

# **Research Notes on Gillespie in County Monaghan**

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# Introduction

The following references pertaining to County Monaghan were handed down in the recorded family history of my Gillespie clan:

"The original Gillespie clan migrated from Glasgow, Scotland to County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland and later of County Armagh in Northern Ireland, from which these two brothers and their sister left for America."<sup>1</sup>

My Note: Northern Ireland was created in 1921, and Irish Free State was created in 1922, the latter becoming The Republic of Ireland in 1949. At the time our Gillespies lived there, the entire island was known as Ireland or the Kingdom of Ireland.

"James Gillespie, born in Skarnagirra<sup>2</sup> County Monaghan, Ireland, April 20, 1810, was the son of John Gillespie and Sarah Woods Gillespie, his second wife."<sup>3</sup>

"My father, James Gillespie, born at Skarnagirra, County Monaghan, Ireland, was the son of John Gillespie and Sarah Woods, his second wife. John Gillespie, farmer and small manufacturer, whose father came from Glasgow, Scotland, was well known in the county.... He lived to the great age of 100 years."<sup>4</sup>

I have some issue with the details of my recorded family history, the biggest of which is that we have the marriage record between John Gillespie and Jane Woods, believed to be our progenitors, from 1805 at the First Presbyterian Church in Armagh. John was of Drumgaw, and Jane Woods, not Sarah Woods, was of Autlack (Outlack), both places found in Lisnadill parish. Perhaps that marriage record does not belong to us, and maybe I should consider that possibility more seriously. Until then, if James Gillespie, son of John and Jane who married in Armagh in 1805, was born in Monaghan in 1810, the family moved there after marriage in Armagh, which seems to contradict the first account above. We also have documentation that James Gillespie was working in Armagh from 1827-1837, so we have to wonder if he was born in Monaghan, then he moved back to Armagh for work?

Part of the problem is that in the past I have been unable to locate many records of any Gillespie family in or around the Emyvale area after 1800, or even before that time for that matter. But Monaghan is by tradition a flax-growing county, and we have reason to believe our Gillespies were both farmers and weavers. In addition, a few small DNA matches have traced to that county, and so I think it's worthwhile to explore County Monaghan a little more.

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1 *The Gillespie Family Record*, Edith Gillespie, privately published, 1966, Flint, MI; page 2.

2 The village today known as Emyvale, was known before the Plantation of Ulster as Scarnageeragh. I find it curious that our family records do not use the more modern name of this village.

3 Ibid, page 57.

4 *Memories of My Early Years*, Mary Gillespie Henderson, Charters & Charters Limited, Montreal, 1937, page 9.

# Monaghan Presbyterianism

Before I get started, I want to make the point that County Monaghan was not part of the Ulster Plantation, which I had not previously realized. Monaghan, along with counties Antrim and Down were “privately planted.” So that’s somewhat important to keep in mind.

For this round of research, I decided to focus on the fact that my Gillespies were Presbyterian, hoping that Presbyterian history might provide some insights. Here is a summary of some things I’ve learned about Presbyterianism in Ulster and in particular in county Monaghan:

- 1642, first Presbytery established at Carrickfergus in County Down.
- 1658, county Monaghan, first known Presbyterian congregation was established in [Glaslough](#), forerunner of present [Glennan](#) congregation.<sup>5</sup> The minister was Rev. Thomas Gowan. He was born in Caldermuir in 1631, a place I can’t locate as such, but which might have been the place called Cademuir near the town of [Peebles](#) in the Scottish Borders south of Edinburgh. But then Gowan was ejected in 1661.
  - new church built at Kinnaird<sup>6</sup> (near Caledon), which is where the Glaslough congregation worshiped until a petition was submitted to erect a new presbytery (1714, see below)
- 1689-1702, King William’s reign brought new support for Presbyterians, so many more Scot Presbyterians started coming to Monaghan.<sup>7</sup> Between 1690-1710, many who came had fought as soldiers in the [Williamite War](#). Over the course of 30 years, several more Monaghan congregations were established such as in Ballybay ([Tullycorbet](#)) 1698 and [Monaghan](#) 1697, and more in Clontibret.
- 1702, the Presbytery of Tyrone was divided into two, Tyrone and Monaghan.
- 1710, the Kinnaird congregation was annexed to the Monaghan presbytery.
- 1714, the parish of Treugh (also Trough)<sup>8</sup> established, later called Glennan. Patrick Plunket<sup>9</sup> was ordained as the minister and served until 1757.<sup>10</sup>
  - It should be noted that one of the commissioners selected to petition the Synod to separate from the Kinnaird congregation and establish a new and distinct congregation was **Henry Gillespie**.

