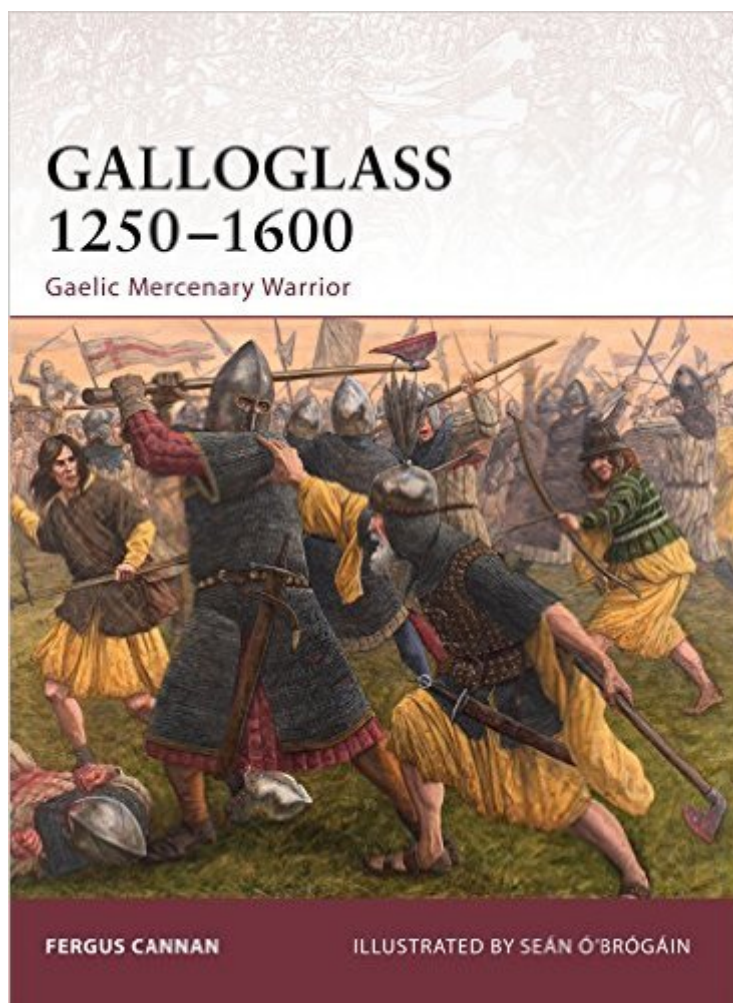


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# Galloglass 1250–1600: Gaelic Mercenary Warrior



## Synopsis

Galloglass, from the Gaelic *gall* 'foreign' and *glach* 'warrior' meaning 'foreign warriors' from the Hebrides, were fearsome axe-wielding mercenaries from the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland who fought in the retinues of Irish magnates from the mid-13th century until the early 17th century. This work, written by Gaelic historian Fergus Cannan, looks at the clan and family structures of the galloglass, their performance in battle, their weapons and armour, and way of life in time of peace and war. The unique fighting skills and tactics of the galloglass are also examined in this pioneering study, as well as how galloglass were organized on the battlefield, and their command structures and systems of rank.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've always been a fan of Osprey. These little synopses are perfect for anyone who is trying to read about a specific subject of history. So far I've collected about a dozen, all of which have a special place in my collection. However, one problem with these is that they tend to be very dry, dull and only for the die-hard history buff. Galloglass is hands down the most thorough and concise history of any of the Osprey books so far and an absolute joy to read. These warriors are one of the most mysterious and strange parts of medieval and renaissance Gaelic history, despite being an ever present site in Ireland in this time period. Scottish mercenaries are nothing new in history and their clan-like social attitudes and harsh conditions at home made them perfect choices for most European armies. Anyone interested in Gaelic history needs to add this to their collection. There is

not a lot of information on Galloglasses and I can't imagine a better book on the subject anytime soon, it's worth the price just for the artwork in my opinion as well.

I had been anticipating the release of this book for several months and after reading it can say that I was not disappointed. The author used every known source on Gallowglass history, many of which I had never seen, even after studying this topic for a number of years. Every possible contemporary illustration is also included with the book. Cannan also writes in a lively manner that holds the readers interest. The illustrations by Sean O'Brogain are the most accurate and authentic illustrations done in recent years. I can't recommend this book highly enough.

After reading this brilliant account of the Galloglass by Fergus Cannan I can only imagine how similar, in so many ways, they were to the Gaesatai of the ancient world. The qualities and flaws of both warrior traditions are practically the same. Unbelievable valour and courage, hospitality, love of drink, boasting, power and gold...also very violent, with an "odium humanitatis" reflected in the frequent refusal of surrenders and gross abuse of civilians. Brilliant the story of an Irish priest making a collection for St Patrick, because this Saint tried to allow a Galloglass in Heaven and St Peter smacked him in the Head for that. Originally from Scotland, the Galloglasses became the quintessential Elite heavy footman from Ireland, and probably the most readily identifiable Irish Gaelic warrior. Tall, strong, big, well armoured, armed with their typical huge battle axe (among other weapons) and with a "esprit de corps" that formatted the new recruits from Irish boys into Celtic warriors, no lord in Ireland (including English and Anglo-Irish) could hope to maintain power without those mercenaries like the MacDougall, MacRories, MacSweenees among so many other Galloglass clans. In this book you will find why the Galloglasses impressed so much their contemporaries being depicted in painting, playwrights and history. Survivors of an ancient tradition, only surpassed by the advent of new tactics like the Pike and shot. You will also find maps with the distribution of the clans in Ireland and their provenance from Scotland. There are also great pictures of castles and artifacts. The color plates from Seán Ó Brágháin are very good, detailed and well imagined.

There is not a great deal of literature out in the stream on the Galloglass as it is. Fergus Cannan has alleviated this situation with this Osprey title. I learned some years back that some of Osprey's titles can be a little dodgy, some are fantastic, most are pretty good, and a few are so rife with errors that one wonders if the author studied his subject at all before putting ink to paper. This is not the case

with Mr Cannan's work. I would heartily recommend this Osprey title to anyone who is interested in the history of this group of warriors that played such an important role in Irish military history. Combined with the great artwork of Sean O'Brogain one will come away with a good sound basis from which to explore this subject further. Both text and artwork are superior in this reviewer's opinion. I've been involved in military history both as a vocation and avocation for well over thirty years, and I've seen Osprey's titles grow over that time. This one is definitely one of their better titles. Money spent on this book for your reference bookshelf is money well spent.

Fergus Cannan's is not only an excellent summary of modern scholarship on the "samurai" of medieval Ireland, it is also well-written to the point of being a genuinely pleasurable read. Cannan has the raw talent to write novels if he ever gets the urge. Beyond his enjoyable style, Cannan organized the material in a logical and intuitive flow which I appreciate. The book itself is as beautifully-illustrated as the majority of Osprey releases are. If it hasn't come through yet, I highly recommend this title to anyone with an interest in Celtic, medieval, or Renaissance history.

I'm interested in Swordsmen and Mercenaries of the old world, so I couldn't resist the brutal cover. Hired Blades turned into bodyguards with a rich tradition of ruling the battlefield. After reading this book I'm considering purchasing a Gallowglass Axe. Even the illustrations are informative.

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