

## 5. The O'Doherty Castles

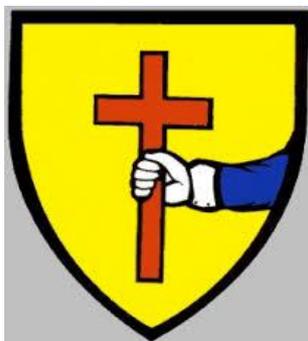


### Over Centuries

The tribes of Cenél Conaill and Cenél Eoghain developed and grew over the centuries. They increased their populations, farmed their animals, harvested their crops, fished their waters, and built their family-based communities. They also defended their territories against 'outsiders' as well as their fighting Clan cousins. They formed alliances and used inter-marriage as a powerful form of tribal unity. Their everyday living with wars and alliances seems consistent with other tribal behaviour around the world.

### Clan Surnames

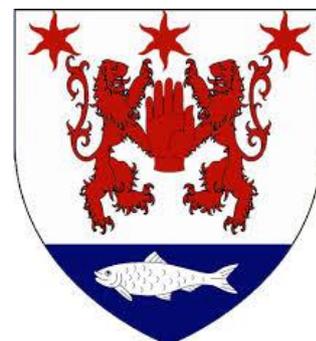
At about 1000 AD the concept of Clan surnames and coats of arms began to identify clans. The people of Tír Conaill and Tír Eoghain aligned themselves with three significant Clan surnames - the O'Donnells, the O'Neills, and on Inishowen the O'Dohertys.



*O'Donnell*



*O'Doherty*



*O'Neill*

The O'Dohertys are named after an ancestor Dochartaigh. The meaning of the name O'Dochartaigh is 'hurtful' and the motto of the family name is *Ár nDutcas* meaning Our Heritage. Our crest, or coat of arms, is a leaping red stag on a white background with three white stars on a green background.

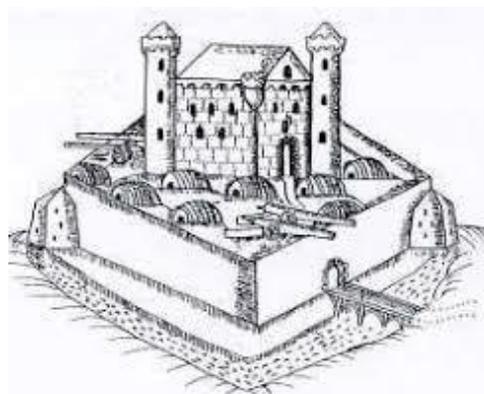


These Ulster surnames became the heritage of significant Clan families with powerful chiefs. The chiefs of the O'Doherty Clan became known as the Lords of Inishowen.

### **The Castles**

The Inishowen Lords needed to display their power through building defensive strongholds. Building had evolved from timber henges to stonewalled castles, and some of the early castles were built by the Norman invaders. Through the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the building of stone castles was an important development on Inishowen. Today they still echo the medieval history of the O'Doherty Clan.

When Inishowen castles were being built the 'Island of Owen' was still an island and waterways were the main highways of transport. Therefore most of the castles were built on the shores of Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle.



***Burt Castle***

## **Elagh Castle**

Elagh castle was possibly the oldest and most historical of our clan sites although it is now reduced to a remnant stone wall. Elagh was closely connected to the ancient Grianán of Aileach and was once the seat of power of the O'Dochartaigh Clan.



***Elagh Castle***

## **Burt Castle**

The silhouette ruins of Burt Castle (1560) overlook Lough Swilly in the shadow of the Grianán of Aileach.



***Burt Castle***

## **Inch Castle**

The ruined stairwell and tower of Inch Castle (1430) sits above the southern shore of Inch Island in Lough Swilly.



*Inch Castle*

## **O'Doherty Keep**

The O'Doherty Keep (1600) is at the mouth of the Crana river flowing into Lough Swilly. It is part of a current restoration programme.



*O'Doherty Keep*

### **Carrickabraghy Castle**

The recently restored remnants of Carrickabraghy Castle (1600) stand on a rocky shore outcrop on Doagh Island.



***Carrickabraghy Castle***

### **Dunowen Castle**

The ruin of Dunowen Castle is situated on north Culduff Bay.



***Dunowen Castle***

## **Green Castle**

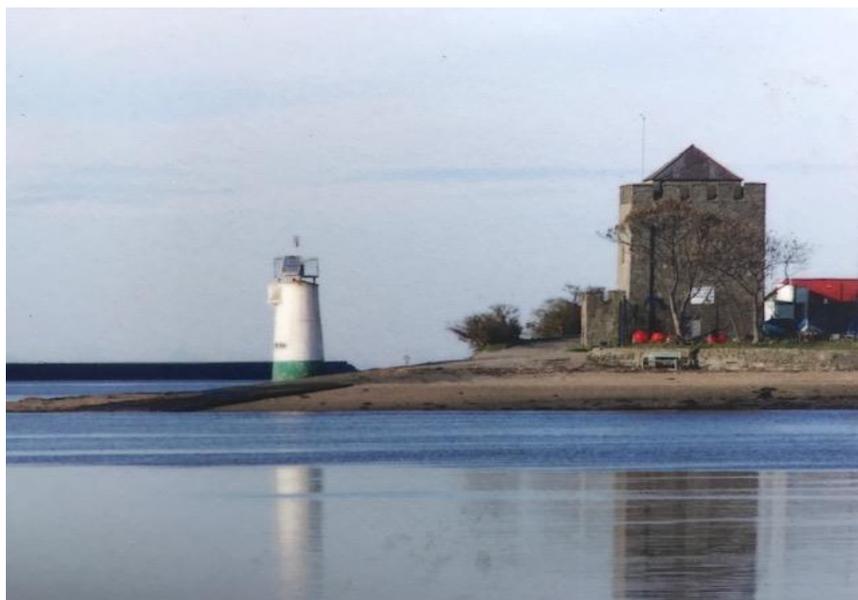
The ivy covered Norman ruins of Northburg or Green Castle (1305) are overlooking the head waters of Lough Foyle.



***Green Castle***

## **Culmore Fort**

Culmore Fort (1555) overlooks the entrance of the river Foyle protecting the waterway of the City of Derry.



***Culmore Fort***

## Doherty Tower

Doherty Tower (1990) was built as a museum and was part of the modern rebuilding of the walled City of Derry.



*Doherty Tower*

## Conclusion

Most of these castle sites can be visited today. Those on private land can be viewed from the road. All of these Inishowen castles are significant in the O'Doherty history, sometimes with a traumatic impact on the ancestors of my Clan.

Some of the castles are built on the sites of much older history.

Today they are a much loved and appreciated part of the O'Doherty Clan story. My family have spent many memorable hours exploring these ruins.

