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‘New Troy’: the Irish at Oostende in the first half of the seventeenth century

Benjamin J. Hazard

Since the ‘drum and trumpet’ narratives of the nineteenth-century, the Irish presence in the armed forces of the Spanish Habsburgs has attracted historians’ interest. In recent decades, most notably since the work of Brendan Jennings OFM, this field of historical research has received increasing attention. Nevertheless, apart from isolated examples, no concerted effort has hitherto been made to substantiate the experiences of Irish exiles in specific centres of population abroad, such as the harbour towns of Galicia and Flanders. In part, this reflects the scale of religious and cultural upheaval in early-modern Europe where many Irish exiles moved from one theatre of war to another. Since war was an ever-present reality of life, Irish soldiers served in the armies of Spain, France, Sweden and elsewhere during the first half of the seventeenth century.

The strategically important town of Oostende witnessed the arrival and departure of many Irish men, women and children from the early 1600s to the early 1640s. This paper offers a brief survey of their experiences and makes no claim to being an exhaustive analysis of these years. Located in north-west Flanders, Oostende was the last Dutch outpost of the Southern Netherlands in the late sixteenth century. The Dutch referred to Oostende as ‘New Troy’ and declared that they would defend the town for as long as the ancient Trojans had defended Ilium.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Irish abroad became closely connected with the history of Oostende. As will become apparent, the FitzGeralds of Kildare and Desmond developed particularly strong links with ‘New Troy’. This connection between Oostende and the FitzGeralds is are made all the more interesting when one considers Philip O’Sullivan Beare’s contemporary observation that the Geraldines traced their origin

1 Meehan, Fate and fortunes, 399–477.
2 See, for instance, Kerney Walsh, The O’Neills in Spain; Jennings, Wild Geese; Stradling, Spanish monarchy and Irish mercenaries; García Hernán and Recio Morales, Extranjeros en el ejército.
3 Henry, Irish military community.
4 Parker, ‘Dutch revolt and the polarization of international politics’.
5 Ohlmeyer, ‘Military migration’.
7 Simoni, Ostend story, 42, 137, 146; Thomas, ‘De val van het Nieuwe Troje’.
The Irish at Oostende

to Troy. The Dominican historian Dominic O’Daly of Kerry made the same connection in 1655, stating that the Gherardini, the FitzGerald’s forebears from Florence, claimed Trojan origins:

From the banks of the Arno, and the shores of the blue Tyrrhenian Sea, the branches of that great tree extended themselves to the far off land of Ireland. That tree was the noble race of the Geraldines, who, under the shadow of Tuscan banners, penetrated regions Roman cohorts did not dare to venture.

After its recapture by the Spanish, newly recruited Irish soldiers frequently arrived at the port of Oostende, where merchants from Waterford and Cork traded with Flanders and Brabant. Irish infantry units in the service of Spain were recognised for their role in the successful siege of Oostende from 1601–4. During the twelve-year truce between Spain and the United Dutch Provinces, Oostende was one of several towns where Irish infantry companies were garrisoned. This sets the immediate context for the work of Aodh Ó Dochartaigh on behalf of his captain, Somhairle Mac Domhnaill, who arrived in the Spanish Netherlands in 1615. Three years later, the defenestration of Prague marked the renewed outbreak of armed conflict and the start of the Thirty Years’ War. After decorated service in the battle of Prague, Somhairle Mac Domhnaill returned to serve in the Army of Flanders after Spain’s renewal of war with the United Dutch Provinces in 1621.

When the Dutch rebelled against Spanish rule in the late sixteenth century both Henry IV of France and Elizabeth Tudor supported the Dutch in their war. The scope of enquiry for this paper begins with the first contingent of approximately 500 Irish soldiers recruited by Colonel William Stanley to serve with the Dutch against Spain after the Geraldine wars. According to Peter Lombard, William Stanley ‘refused to aid heretics and later declared openly for the Catholic cause’. In January 1587, less

5The FitzGeralds were kinsmen to Philip O’Sullivan Beare; see IBP, 234 n. 6.
6See the dedication of his Geraldine history (Initium, Incrementa, et Exitus Familiae Geraldinorum Desmoniae comitum) to Cardinals Antonio and Francesco Barberini, Dominicus Rosario O’Daly: Meehan, The Geraldines, 5; on the FitzGerald’s link to the Gherardini, see ibid., 28, 34, 117, 123–30.
8Mc Donnell, Wild Geese of the Antrim MacDonnells, 30–1.
9Zwitzer, ‘Eighty Years War’; Fernández Álvarez, Felipe II y su tiempo, 371–95, 488–507.
10Jennings, ‘Irish swordsmen in Flanders’. Stanley was a kinsman of the Munster Geraldines.
than a year after their arrival in the Southern Netherlands, 1,200 Irish troops under his command went over to the service of Philip II.\textsuperscript{14}

From the late 1580s until its fall to the Spanish in 1604, the port of Oostende was held by an English garrison.\textsuperscript{15} Oostende had first come into being as a small fishing harbour but, in the early 1580s, the Dutch fortified a new town further inland. The dunes were cut away, the sea was allowed to fill the ditches surrounding the town and a wide gullet began to form a new harbour. To the south, the countryside was intersected by a network of canals and was often flooded.\textsuperscript{16} Where the deep water on the east side of Oostende flowed into the town’s dyke, up to 150 mid-sized vessels at a time could safely unload.\textsuperscript{17} The Dutch campaign at the start of the 1600s focussed upon the Flemish coast. Maurice of Nassau made Oostende his base where he met the full assembly of the States General of the Netherlands and withdrew after giving battle at Nieuwpoort.\textsuperscript{18} Although nominally under Spanish control, the surrounding countryside of west Flanders was regularly laid under contribution by Protestant troops.\textsuperscript{19}

