

The Scribes: their lives and outputs

3. Peattair (b. 1801) and Pól (1801-66)

Peattair and Pól began transcribing with their father at sixteen, in 1817 when they assisted him in his work on the Book of Lismore for Bishop Murphy.

Peattair taught at various periods of his life and also worked as a farm labourer. He eventually took charge of the family holding at Knockboy. Details of Peattair's life are scarce and although he transcribed for both Bishop Murphy and James Roche, the banker, he rarely signed his work. He transcribed devotional material for Rev. Uilliam Ó Murchadha and prose tales for Uilliam Ó Duinnín and Aindrias Ó Súilleabháin, as well as annals for Richard B. Tooker, for whom his father had undertaken commissions. He also worked for Thomas Hewitt of Cork, John Windele, Rev. Matthew Horgan and Rev. Maurice Kennifick, and for William Smith O'Brien. His brother Pól sold some of his work to the collector, Sir Thomas Phillipps. It is known that Peattair composed at least two poems, one of which survives, in his father's hand in RIA MS 23 E 16.

Peattair was fiercely committed to the Irish language and conscious of the role of the scribe in ensuring its preservation via scribal transmission of the old texts.

Pól appears to have worked solely as a scribe and teacher. He travelled to various locations in Co. Cork as a teacher but he also ventured to Dublin, where he brought many of Mícheál Óg's own manuscripts to Dublin to sell and sold them also to Sir Thomas Phillipps. This was the period of famine in Ireland and the Ó Longáin family were not immune to the hardship endured by so many.

In Cork, Pól completed commissions for Bishop Murphy and for James Roche. He also worked for Uilliam Ó Duinnín, Heard, Rev. George E. Cotter, Richard B. Tooker and Richard R. Madden, biographer of the United Irishmen, inter al. Windele and Hewitt both owned manuscripts compiled by Pól for his own use

and amusement. Both he and Seosamh transcribed for Sir Thomas Phillipps and for Rev. E.G. Hudson.

Pól settled in Dublin in the 1840s, becoming a scribe for the Academy where he worked on the second volume of the three-volume, 'Index to initial lines of manuscript catalogues in the RIA' (RIA MSS 67 F 1-3). His work at the Academy which was fast building up manuscript collections as well as promoting publication and research on Irish texts, would have brought a measure of economic security to Pól who died in 1866.