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5 *The Presbyterians of County Monaghan Part I: The Unfolding Story* by Lindsay T. Brown, Clogher Record, Vol 13, No. 3 (1990), pp. 7-54; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27699309>

6 This congregation was located in a village called Lisluney or Lislooney, near the Fort of O’Looney – see *The History of Tynan Parish*, Ulster Journal of Archaeology, Belfast 1901, Vol 7, p. 190. From what I can tell, O’Luinigh or O’Looney were Irish chiefs of the surrounding area – see The [Origin and History of Irish Names of Places](#) by P.W. Joyce, Dublin 1887, p. 123.

7 previous citation, Brown, Clogher Record

8 Also known as Scarnagiroch (Scarne Giroch or Scarnegeerath meaning shallow ford of the sheep)

9 The [Plunket family](#) were Irish nobility going back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron of Killeen.

10 [History of congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland](#) and biographical notices of eminent Presbyterian ministers and laymen. ed W.D. Killeen, Edinburgh 1886, p. 153; also Records of the General Synod of Ulster from 1691 to 1820, Vol 1, Belfast, 1890, p. 298.

The following map<sup>11</sup> shows the Presbyterian congregations in county Monaghan around 1713:

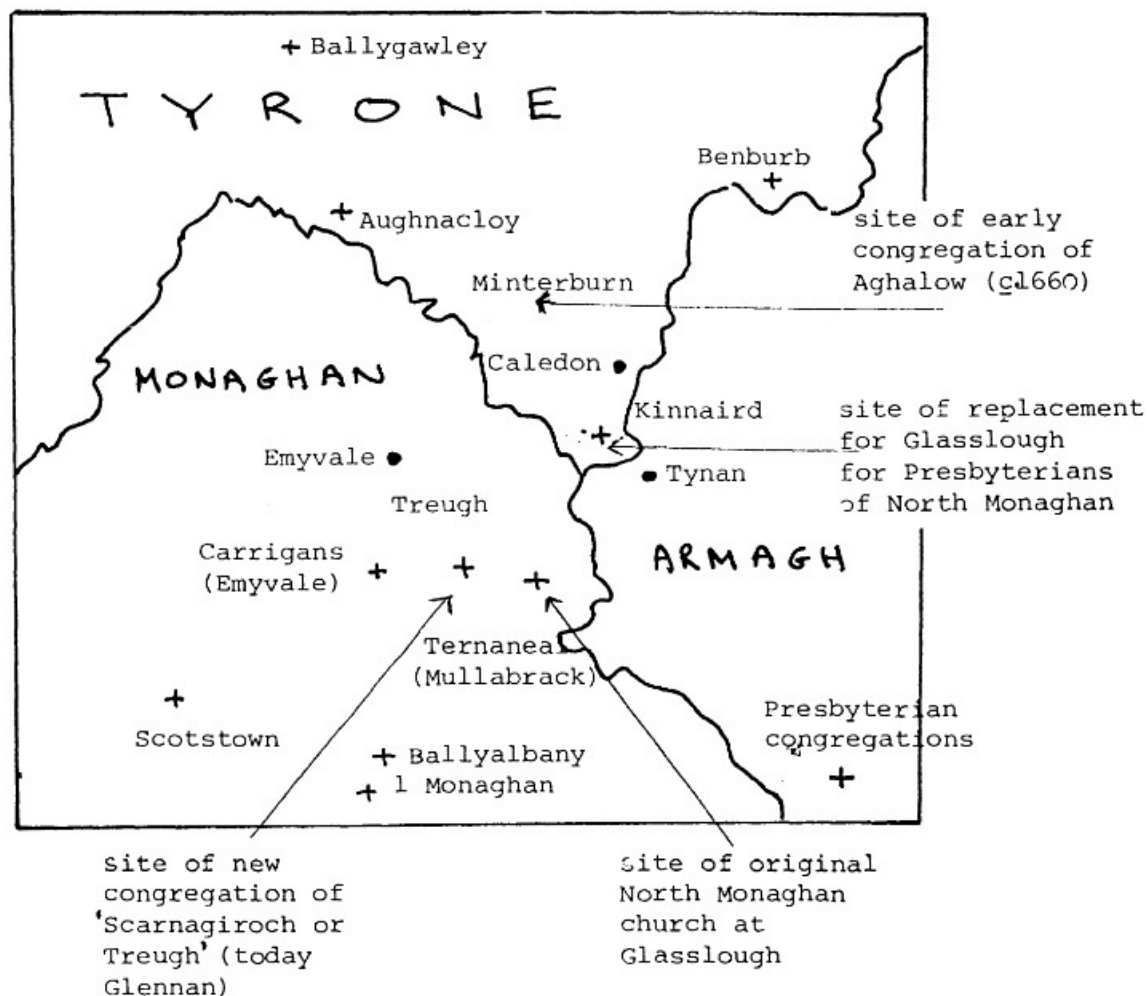


Fig. 2. Evolution of Presbyterianism in North Monaghan.

The next map shows the growth of the Presbyterian congregations in and around Monaghan up to 1753.<sup>12</sup> We can make note of the townland of Derrynoose, which is a place that is potentially associated with the Greer family who married into my Gillespie family.

11 *The Presbyterians of County Monaghan Part I: The Unfolding Story* by Lindsay T. Brown, Clogher Record, Vol 13, No. 3 (1990), pp. 7-54; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27699309>