In Dutch hands, therefore, Oostende became known as ‘the thorn which remained in the Flemish foot’ of the Spanish Netherlands.\textsuperscript{20} As a counter measure, the Archduke Albert built a series of forts around Oostende. Its capture was essential for Spain.\textsuperscript{21} The obedient states of Flanders raised special subsidies to overcome the port town and, on 15 July 1601, the Archduke, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, began the bloodiest, most memorable siege ever witnessed in early-modern warfare.\textsuperscript{22} The port’s open access to the sea enabled the supply and replacement of defending troops who could not be starved out.\textsuperscript{23} As a result, the siege lasted three years and seventy-seven days.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{14}O’Connor, ‘Diplomatic preparations for Kinsale’, 146. Stanley subsequently joined a Carthusian monastery near Oostende and died in 1630, aged 82; Ó Muraíle, Turas na dTaoiseach nUltach as Éirinn, 495.
\textsuperscript{15}Mattingly, Defeat of the Spanish Armada, 124–5; Markham, The fighting Veres, 309–14.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 311; Lombaerde, ‘De stad Oostende’.
\textsuperscript{17}Puype, ‘Victory at Nieuwpoort’, 72, 88.
\textsuperscript{18}Giménez Martín, Tercios de Flandes, 256–9.
\textsuperscript{19}Geyl, Revolt of the Netherlands, 190, 239, 245.
\textsuperscript{20}Thomas, ‘De val van het Nieuwe Troje’, 9.
\textsuperscript{21}Manning, Apprenticeship in arms, 32–3.
\textsuperscript{22}Van der Hoeven, ‘Introduction’, in idem, Exercise of arms; Díaz Padrón, ‘El sitio de Oostende’.
\textsuperscript{23}Van Creveld, Supplying war, 9.
\textsuperscript{24}Parker, Dutch revolt, 235–6.
Oostende c. 1560 by Jacobus Van Deventer
(Archief Oostende, Kaarten en Plannen, G/0021)
The Archduchess Isabel promised not to change her underwear until Oostende was retaken. Apart from the Low Countries, combatants were drawn from many other places in Europe: Ireland, Italy, Burgundy, Spain, Germany, Croatia and Hungary. Troops from England and Scotland accounted for at least 25 per cent of the garrison defending the port for their Dutch allies. Military governors, engineers and surgeons considered the fortifications and siege works of Oostende a *krijgsuniversiteit* or ‘university of war’. Irish soldiers featured prominently in the siege and were regularly mentioned in dispatches. Specific reference is made to the unattached Irish companies of Captains Barnewall, Claremount and FitzGerald. After action at Dinxmude, Gravelines and Zutphen, William Stanley’s unit had been disbanded when serious tensions emerged between English officers and Irish soldiers. In this regard, the Archduke Albert commented that troops from Ireland ‘could serve better under an Irish leader’. At the start of the seventeenth century, therefore, independent companies served under Irish captains in the Spanish Army of Flanders. An Irish company of 13 officers and 144 troops at Oostende received payment of 1,852 crowns in 1603. On June 22 that year, Walter Sachet, a soldier in the Irish infantry company of Captain Barnewall, received a special grant after he reconnoitred a Dutch boat ‘thought to contain incendiary devices and brought back from it two prisoners’.

Early-modern armies were accommodated in a number of ways. During the siege of Oostende the ordinary rank-and-file constructed their own huts with salvaged timber which, once they moved on, could be razed to the ground. Officers on campaign usually spent long periods under canvas camped in the field, only relocating with their troops when local food sources had been used up.

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28 Most soldiers from Ireland were enlisted in Irish companies but some served with German, Burgundian and Walloon units in the Spanish Army of Flanders. See Jennings, *Wild Geese*, 67, 85, 168, 187, 266–7, 275–6, 312–13.
29 AGS, Flandes, legajo 622; Jennings, *Wild Geese*, 528.
30 Ibid., 75.
sheltered by the local church and a copse of trees, the best possible location beyond cannon shot range of the town.\textsuperscript{33}

Paintings of the great siege at Ostende, such as the work of Cornelis de Wael, depict the tents of civilian traders known as sutlers, each marked with their own insignia. They supplied essential goods to soldiers and are also known to have bought plunder from the troops.\textsuperscript{34} Cooks and butchers provided food and drink, clothiers sold garments, and leather-workers made footwear, sword-belts and bridles.\textsuperscript{35} Irish merchants, such as Nicholas Lynch of Galway, operated in the Southern Netherlands when beef and hides from Ireland were traded in Ostende and Archbishop Flaithrí Ó Maoil Chonaire was consulted on the authenticity of four hundredweight of Irish butter for troops.\textsuperscript{36}

On the western dunes near the fort of St Albert, the Spanish commander, Juan de Ribas, had a platform built to facilitate the bombardment of the old quarter of Ostende in 1602.\textsuperscript{37} Known as ‘de Grote Kat’, or ‘the Big Cat’, this platform stood more than thirty metres high.\textsuperscript{38} When the Dutch explosives-expert Filip Rottegatter set fire to the platform in July 1603, Irish soldiers of the company commanded by Barnewall of Co. Meath overcame the flames. Amongst those honoured on this occasion were John O’Conor, Humphrey Plunket, William Frayn and John FitzGerald.\textsuperscript{39}

Captain Edward FitzGerald ‘covered himself with glory’ at the siege according to the Jesuit Fr Henry Fitzsimon. Edward FitzGerald led the same brigade of Irish and Walloon infantry subsequently commanded by Somhairle Mac Domhnaill at the Battle of the White Mountain.\textsuperscript{40} Maurice FitzGerald, a kinsman to the earl of Kildare, took part in the siege as an ensign and was ‘the main cause of beating off two attacks’.\textsuperscript{41} He subsequently served as a captain at the Spanish garrison of Ostende. One ‘Hugo Doharty’ served in FitzGerald’s infantry company with a special

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{33} Ó hAnnracháin and Aubert, ‘Irish tents in Spanish Flanders’, 3–4.
\bibitem{34} Díaz Padrón, ‘El sitio de Ostende’, 46. The word now used in Castilian for shop, tienda, also translates as ‘tent’.
\bibitem{35} Cf. Parker, Army of Flanders, 86–95.
\bibitem{36} Hazard, Faith and patronage, 137.
\bibitem{37} Bentivoglio, Della guerra di Fiandra III, lib. VII, p. 162.
\bibitem{38} Thomas, ‘El sitio de Ostende’: de Graaf, Oorlog mijn arme schapen, 338–44.
\bibitem{39} Jennings, Wild Geese, 76–7.
\bibitem{40} Hogan, Distinguished Irishmen, 289–93; idem, Words of comfort, 89–97; see also Jennings, Wild Geese, 74. The grandmother of Somhairle Mac Domhnaill’s wife was a Geraldine.
\bibitem{41} Jennings, ‘Melchior de Burgo’.
\end{thebibliography}
grant of 4 crowns per month.\textsuperscript{42} At the end of his military career, Maurice FitzGerald retired to Oostende.\textsuperscript{43}

While the Archduke’s army concentrated their efforts on the siege, Maurice of Nassau captured the deep-water harbour of Sluis. Increased trade income from the Indies in 1602–3 allowed the Spanish government to pour more money into their military offensive against the Dutch and, on 22 September 1604, Oostende surrendered to the Archduke’s army under its new military commander, the Genoese entrepreneur Ambrosio Spinola.\textsuperscript{44} The recapture of Oostende sealed Spinola’s reputation and, noted for his generosity, he let the defeated Dutch army leave Oostende with its standards and arms. During their sojourn in Spanish Flanders, Aodh Ó Néill and Rudhraighe Ó Domhnaill accepted an invitation to dine with Spinola in Brussels.\textsuperscript{45}

The initial intention of the Oostende siege had been the destruction of a Dutch enclave of privateers and raiders. The hard-fought, hard-won prize of Oostende helped preserve la reputación, an essential part of the foreign policy pursued by Philip III and those of his advisers who hoped to pacify the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{46} The Spanish had sustained 80,000 casualties in the siege, the Dutch 60,000.\textsuperscript{47} Irish losses on the Spanish side are likely to have been high. Up to 1,000 soldiers from Ireland served at Oostende from 1601 to 1603.\textsuperscript{48} The names of many are recorded but, in the aftermath of the siege, we can only account for a small fraction of this figure.\textsuperscript{49}

By holding onto Oostende, the Spanish protected the main Flemish port at Dunkirk, thereby disrupting Dutch trade and freeing the people of Flanders from the pillaging of their lands.\textsuperscript{50} From an Irish perspective, reinforcements sent to the Low Countries by Elizabeth Tudor had been diverted from the war in Ireland and it must have been a cause for
satisfaction among the Irish abroad to know that they contributed to the fall of the former English garrison at Oostende.

