. The archaeological evidence suggests that the use of dyestuffs extracted from the red-dyeing madder plant and the blue-dyeing woad plant was important from at least the seventh and eighth centuries, while fringed, plaited, and tablet-woven braids recorded on early medieval textile fragments provide evidence as to the nature of decorative borders. The brat was secured on the breast by a bronze, silver, or iron brooch or pin, depending on the individual’s social status and wealth.

Figurative art also suggests that truíbhas (trousers) were worn by horsemen and others engaged in outdoor activities. A series of small figures wearing knee-length truíbhas are recorded in the text of the Book of Kells. The wearing of the léine and brat secured with a penannular brooch is recorded on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois, County Offaly, in a scene interpreted as the laying of the church foundation post by Abbot Colmán and King Flann around 910.

There are few women depicted in the figurative art of the early medieval period, but descriptions in the myths and sagas indicate that the brat and léine were worn by both sexes. From the early ninth century onward women covered their heads with a veil or headdress.

The introduction to Old Irish before 900 of a number of Old Norse loan words—such as skyrra, which became seúr (shirt, tunic, cloak), and brók, which became bróg (hose, trousers, [and later] shoes)—suggests that the Viking incursions had an impact on dress. In particular, the Vikings may have introduced the short tunic and trousers outfit, as well as the ionar, a form of tunic worn over the léine. The Scandinavians are also generally credited with the introduction of silk cloth into Ireland through their increased trading connections.

The Anglo-Norman Invasion of 1169 and the establishment by Henry II of a stronghold in the Dublin region in 1171 introduced a new aristocracy to Ireland, who followed the fashions of London and Europe. The contrast in dress and appearance between the recently arrived Anglo-Normans and the Gaelic Irish is highlighted in the descriptions and illustrations of Giraldus Cambrensis in his Topographia Hiberniae. The léine, brat, and ionar continued to be worn by the Gaelic Irish in the medieval period; the brat came to be called the “Irish mantle” and the léine the “safron shirt.” Other garments of importance included a short-hooded cloak called a cohall and a poncho-type cloak of colored and patterned cloth called a fallaing, as well as woollen truíbhas with feet and soles. Contemporary Anglo-Normans are shown wearing tunics of mid- to lower-calf length with Magyar-style sleeves, belted at the waist with a white sash from which a scabbard was suspended, along with a traditional mantle or cloak. The contrast in dress styles was probably most apparent during the initial colonization period, while the following centuries saw considerable mutual cultural influence, as evidenced by various statutes and laws that sought to discourage Anglo-Norman descendants from adopting Gaelic modes of dress and appearance.

Anglo-Norman men and women wore an underdress, or kirtle, and an overgown, or surcoat. The kirtle was round-necked with tight-fitting sleeves and was secured at the waist or hips with a girdle (for women) or sash (for men), from which personal objects such as keys or scabbards were suspended. The surcoat could be sleeved or sleeveless, with deep armholes and with vertical slits called fichets that provided access to objects suspended from the girdle. Both male and female versions of the surcoats had a slit at the neck, which during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was commonly secured by a ring brooch. This dress fastener was introduced by the Anglo-Normans, but a number of ring brooches were recovered from Gaelic Irish Crannógá. In winter, a mantle or fur-lined cape was also worn. The Irish mantle appears to have been adopted by both communities, and came to be an important trade item.

In the mid-fourteenth century a closer-fitting outfit emerged for Anglo-Norman men, consisting of a knee-length garment called a gipon (later doublet) worn with hose. The wearing of a doublet by Noah in the Book of Ballymote, which dates to 1400, would suggest that this was also adopted by the Gaelic Irish. A gown with buttons on the sleeves and bodice and a full knife-pleated skirt, seen on the double effigy at Knocktopher, County Kilkenny, is interpreted as an Irish adaptation of the Anglo-Norman houppelande, and a garment of similar type was recovered from a bog in Moy, County Clare. The wearing of hoods with long, pointed extensions—called liripipes by the Irish—represents an expression of mutual cultural influence.

As Ireland fell under increasingly direct English rule during the sixteenth century, the ascendancy redoubled its efforts to supplant Gaelic traditions and customs. In terms of clothing, this manifested itself as a growing struggle between the increasingly sober styles of London and the relative flamboyance of indigenous medieval dress.