12 Ibid.

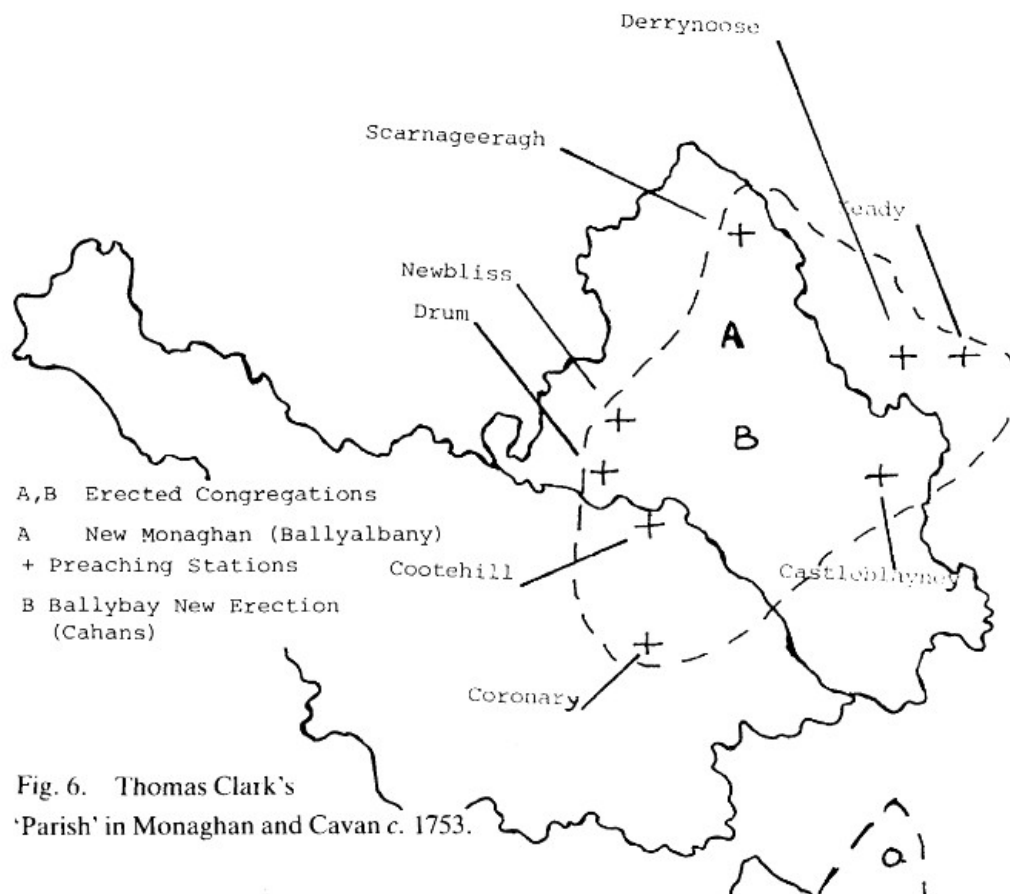


Fig. 6. Thomas Clark's  
'Parish' in Monaghan and Cavan c. 1753.

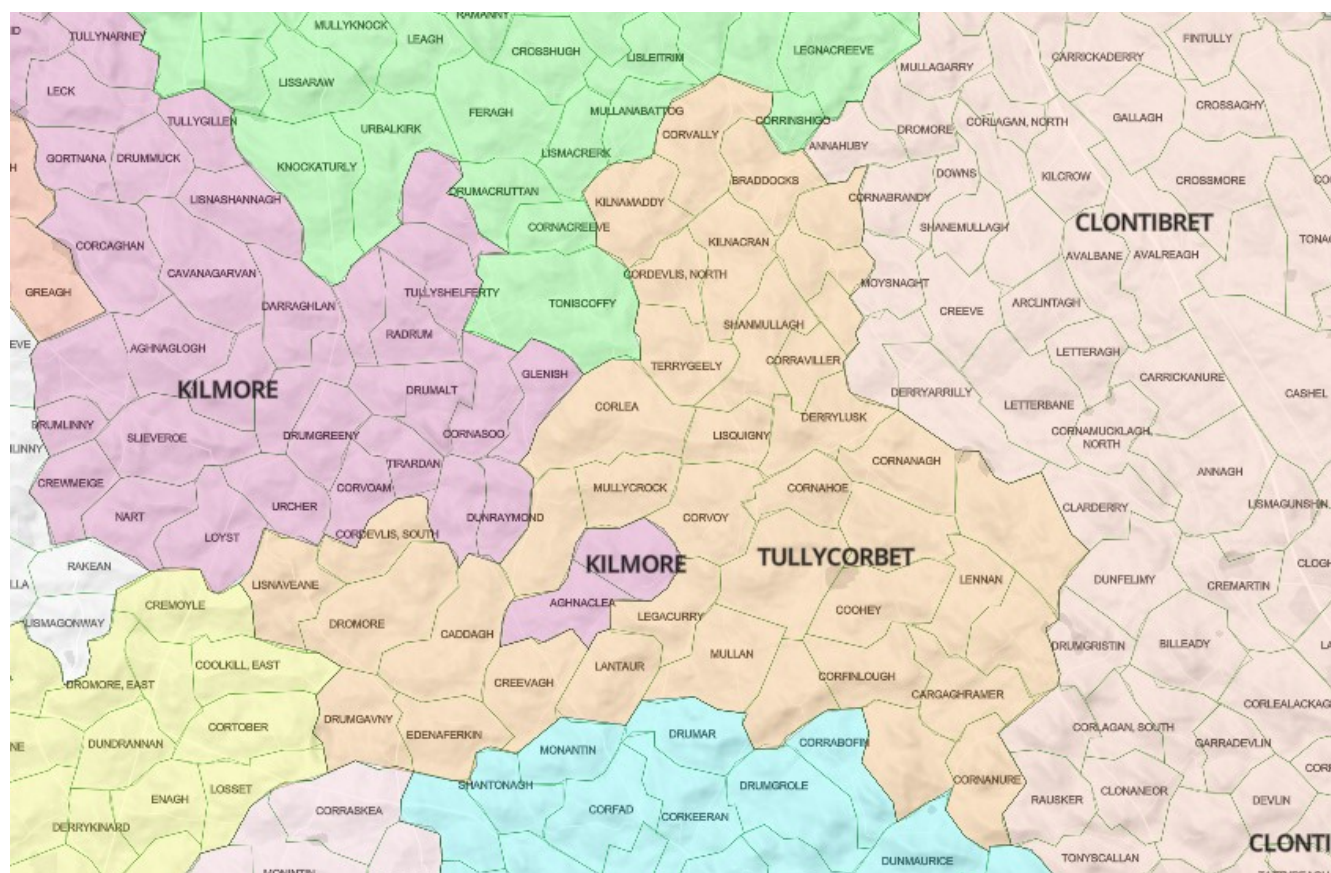
I think it's also worth noting that the [First Secession](#) from the Church of Scotland happened in 1733, and they formed the Associate Presbytery. By 1748 Seceder ministers had arrived in Monaghan, causing a great deal of unrest there. The congregations of Ballybay, Donagh, and Scarnagiroch in northern Monaghan as well as Derrynoose in Armagh all showed interest in adhering to the Seceder ministry.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