At the height of the Nine Years War, the Spanish general Pedro de Zubiaur described Irish combatants as robust and fearless, inclined to war and capable of enduring up to three days’ hunger.\textsuperscript{51} The next wave of migration from Ireland to the continent occurred after the battle of Kinsale. Establishing a dedicated military unit in the Army of Flanders was essential to deal with the large numbers of Irish migrants arriving in Galicia and Castile.\textsuperscript{52} Irish military contractors, including Maurice FitzGerald and one Manus O’Doherty, were also redeployed from Oostende to enlist soldiers from Ireland in the Army of Flanders.\textsuperscript{53}

The groups of Irish troops already serving in Spanish Flanders were amalgamated, and were joined by the new recruits. In consideration of the services of his father and his uncle, Aodh Ó Néill’s second son Éinrí received the title of colonel.\textsuperscript{54} Since the 1580s, the emerging Irish community in the Low Countries had drawn its leaders from the Pale and from Munster. From 1605, however, the increasing presence of soldiers from Ulster tipped the balance in favour of the Úi Ídeall and their allies.\textsuperscript{55}

The new Úi Ídeall military unit was known as a tercio. The term tercio means ‘one-third’ and appears to have been derived from ‘one-third of an army’ of 10,000.\textsuperscript{56} By the beginning of the seventeenth century, tercios, on average, consisted of 1,000–1,200 soldiers.\textsuperscript{57} It is important to note that, due to the decentralised command structure, this type of military formation was markedly different from the regiments in the Flanders army. At the start of the seventeenth century, only German troops in Spanish service were organised in regiments.\textsuperscript{58} Each tercio, on the other hand, was its own separate and complete unit under one commander. The commanding officer, or maestre de campo, of a tercio was its administrator and, as such, accountable for its maintenance.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{51}O’Donnell y Duque de Estrada, ‘Tyrone y Tyrconnel’, 287.
\textsuperscript{52}Murtagh, ‘Irish soldiers abroad’, 294–5.
\textsuperscript{53}Jennings, ‘Irish swordsmen in Flanders, II’. 197.
\textsuperscript{54}Flaherty Ó Maoil Chonaire to the Conde de Caracena, Valladolid, 14 November 1604 (Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección Nobleza, Frias, caja 67, f. 675): ‘que era justo por los serbios de su Padre y su Tio, […] dale título de Coronel aquí’.
\textsuperscript{55}Henry, Irish military community, 98–102; eadem, ‘Ulster exiles in Europe’.
\textsuperscript{56}Puype, ‘Victory at Nieuwpoort’, 74.
\textsuperscript{57}Parker, Army of Flanders, 274.
\textsuperscript{58}Albi de la Cuesta, De Pavía a Rocroi, 228–9.
\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 50–52.
Each tercio was further divided into companies of up to 150 men, each led by a captain. Every soldier belonged to a squadron of approximately twenty-five troops under a cabo or corporal. This helped instil tactical efficiency and made the army of Spanish Flanders more manoeuvrable on the ground. Barber-surgeons, quartermasters and controllers of accounts were appointed to serve as administrative officers. The Army of Flanders also had an autonomous judicial hierarchy, with a judge for every tercio and for districts with garrisons.

The pike and musket were the main weapons carried by infantry soldiers with an average of two pikemen to every musketeer maintained in each tercio. The pike was made of ash with a reinforced steel tip. It weighed about 5kg and measured approximately 4.5 metres. Pikemen usually fought in close formation with their pikes pointed straight ahead on the advance. Against cavalry, the pike was placed against the heel and directed at the chest of the oncoming horse. The pike and musket were the main weapons carried by infantry soldiers with an average of two pikemen to every musketeer maintained in each tercio. The pike was made of ash with a reinforced steel tip. It weighed about 5kg and measured approximately 4.5 metres. Pikemen usually fought in close formation with their pikes pointed straight ahead on the advance. Against cavalry, the pike was placed against the heel and directed at the chest of the oncoming horse.

Musketeers, such as Niall (Gruamdha) Ó Cathán, used a shoulder-firing gunpowder weapon weighing 9kg. Fired from a forked rest, it had a range of up to 400 metres. Each musketeer carried his own gunpowder, a slow-match cord, and lead musket balls. Soldiers could carry their own rations, cooking utensils, spare clothes and shoes. For practical purposes, in marshy conditions they wore rope-soled footwear and ankle coverings. Soldiers of the Habsburgs received a free set of garments on joining up and wore a red band on their clothing, although no attempt was made at standard uniformity of dress in the Spanish Army of Flanders until the 1630s ‘because that would remove the spirit and fire which is necessary in a soldier [...] so that he can with furious resolution

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60 Domínguez Ortiz, Golden age of Spain, 36.
61 Parker, Guide to the archives of the Spanish institutions, 105.
63 Parker and Parker, European soldiers, 15–17.
64 Somhairle Mac Domhnall’s was a musketry company; see McDonnell, Wild Geese of the Antrim MacDonnells, 30, and Jennings, Wild Geese, 187. Niall Gruamdha was Aodh Ó Dochartaigh’s collaborator on the copy of ‘Agallamh na Seanórach’ copied by them in 1626–7 (UCD-OFM ms A 20 (a)). On f. 64v of that manuscript, Niall records the feast-day of his patron, St Francis. Somhairle Mac Domhnall retained three Franciscan priests as chaplains to his company of musketeers, and such chaplains encouraged the formation of confraternities and sodalities in Spanish Flanders. Since plans to promote the secular Franciscan order were aimed at Irish troops, Niall Ó Cathán may well have been a member of the Third Order; see Hazard, “A new company of crusaders like that of St John Capistran”.
65 Showalter and Astore, Soldiers’ lives through history, 35.
66 Kist et al., Musket, roer en pistolet; Martin and Parker, Spanish Armada, 77.
overcome any difficulty or accomplish any valorous exploit.\textsuperscript{67} Armour consisted of a steel corslet along with a helmet encased in a protective cloth cover and lined with compressed pine needles.\textsuperscript{68} At a time when the sword was the symbol of honour, each soldier carried his own light blade and a dagger for close combat.\textsuperscript{59}

Spanish veterans accounted for no more than 20 per cent of total infantry numbers in the Army of Flanders.\textsuperscript{70} Having originally had a distinct structure of their own, the remaining \textit{naciones} were organised according to the model of the Spanish infantry by the beginning of Philip III’s reign.\textsuperscript{71} Large-scale warfare in the Low Countries was siege-oriented.\textsuperscript{72} Success at Oostende propelled Spinola to besiege and capture the towns of Grol and Rheinburg two years later, a campaign in which ninety-eight soldiers from the new Irish \textit{tercio} received an increase in their standard income in recognition of their bravery.\textsuperscript{73}

Heavy fighting since the 1570s had impoverished the Southern Netherlands, brought about a sharp demographic decline, and severely depleted the state finances of Spain and of the United Dutch Provinces.\textsuperscript{74} A ceasefire was agreed and a truce subsequently declared in 1609.