Maria FitzGerald

References and Further Reading


See also Craftwork; High Crosses; Jewelry and Personal Ornament; Kells, Book of; Society, Grades of Anglo-Norman; Society, Grades of Gaelic; Viking Incursions

**CLYN, FRIAR JOHN (d. 1349?)**

John Clyn was an Anglo-Irish Franciscan friar and the author of *Annals of Ireland by Friar John Clyn*, written in Kilkenny and covering the period from the “beginning of the world” to 1349. According to the seventeenth-century antiquarian James Ussher, Clyn was born in Leinster and held the degree of doctor. The surname Clyn is not common in Ireland, but there is a townland a few miles from Kilkenny called Clistown. From the annals, we learn that Clyn became the first guardian of the friary of Carrickbeg (Carrick-on-Suir) in 1336, when the earl of Ormond presented the property to the Franciscans. Clyn was present in Kilkenny friary in 1348 during the Black Death, when he identified himself as the author of the annals. The annals are famous for a dramatic first-hand account of the Black Death in Ireland in 1349. A very rough seventeenth-century transcript claims that Clyn was also guardian of the Franciscan friary of Kilkenny. Clyn’s original manuscript is no longer extant; Sir Richard Shee, sovereign (mayor) of Kilkenny, possessed the manuscript in 1543, and by 1631 it had been acquired by David Rothe, bishop of Ossory. Four main seventeenth-century transcripts survive, and they state that the annals were copied from the community book of the Franciscans of Kilkenny. There is scant reference to Franciscan affairs, but as the annals reportedly were part of the community book of the Franciscans of Kilkenny, there would have been no need for such information in the annals. The annals consist of very brief entries, with years often repeated and out of sequence, until 1333. All four transcripts agree that in 1333 a new section of the annals commenced. Clyn’s main interest is in the military society of the area surrounding Kilkenny in a troubled period of Anglo-Irish history. Internal evidence suggests that Clyn was familiar with military society and displayed a great interest in knighthood, noting who was knighted by whom. Clyn respected a certain code of conduct, which led him to express displeasure at actions, perpetrated by either the native Irish or the Anglo-Irish, that were contrary to the highest standards of knighthood. Clyn has sometimes been considered as hostile to the Irish, and indeed during this troubled period it was only to be expected that they should receive censure, but Clyn is remarkable for his criticism of the troublesome members of the Anglo-Irish nation also. Clyn is particularly dismayed by treachery or betrayal, in any form and by either nation. On balance, Clyn only refers to the Irish nation in relation to its effect on the Anglo-Irish nation. Clyn exhibited a particular familiarity with the local Mac Gillapatrick family. Among the Anglo-Irish, it is the de la Frene family that occasions most interest. The dominant personality in Clyn’s annals is Fulk de la Frene, whose knighting by the earl of Ormond Clyn reports in 1335. Fulk emerges, in Clyn’s annals, as a strong military man, and this is reflected by the reports of his victories over the Irish and his success in expelling Anglo-Irish troublemakers. The longest entry in the annals is for 1348, which describes the horrors of the Black Death, an event that the writer regarded as truly catastrophic and apocalyptic. Clyn’s account of the plague opens with pilgrimages to the local St. Mullins Well; these were, he tells us, inspired by fear of the plague. His entry includes the number of people who died in Dublin from August to Christmas, the number who had died in the Franciscan friaries of Drogheda and Dublin from the beginning of the plague to Christmas, and the information that the plague was at its height in Kilkenny during Lent. Although Clyn enters the number of Dominicans who died in Kilkenny, he makes no mention of Franciscan deaths, but this information could have been entered in another section of the community book. Clyn also includes an account of the plague in Avignon and a lengthy account of an apocalyptic vision given to a monk at the Cistercian monastery at Tripoli in 1347. It is with great sorrow, and a great eulogy, that Clyn reports, in his last entry, the death of Fulk in 1349. The seventeenth-century transcripts suggest that Clyn died of the plague. Another possibility is that Clyn was moved to a different friary as part of a possible redistribution necessary after the decimation of some friaries. A third possibility is simply that Clyn ceased to write once his friend, and perhaps patron, Fulk de la Frene, had died.

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References and Further Reading