The map displays the Fermanagh and Down constituency, which is divided into several districts. The districts shown are: ERRIGAL TROUGH, DONAGH, TEDAVNET, TEHALLAN, CLONES, MONAGHAN, DRUMSNAT, CLONTIBRET, CLONES, KILMORE, AGHABOG, KILMORE, DRUMMULLY, KILLEEVAN, CURRIN, EMATRIS, BALLYBAY, MUCKNO, AGHNAMEEN, MAGHEROSS, DONAGHMOYNE, INISHKEEN, MAGHERACLOONE, and KILLANNY. The map also shows the surrounding counties: TYRONE to the north, ARMAGH to the east, CAVAN to the south, and FERMANAGH to the west. Key geographical features include the Upper Lough Erne, the River Finner, and the town of Fintona. The map is color-coded to distinguish between the different districts.

Note that Tullycorbet doesn't show up on the previous map unless you zoom in:



I believe the Old Donagh Cemetery is the one closest to Glennan, and [here](#) is a transcription of gravestone inscriptions. I'm not sure that Presbyterians were buried here.

I also wanted to make note of who the landlords were in the area around Glasslough. For the most part, the lands belonged to the Leslie family who were Scottish noblemen from the area of Fife. They owned over 5500 acres of land in County Monaghan.<sup>14</sup> I've also noticed a lessor named Campbell in the area around Emyvale, but I don't know the origins of that family.

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<sup>14</sup> [Balybay House](#), Lord Belmont in Northern Ireland, blog post, 12 Sep 2023

Finally, here is another review of other Monaghan records:

1659-1857 Lease Abstracts Manor Of Monaghan	Gillespie	David	1792	Tullymin	Monaghan
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	Henry	1796		Killeevan
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	James	1796		Magheracloone
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	Jane	1796		Clones
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	John	1796		Monaghan
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	Joseph	1796		Tullycorbet
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	Matthew	1796		Tullycorbet
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	Patrick	1796		Aghnamullen
1796 Flax Growers Lists	Gillespy	William	1796		Curran
1659-1857 Index Wills Diocese Of Clogher	Gillespie	David	1799	Ballybay	

Early 19th Century Tithe Books	Gillespie	Robert	1832	Curran	Clones
Early 19th Century Tithe Books	Gillespie	James	1834	Curdulough	Tullycorbet
Early 19th Century Tithe Books	Gillespie	James	1834	Mullacrock	Tullycorbet
1659-1857 Index Wills Diocese Of Clogher	Gillespie	James	1839	Eekinahogue, Clogher	

- [James](#) in Tullycorbet parish, Curdulough ([Cordoolough](#))<sup>15</sup>
  - Note that this James was listed next to Peter Lemon and Widow Lemon
  - further down the list is Terrence Lemon, but also Robert Grier!
  - also James in Mullacrock, same parish, other surname of interest – Deacon

We can note that these records are probably too late to be considered as we believe our Gillespie family was in Armagh by the time of these records. And yet, some of our Gillespie family were in New York by this time, and we know they had association with a Lemon family there, not to mention intermarriage with Greers.