Oostende had become a byword for costly victory.\textsuperscript{75} The founder of St Anthony’s Franciscan college at Leuven, Fláithrí Ó Maoil Chonaire, was among those to comment on this point: since the towns of Ireland, Scotland and England lacked fortification, Ó Maoil Chonaire said, they could fall to Philip III without the expenditure he incurred in Flanders where defences like those at Oostende were found far and wide.\textsuperscript{76}

After the fall of Oostende its defences were replaced and Spinola introduced plans for a network of canals to connect the seaports of Flanders with Brugge further inland.\textsuperscript{77} During the twelve years truce,
instead of making the arduous journey over land through states friendly to Spain, troops could be shipped directly from the ports of Galicia and Cantabria to those of Flanders. Between campaigns, soldiers serving in the Low Countries were transferred to winter-quarters or garrison duty. In the early seventeenth century, soldiers were given a billet where they would stay, that is a private household in the village or town where the military unit was stationed. Civilian occupants were expected to share their homes with several soldiers allotted to each house where they received free board and lodgings, bed linen, firewood, and candles. In addition to other staple requirements, soldiers received a daily ration of bread made with rye and wheatmeal. These arrangements suited the soldiers but often made life uncomfortable for the civilians on whom they were quartered. The archducal couple Albert and Isabel, therefore, made plans to provide stone-and-timber barracks in Spanish Flanders to supplement the billets.

Officers often resided away from their soldiers, such as Eóghan Ruadh Ó Néill who, for instance, lived with his wife Rosa in Rue Haute, parish of Notre Dame de la Chapelle, Brussels. On campaign, officers could pay to stay in hostellries. At Lille in northern France, Irish soldiers regularly stayed at the ‘Red Knight Inn’ according to Eóghan Ruadh, who favoured the ‘Three Kings Tavern’ in the same town.

From 1609 to 1621, the Archduke Albert feared for the fragile peace which had been signed with the Dutch and was reluctant to keep a standing army which included cavalry, lancers, riflemen and an armoured division. According to the papal nuncio and historian Guido Bentivoglio, the Irish tercio remained in the Southern Netherlands with three infantry units under Spanish command, two from Italy, one from Burgundy and three from the French-speaking Low Countries. Notwithstanding the loss of significant numbers and the regular reform of Spanish forces, a muster-roll referred to by Flaitrí Ó Maol Chonaire

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81 Casway, ‘Rosa O’Doherty’.
82 Eóghan Ruadh Ó Néill to Hugh de Burgo, 8 July 1641 (UCD-OFM, D.01, pp. 409–11).
83 Guido Bentivoglio to the Papal Secretary of State, 6 April 1613 (ASV, Borghese, I, vol. 269–72, pp. 42–6): ‘Dell’essercito che mantiene il Rè Cattco in Flandra […] in grandissime angustie gli Archiduchi […] le compagnie di cavalli; distinte in Lancie; corazze, et archibuggeri’.
84 Ibid., ‘Trè sono i Terzi de gli Spagnuoli, due quelli de gli Italiani; uno di Borgugnoni; uno d’Irlandesi e trè di Vailoni […] gli Iianti Irlandesi mille’. 
stated that the Ó Néill tercio consisted of 1,440 troops during the truce. In 1613, William Trumbull, James I’s ambassador to the archdukes, grudgingly acknowledged the Ó Néill tercio to be ‘the very best in the king of Spain’s service’. In the same year, the Irish Franciscans at Leuven received permission to appoint preachers and confessors to Irish military units in the service of Spain. When the friars asked for funds from Philip III to build a new church and convent in 1616, the guardian of St Anthony’s referred to alms ‘from the tercio of their nation which serves in Flanders’ which resulted in them receiving ‘the sum of ten or eleven thousand escudos for the stated intention’. This included a contribution from Oostende where Captain James Gearnon’s infantry company were quartered. According to his record, Gearnon had served with distinction as an ensign officer at the siege of Oostende where he had been wounded. Many of the 112 infantrymen under his command in 1616 contributed a month’s pay to the Irish friars at Leuven and the 850 escudos collected was equivalent to the annual salary of a captain serving in the Low Countries.

The Society of Jesus established their mission to the Spanish fleet at Dunkirk, the principal port of Flanders, in 1623. The Capuchins had founded a friary in Oostende after the siege of 1601–4, Dominican friars worked with soldiers in the town which also had a convent of Augustinian nuns. This mendicant presence in Oostende appears to have helped the Irish Franciscans quest for alms and, as they were unattached to parishes, friars were more mobile than other members of the clergy.

It is worth bearing in mind that the Southern Netherlands were comparable in size to the province of Munster, covering about 30,000 square kilometres. Questing for alms over a wide catchment area was a regular

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85 Fláithrí Ó Maoil Chonaire to Philip III, Madrid, 9 September 1610 (AGS, Estado, Negocios de ‘partes’, legajo 1751).
86 William Trumbull to the Secretary of State, Brussels, 13 February 1612 (Purnell et al., Downshire manuscripts III, 237–8).
87 Permission from Juan de Hierro, Franciscan minister general, Madrid, 20 May 1613 (Jennings, Louvain Papers, 45).
88 Petition to Philip III, Louvain, 1616 (ibid., 60).
89 Jennings, Wild Geese, 85.
90 Ibid., 486–8. The captain of this company may have been related to Anthony Gearnon OFM, the army chaplain and author of Parrthas an Anma.
91 Hambye, L’Aumônerie de la flotte de Flandre, 126–7.
93 Hazard, ‘“A new company of crusaders like that of St. John Capistran”’. 
source of income for the friars and, starting out from Leuven, they sometimes reached parts of present-day France and Germany. Oostende is a short distance from its satellite port of Nieuwpoort. In 1619, the Primate of the Dunes between Dunkirk and Nieuwpoort was among those whom Aodh Mac Aingil turned to when raising the necessary funds to complete the Irish Franciscan convent and chapel at Leuven.

With the benefit of the education they received at Salamanca and Douai, chaplains from Ireland served as officers in the Army of Flanders, helping to instil the levels of discipline expected among troops. Evidence suggests that military chaplains were better paid for their work than surgeons, thereby offering an insight into the early seventeenth-century mindset. Jesuit confessors and preachers appointed

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94 Mooney, Irish Franciscans and France, 51.
95 Jennings, Wild Geese, 166–7.
97 Jennings, Wild Geese 224, 261.
to the Army of Flanders administered alms to the poor and kept recipes for medicines for the troops.\textsuperscript{98} Chaplains routinely accompanied into battle the armies they catechised.\textsuperscript{99} For instance, Thomas Carew of Tipperary, a kinsman of the Butlers of Ormond, made his way from the Low Countries to the armies of the Holy Roman Empire in the 1620s and 1630s. The itinerary he subsequently published was compiled:

\begin{quotation}
[... \text{beneath the tents of war, where my busy pen found no peace from the ominous clangour of the hoarse trumpet, and the loud roll of the battle-drum; where my ear was stunned by the dreadful thunder of the cannon, and the fatal leaden hail hissed round the paper on which I was writing.}\textsuperscript{100}
\end{quotation}

Throughout the seventeenth century, twelve Irish religious houses were founded in the Low Countries and, in a militarist culture where politics was regarded as ‘a spiritual fight’, strong contacts were maintained between Irish soldiers and scholars. One specific example deserves our attention here. In view of ‘his birth and good parts, and of the persecution and loss of estate he suffered for the Catholic cause in Ireland’, a special grant was awarded to one ‘Thadeus Cleri’ in 1621.\textsuperscript{101} This is almost certainly the lay Franciscan brother who later took the name Michéal in religion. In the late spring or early summer of 1623, Tadhg Ó Cléirigh of Tír Conaill, a chronicler by birth and training, asked to be received at St Anthony’s College, Leuven.\textsuperscript{102}

Somhairle Mac Domhnaill joined the tercio of his cousin John O’Neill during the twelve years truce. Members of Mac Domhnaill’s direct family had served in the Spanish Netherlands since the early 1600s. After fighting in Ireland in 1603, Tadhg Mac Domhnaill enlisted in Captain James Gearnon’s infantry company, receiving 15 escudos per month from Philip III and 10 escudos in addition to his standard pay from 1611.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{98} AGR/ARA, AII/1,967–9; cit. Parker, \textit{Guide to the archives}, 103.
\textsuperscript{99} O’Heyne, \textit{Epilogus}, xi-xiii.
\textsuperscript{100} Kerney, \textit{Itinerarium Thomas Carve}, vi-vii.
\textsuperscript{101} Jennings, \textit{Wild Geese}, 175. He served with Captain Art Ó Néill’s infantry company.
\textsuperscript{102} Sheppard, \textit{Michael O Clery}, 3–7. Two letters written by Fr Patrick Fleming OFM in June and August 1624 enable us to assess accurately the date of Ó Cléirigh’s entrance into the Franciscan order and, since Fleming left Leuven in April 1623, Ó Cléirigh must have come to St Anthony’s no later than August that year.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Relación de los Entretenimientos que goçan distint. personas en las treze Compañías de Infanteria Irlanesa del regimiento del Conde Don Henrique Oneil}, October 1608 (AGS,
Nevertheless, Irish military migration to the continent decreased during this period before regaining momentum when war broke out again in 1618: the German Protestants with their allies in Sweden, France, England and Scotland on one side, versus Spain and the Catholics of Germany on the other.\textsuperscript{104} Renewed conflict between the Southern Netherlands and the United Provinces resumed three years later, motivated by Olivares’ view that war would protect Catholicism in Europe and Spanish trade with the Indies.\textsuperscript{105}

While several thousand Irishmen enlisted in the armies of Sweden and France, recruitment to Philip IV’s forces in the Southern Netherlands predominated.\textsuperscript{106} In the early 1620s, Irish troops besieged Bergen-op-Zoom with Spinola, captain-general of Spanish Flanders, and shared in the victories at Breda and the battle of Fleurus.\textsuperscript{107} At home in Ireland crop failures impelled migrants to join up and by 1635 up to seven thousand were serving in the Southern Netherlands, leading to the formation of a further five Irish military units in the Spanish forces.\textsuperscript{108} In Castile, meanwhile, the population had plummeted since the last decade of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{109} This contributed to a severe shortage of potential recruits for the Army of Flanders.\textsuperscript{110} Seasoned soldiers such as Mac Domnaill and his infantry were highly valued, therefore.

Armies increased in size during the seventeenth century, especially among the foot-soldiers, but throughout Europe, quality counted more than quantity.\textsuperscript{111} In France, the chief government minister, Cardinal Richelieu, expressed the view that 2,000 experienced troops were more valuable than 6,000 new recruits.\textsuperscript{112} The Polish diplomat Ossoliński wrote as follows to King Sigismund III about recruitment in 1621: ‘the

\textsuperscript{104} Childs, \textit{Warfare in the seventeenth century}, 22; Henning, ‘Irish soldiers in the Thirty Years War’.
\textsuperscript{105} Lynch, \textit{Spain under the Habsburgs II}, 74–6.
\textsuperscript{107} Jennings, \textit{Wild Geese}, 55.
\textsuperscript{109} Pérez Moreda, ‘The plague in Castile at the end of the sixteenth century’.
\textsuperscript{110} Stradling, \textit{Spanish monarchy and Irish mercenaries}, 17–23.
\textsuperscript{111} Childs, \textit{Armies and warfare in Europe}, 105. On the increased use of infantry, see Verbruggen, \textit{De Krijgskunst in West-Europa in de Middeleeuwen}.
\textsuperscript{112} Jones, ‘The welfare of the French foot-soldier’, 194.
Irish are the best, for they are hardy and good Catholics; the Scots are hardy, but they are great heretics. Among the English are many Catholics, but they are soft.\textsuperscript{113}

In the early-modern period, when martial glory was strongly associated with nobility, officers were drawn from the upper echelons of society and usually recruited soldiers of their own region.\textsuperscript{114} The prestige already gained in battle by Somhairle Mac Domhnaill would have enabled him to bring in new recruits and retain his forces.\textsuperscript{115} After receiving a patent to raise a company, a captain would begin the process by appointing an ensign and arranging for a standard to be made for the unit.\textsuperscript{116} The ensign or lieutenant was second-in-command of a company who, among other duties, carried the colours of the company.\textsuperscript{117} Granted leave to return home, noblemen such as Mac Domhnaill regularly raised a whole company of volunteers from their family estates. Whenever necessary, they could add individual recruits, preferably veterans with experience of using a musket or pike. As captain of his own company, Mac Domhnaill took responsibility for their arming, training and transportation to Flanders. Most notably, the wages for every soldier enlisted in the company were also assigned to the captain for distribution. This made the occupation sought-after and profitable since captains were entitled to withhold sums to cover the costs of the food, clothing and equipment they were expected to provide to foot soldiers who could receive between one-half and two-thirds of their pay in kind.\textsuperscript{118} Irish infantrymen were also enlisted on arrival in the port-towns of Flanders and, from 1534 to 1634, despite inflation, the basic monthly pay of a foot-soldier in the Spanish Army of Flanders was 3 escudos.\textsuperscript{119}