<sup>15</sup> This townland is 8 miles from Derrynoose in Armagh. It's also worth noting there were several Greer families in the Griffiths Valuation of Tullycorbet parish.



# Discussion

My observations:

- One has to take note that the Presbyterian congregation in Glennan was also known as Scarnagiroch (varied spellings), which was a place name specifically written in my Gillespie family history. So Scarnagiroch is not only associated with Emyvale, the town, (a place name NOT spelled out in my family history), but the name is also associated with a Presbyterian congregation that was southeast of Emyvale. Was this latter the reference in our family history?
- Next, one has to take note that for many years, over 50 years in fact, the early Glennan congregation attended services in Kinnaird, near Caledon (Tyrone), a distance of 5 miles give or take. The Caledon area is one where a number of Gillespies are known to have settled, and given that the Scarnagiroch (Glennan) congregation worshipped in Caledon, we might wonder if Scarnagorich in our family history might have association with Caledon? Because some DNA matches seem to be pointing to that area, I did some research which I reported on [here](#). Fifty years is a rather long time for people living in Monaghan to attend church in Armagh although to be fair, the distance was not far, and it's easy to understand that legislative boundaries were probably not all that important to everyday life at the time.
- Then we have a remarkable note that a commissioner named GILLESPIE was one who petitioned the Synod to establish a new congregation in Glennan. I think that tells us that a Gillespie was living in that area in 1713. We don't have any record of males named Henry, and I'm currently researching more to see if we can identify who this particular Henry Gillespie was. Whether or not this Henry was related to us, this evidence tells us that people of the surname Gillespie were in the Emyvale area in the early 1700s.
- By the early 1800s, I would say that most of the Gillespie families in Monaghan were located in the west of Monaghan, in the Clones area on the border with County Fermanagh, and even to the south into County Cavan. But clearly there were also a few Gillespie families in east Monaghan, mostly in the Tullycorbet parish living in townlands with other families familiar to our family history.

So all these observations are new – evidence that has not previously been on my radar. Even though I don't think we can yet come to any conclusions that bring any further clarity to my Gillespie story, it is still possible to speculate. What are the possibilities here?

- Maybe the story about our James Gillespie being born in Monaghan referred to a different James Gillespie? Given that we don't really know the name of the first Gillespie progenitor to Ireland, maybe that progenitor was named James?
- Maybe this James, or other Gillespie progenitor, came to Monaghan after the Williamite War, maybe even during the reign of William and Mary. We can imagine this Gillespie was living

with other Scot Presbyterian settlers in the area between Glasslough and Emyvale. However, he was having to travel into Armagh, Kinnaird (Caledon) in order to worship. Maybe after awhile, he and/or some of his descendants settled in the Caledon area or even farther east around Killylea.<sup>16</sup> From there, it's easy to imagine Gillespies migrating into the city of Armagh and surrounding townlands.

Given the geography of the Presbyterian congregations discussed here, I think this speculation has some degree of plausibility. Our family history clearly includes County Monaghan, and it seems more logical that our Gillespies might have started there establishing themselves in a Presbyterian community and then moved their way east toward the city of Armagh, maybe following the linen industry, or maybe as a result of the Seceder movement, or maybe both. It's worth noting that both PRONI and the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland have records that, as far as I know, have not been examined closely for evidence of our Gillespie family. This would be the next stop for this research, in my opinion.

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16 See my recent article [Gillespie Clues from Ballydoo](#), MA Schaefer, Jan. 2024 where I surmise that James Gillespie of Ballydoo might have been a brother of our John Gillespie.