According to procedure, a captain in the Spanish Army of Flanders was expected to raise a company in less than six weeks. On average, those enlisted were between twenty and forty years of age, with the majority of recruits in their twenties.\textsuperscript{120} Nonetheless, because of the rates of attrition in battle and the adverse effects of depopulation described above, standards of age were flexible. Reflecting assertions made by

\begin{itemize}
\item Fro\textsuperscript{113}st, ‘Scottish soldiers’, 203.
\item Parker, ‘The soldier’, 35; Showalter and Astore, \textit{Soldiers’ lives through history}, 39.
\item Ferdinand II to the Archduchess Isabel, Vienna, 9 August 1624 (UCD-OFM, J.02/2/5).
\item Parker, ‘The soldier’, 33–7.
\item Idem, \textit{Army of Flanders}, xv.
\item McGurk, ‘Garrison life in Derry’; Parker, ‘The soldier’, 42.
\item Jennings, \textit{Wild Geese}, 326–7; Parker, \textit{Army of Flanders}, 158.
\item Showalter and Astore, \textit{Soldiers’ lives through history}, 38.
\end{itemize}
Miguel de Cervantes, himself a veteran of battles on land and sea, Captain Alonso de Contreras stated that his military career began as a page and shield bearer to the Catalan captain Don Felipe de Menarges.\(^\text{121}\) The examples of Albert Hugh O’Donnell and Balthasar de Burgo show that such formation was established practice at the courts of the Spanish Habsburgs.\(^\text{122}\)

After the land offensive observed at Oostende in the early 1600s, the focus of attention for Spain moved to marine warfare against the Dutch twenty years later.\(^\text{123}\) As the sea was the source of early-modern Dutch prosperity and fishing provided the main source of income for many Netherlanders, the Spanish council of state identified trade and shipping as a legitimate target.\(^\text{124}\) Making aggressive use of flyboats and small crews, the Dutch had dominated the North Sea, disabling and sinking Spanish ships built to subdue them. Dunkirk was regarded as a greater menace to Dutch commerce but the shipyard and harbour of Oostende were vital to strengthening the Spanish navy in Flanders.\(^\text{125}\) Both ports offered safe anchorage and enclosed the Dutch in their own waters.\(^\text{126}\) The first twelve ships of the new fleet were built at Oostende by the contractor for naval stores, Adriaan van der Walle.\(^\text{127}\)

In order to offset the cost of construction and equipment, the Spanish authorities granted a generous return on investment to the owners, builders and skippers of the new ships. Ransoms paid for captured Dutch mariners were appropriated by the privateers who were also entitled to sell the plunder they won at sea. The success of this new naval strategy contributed to the political, social and economic revival of Spain in the 1620s and 1630s, which became ‘an era of Spanish Vikings’.\(^\text{128}\) This is a most appropriate image for Mac Domhnaill when one considers his family’s early origins. More to the point, before sailing for Dunkirk to join up with the Ó Néill tercio in 1615, Mac Domhnaill had operated as a privateer in the Irish Sea.\(^\text{129}\) His contemporary Luke Wadding was conscious of the ‘great profit and wellbeing’ brought by Flemish privateers during

\(^{121}\) Phillips, Life of Captain Alonso de Contreras, 96
\(^{122}\) Hazard, Faith and patronage, 136.
\(^{123}\) Stradling, Armada of Flanders, 12–13.
\(^{125}\) Stradling, Armada of Flanders, 30–33, 132–3.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., 50.
\(^{127}\) Israel, Dutch republic, 95.
\(^{128}\) Lynch, Spain under the Habsburgs II, 78; Stradling, Armada of Flanders, 50.
\(^{129}\) Gillespie, Conspiracy, 34.
The Irish at Oostende

the Irish Confederate war of the 1640s. Gaining a share of plunder helped maintain morale in the ranks. Mac Domhnaill may, therefore, have offered such prospects to his infantry company in Spanish Flanders.

Naval contact between Ireland and Oostende was well-established at this time. In April 1626, for instance, the Archduchess Isabel advised Philip IV to send twenty warships directly from Spain to the Dutch herring fisheries before returning to Oostende from the north on a route which would have involved sailing around Ireland and Scotland. This fleet was to carry infantry reinforcements throughout its voyage. From 1626 to 1634, more than 1,800 vessels, most of them Dutch, were seized or sunk by Philip IV’s privateers based on Oostende and Dunkirk. During the same decade, the Dutch herring fleet suffered losses ‘equivalent to a whole year’s maintenance for the Army of Flanders’. To explain the *modus operandi*, two privateering ships would pursue an isolated merchant vessel which entered the Channel close upon the coast before overhauling it and taking the spoils back to port.

The Dutch retaliated with the most intense fighting of the war in 1629. As to the purpose of Irish troops at Oostende when the Book of O’Conor Don was written there two years later, the diversion of Spanish troops from the Netherlands to Mantua and the capture of ‘s Hertogenbosch by Frederik Hendrik of Orange, meant that the Ó Néill tercio and other reinforcements guarded against the risk of a surprise attack on Oostende. For the duration of the war, around 30,000 troops were taken up with garrison duty. In 1631, 524 Irish infantrymen from eight companies were stationed at Oostende, of which 64 were commanded by Captain Somhairle Mac Domhnaill. That year, Irish servicemen accounted for five per cent of total troop numbers in the Spanish Army of Flanders at a time when Oostende was guarded by 500–700 soldiers.

Time spent in fortified towns was far less challenging for soldiers than life on the battlefield. Garrison troops were expected to stand watch

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130 Hazard, ‘Luke Wadding’s petitions to the papacy’.
133 Parker, *Spain and the Netherlands*, 199.
134 Ibid.
138 Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano, *España, Flandes, y el Mar del Norte* 284–5. The office of governor of Oostende was intended only for Spanish officers.
at their sentry boxes, take delivery of letters at the main gates, and make rounds on the walls of the town. They could also receive training in drill and the use of firearms with the garrison while waiting to go on campaign. With plenty of time for leisure, soldiers often enjoyed drinking, gambling with cards and dice, and courting local women. Breweries flourished in the crowded ports of Flanders. Dunkirk, for instance, had nineteen.

Otherwise, exiled troops, unable to return home, reproduced social and cultural activities distinct to their own countries in the distant surroundings of Spanish Flanders. The sense of demoralisation caused by homesickness among soldiers was termed ‘nostalgia’ by early-modern medical writers. In 1627, Spinola stated that, as ‘each country has its own customs [it is] best to leave things alone when they work well enough.’ Soldiers with a trade to pursue could earn extra money. In the case of Aodh Ó Dochartaigh, this corresponded to his manuscript work for Captain Mac Domhnaill. Early 1631 was comparatively peaceful at Oostende. It was, for instance, quieter than Bohemia, from where Mac Domhnaill had made his way to Flanders. In the same year that the Book of the O’Conor Don was written, two Irish Franciscan friars Fr Patrick Fleming and Br Matthew Hoar were murdered after fleeing from armed conflict in Prague. At Oostende, in contrast, Diarmaid Ó Súilleabháin Mór found time to write to the guardian of St Anthony’s College about the suitability of certain Irish clergy for higher office and to appeal on behalf of ‘young students of Musker’ who sought admission at Leuven.

At the beginning of the year, a pact against the Dutch was signed between London and Madrid. In mid-September, the Marqués de Aytuna, governor-general of Spanish Flanders, launched a maritime offensive to sever connections between the northern Dutch provinces of Holland and Zeeland. Battle was joined on Zeeland’s inland waters

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141 Stradling, *Armada of Flanders*, 212.
145 Von Grimmelshausen, *Adventurous Simplicissimus*, Lib. IV, Cap. IX.
147 Ó Súilleabháin Mór to Fr Francis Matthews, Oostende, 5 Mar. 1631 (UCD-OFM, D.02, f. 280). Diarmaid’s cousin Fr Thomas FitzGerald also dwelt in Oostende according to this letter.
where Aytona’s forces were attacked by the Dutch who lay in wait. One and a half thousand sailors and soldiers were killed, a further four thousand from the Spanish side were taken prisoner and Aytona retreated with two ships.\footnote{Roos, 
Twee eeuwen varen en vechten; de Mesa Gallego, 
Marqués de Aytona, Discurso militar, 42.} Frederik Hendrik and his Dutch Army maintained their counter-offensive against the Spanish during the early 1630s.\footnote{Israel, 
Dutch republic, 167; Stradling, 
Spain’s struggle for Europe, 257–8.}

With the praesidium system of garrisons, captains defended strategically important towns that were prey to raiding parties in search of booty. It was also the duty of the garrison to patrol the hinterland where they sometimes had to rely on foraging for provisions. Building and supplying fortified settlements favoured defence over attack but lengthy periods of mundane routine in garrisons could lead troops to desert to the enemy.\footnote{White, ‘Spain’s early-modern soldiers’; Showalter and Astore, 
Soldiers’ lives through history, 56–7, 132–3.} Troops on garrison duty, such as Aodh Ó Dochartaigh, were required to have ‘corporate discipline, good order, careful drilling in certain collective movements and above all stoicism under fire’.\footnote{Parker, 
Army of Flanders, 12–13.}

In 1631, the captain-general in the Southern Netherlands told the king that local troops were more likely to desert or defect than those raised abroad.\footnote{Ibid., 30.} Irish soldiers’ commitment to the Spanish meant that they could be depended upon for garrison duty in the early 1630s when Colonel John O’Neill appealed on behalf of his officers for terms equivalent to those serving with Spanish and Italian units, stating that his tercio served Philip IV in Flanders ‘with great zeal and loyalty [...] and never gives grounds for suspicion, or for anxiety concerning any change of allegiance’.\footnote{Jennings, 
Wild Geese, 251–3.} The Spanish set great store by Irish soldiers who, they noted, were ‘the most attached to your Majesty’s service, and we must never neglect an occasion to bring them to the payroll’.\footnote{Stradling, 
Spain’s struggle for Europe, 260.}

The heavy losses endured militarily throughout that decade confirmed staunch Irish support for the Spanish cause and, more specifically, militant Catholicism. Strong kin-group ties between families contributed to the social cohesion observed in Irish military units. When the son of Lord Slane, Captain Patrick Fleming, died at Aire-sur-la-Lys in 1637,
he bequeathed ten pounds ‘to me foster brother James Duffe’ who was present at the writing of the will.156

The case of Melchior de Burgo offers further evidence of mutual support among the Irish at Oostende.157 Comradeship was an important part of life in Spanish Flanders during this period.158 After decorated service at Prague, Fleurus, Breda and elsewhere, Melchior de Burgo was ensign to his brother’s infantry company in Albert Hugh O’Donnell’s new tercio but, weighed down with wounds and advancing years he was unable to go on campaign.159 Instead, after twenty-six years service, he joined the infantry company of Captain Maurice FitzGerald at Oostende and was given a post at the garrison. FitzGerald also retired to the port-town and yielded his company to his son Gaspar who, in turn, assigned it to the de la Hoyd family and then the Butlers.160

Fixed garrisons represented up to twenty-five per cent of a fortified town’s population, and Oostende’s consisted of 166 soldiers in 1628.161 Large troop numbers in any locality were, however, avoided to reduce the spread of infection, especially during the winter months.162 Sickness and desertion could account for as much as forty per cent of men at arms.163 Infantry companies were, therefore, rotated through the garrison towns of Flanders which were often used as stopping-off points on the march. This helped to deal with troop shortages and the threat of disease. Soldiers had to contend with smallpox, scurvy, tuberculosis, typhus and malaria. Poor sanitation on the campaign trail also led to dysentery, but the most common of all diseases in the ranks was syphilis.164 Despite these problems, only the Spanish offered proper medical care to their soldiers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Philip II of Spain provided a military hospital at Mechelen which, by the late

158 Parker, Army of Flanders, 177.
159 O’Donnell to Philip IV, Diest, 7 May 1635 (UCD-OFM, J.02/2).
160 FitzGerald to Philip IV, Oostende, 18 Dec. 1640 (UCD-OFM, J.02/2/6): ‘Don Melchor de Burgo Alférez reformado que hassido de la compañia del Capitan Don Juan de Burgo. Servir a su Magestad por espacio de veynte y seis años […] vino a mi compañia siendo yo capitán en esta guarnición de Ostende hasta que hice dexación de mi compañia en mi hijo el Capitan Gaspar Geraldin y despues su se dio en ella el Capitan de la Hoyd y despues su se dio el Capitan Don Guillermo Butler’.
161 Israel, Dutch republic, 164; Zwitzer, ‘The Eighty Years War’, 52; J. A. de Moor, ‘Experience and experiment’, 31.
162 Christopher Storrs, ‘Health, sickness and medical services’.
164 Idem, Army of Flanders, 169.
1630s, had more than 300 beds. Alms were deducted from each soldier’s monthly income to defray the cost of the hospital where treatment was provided free of charge when they fell sick or wounded.

Although archaeological remains reveal that women accompanied the besieging forces at Oostende, the Spanish authorities discouraged women from following the Army of Flanders. To quote the German historian Fritz Redlich, ‘we find everywhere a policy of restricting the soldier’s copulations’. When the Spanish council of state debated the transfer of Irish exiles from Galicia to Flanders in 1610, Juan Fernández de Velasco, the Constable of Castile, advised that women, children, the old and infirm should not accompany Irish troops. In 1632 Philip IV declared that ‘only one soldier in every six could marry’, although implementing this directive proved unfeasible. Of twenty-nine Irish soldiers maintained on salaries in the early 1600s, for instance, twelve were married. A total of 1,986 ducados was shared among them.

The names of those recorded in extant registers for marriages, baptisms and deaths from garrison churches in the Low Countries ‘were often huus castri filia [or] filius’ that is ‘a child of this army’. According to a contemporary letter now preserved at University College Dublin, prominent Irish examples include the sons of the Oostende veteran Captain Maurice FitzGerald. Regrettably, the municipal archives at Oostende were destroyed by bombardments during World War II, although parish records from other parts of the Southern Netherlands clearly indicate the existence of Irish military communities in the region. Those from the parishes of Saint Michel et Gudule and Saint Catherine in Brussels date from the 1560s and 1580s respectively.

165Ibid., 167; Parker, The military revolution, 73; Goodman, Power and penury, 243–4; Corvisier et al., Dictionary of military history, 73.
166Parker, Army of Flanders, xxv.
167Anna Simoni, Ostend story, Chapter 9; see also Pieters et al., ‘De materiële’.
169Spanish council of state to Philip III, Madrid, 18 July 1610 (AGS, Estado, Inglaterra, legajo 2513): ‘Pareçe al Condestable de Castilla muy combeniente […] que no tienen hijos ni mugeres ni estan viejos ni impedidos se vayan a Flandes’.
170Parker, Army of Flanders, 150.
171Report of Fláithrí Ó Maolchonaire to Philip III concerning the Irish in Spain, Valladolid, 18 November 1604 (Archivo Histórico de Loyola, Lerma, 27): ‘Síguen agora los que llama la lista aventajados de ellos doce casados […] Se repartieron entre ellos 1,986 ducados.’
173Maurice FitzGerald to Philip IV, Oostende, 18 December 1640 (UCD-OFM, J.02/2/6): ‘hiçe dexaçion de mi compañia en mi hijo el Capitan Gaspar Geraldin’.
while similar data is available from Saint Giles and Notre Dame in Brugge for the early 1600s. The Irish military community integrated very well in their new surroundings and some intermarried with the local Flemish and Walloon populations.

As each of the main armies moved from one battle and siege to another, a long train of civilian followers moved with it. Marriages between Irish soldiers and Irish women helped to maintain ties of kinship among those exiled abroad. Pay arrears were a chronic problem for soldiers throughout the wars in the Low Countries and frequently gave rise to mutiny in the ranks. In order to survive many soldiers turned to begging, especially after disbandment. As a consequence, soldiers’ wives often supplemented their income by fulfilling the role of midwife or wet-nurse, while others washed and repaired clothes, or sold tobacco and brandy to the troops.

The period of recruitment in Ireland, which had begun nearly two decades earlier, continued until the outbreak of the Irish Confederate war, which prompted many Irish soldiers to return home, disrupting the activities of military contractors mobilising for the armies of France and Spain. Facing the North Sea, Oostende remained an important point of arrival and departure for the Irish military. The county of Flanders, meanwhile, underwent a period of industrial recovery. From the 1640s onwards a number of Irish families, such as the Carews and FitzGeralds, settled in Oostende maintaining economic contact between Ireland and the Flemish coastal region. These trade links were sufficiently strong to encourage Dutch-speaking merchants to locate themselves in Waterford.

174 Henry, ‘“Wild Geese” in Spanish Flanders’.
176 Showalter and Astore, Soldiers’ lives through history, 123–5.
177 Henry, ‘Women wild geese’.
178 Parker, Army of Flanders, 191.
179 Lyons, ‘Vagabonds’, ‘Mendiants’, “Gueux”’.
180 Grimmelshausen, Adventurous Simplicissimus Lib. IV, Cap. IX.
181 Kerney Walsh, ‘Wild Goose tradition’, 6–8. During the Confederate war of the 1640s, Irish soldiers used many of the lessons they had learned in Spanish Flanders: see Parker and Loeber, ‘The military revolution’.
182 Burtchaell and Rigg, HMC Report on Franciscan Mss., 151, 159; Pérez Tostado, Irish influence at the court of Spain, 147.
183 Parker, Dutch revolt, 256; Sella, European industries, 6. A peak of almost 61,000 serge-cloths produced at Hondschoote were exported in 1630, almost as many as the 1550s, most of them from Dunkirk and Oostende to the ports of Spain.
184 Parmentier, ‘The Ray dynasty’.
To conclude then: in an era when warfare was inseparable from politics and ‘the arts of war’ were a recognised part of a nobleman’s breeding, soldiers such as Somhairle Mac Domhnaill, Maurice and Edward FitzGerald, Aodh Ó Dochartaigh and Melchior de Burgo helped win and defend the New Troy of Oostende for Spain. By this means, they set the early-modern precedent for an Irish presence in a port town where their experience of life encapsulated that of many Irish exiles during the early seventeenth century.  

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### Irish military units in Spanish service, 1587–1692:

#### Order of Command

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<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Col. Stanley’s Irish Regiment</td>
<td>1587–1605</td>
<td>• Formed 28 January 1587 by Sir William Stanley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disbanded 1605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Fitzgerald’s Irish Company</td>
<td>1600–1602</td>
<td>• Formed in 1600 by Edward Fitzgerald, who had served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>as a captain in Stanley’s regiment since 1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conde de Tiron’s Tercio, later known as</td>
<td>1605–81</td>
<td>• Raised 22 January 1605 by Henry O’Neill, III Conde de Tiron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Tercio Viejo de Irlandeses’</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1610, John O’Neill, IV Conde de Tiron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1638, transferred to serve in the Iberian Peninsula</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1641, Eóghan Ruadh Ó Néill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1660, Art O’Neill</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1663, Hugh O’Neill, VII Conde de Tiron</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1673, Brian Roe O’Neill, VIII Conde de Tiron</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disbanded, Catalonia, December 1681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conde de Tirconell’s Irish Tercio</td>
<td>1624–41</td>
<td>• Raised 20 September 1624 by Albert Hugh O’Donnell, Conde de Tirconell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disbanded, Catalonia, 1641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. Preston’s Irish Tercio</td>
<td>1634–42</td>
<td>• Raised 1634 by Thomas Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disbanded 1642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eóghan Ruadh Ó Neill’s Irish Tercio</td>
<td>1634–47</td>
<td>• Raised 12 December 1634 by Eóghan Ruadh Ó Neill</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 27 July 1642, Patrick O’Donnell</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Incorporated into Murphy’s Tercio, 25 October 1647</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Based on data drawn from Jennings, *Wild Geese*.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tercio</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Murphy’s Irish Tercio  | 1647–92 | • Raised February 1647 by John Murphy  
|                        |        | • 1670, Niall Taafe  
|                        |        | • 1677, Denis O’Byrne  
|                        |        | • 25 January 1685, Owen O’Neill, IX Conde de Tiron  
|                        |        | • 1689, Bernard Fitzpatrick  
|                        |        | • Disbanded 1692  
| Netterwill’s Irish Tercio | 1651   | Raised 1651 by Francis Netterwill before its incorporation into Murphy’s Tercio  
| O’Reilly’s Irish Tercio | 1656–60| • Raised 31 July 1656, Philip McHugh O’Reilly  
|                        |        | • Disbanded, Dixmude, Flanders, 7 March 1660  