



# Did Armada survivor De Cuellar go to Ahamlish?

## The Armada at Streedagh: Ahamlish, not Staad

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*Joe McGowan's piece on de Cuellar's account of the Armada and Streedagh, Sligo Champion July 28th, 2015, prompted me to check out Robert Crawford, the translator of de Cuellar. Two positive results emerged.*

[1] According to Joe McGowan the inclusion of Staad Abbey as part of the de Cuellar story begins in 1896 with Crawford's translation for Hugh Allingham, 1845-1922, of de Cuellar's account from 1588.

Crawford, 1831-1914, is described in the publication as being Prof. of Engineering at TCD from 1882 to 1887. Significantly he had been a railway engineer for thirty years in Spanish South America publishing his experiences in three books. After such time in South America he would have been sufficiently fluent in Spanish to competently translate de Cuellar's account in 1896. He had retired home to Co. Donegal in 1892.

[2] Crawford and Allingham would know the landscape of north Sligo, both being from Ballyshannon, not far from Streedagh. Passing along the road they would see Ahamlish Protestant church, a church built in 1811 and in use in their time. There was no visible evidence for it incorporating a church that would have existed in 1588.

Therefore, to match the 1588 date, they would have picked the adjacent medieval Staad Abbey. Crawford would have used the 1836 OS 6" map. This shows Ahamlish as a church in use and *Staad Abbey* as a ruin.



I have believed independently of the current debate that Ahamlish Protestant church replaced an earlier Medieval church – Richard Bartlett's 1602-1603 map of the Sligo coastline shows a church at the correct location for Ahamlish. It seems then that it was from the 'iron gratings' of Ahamlish medieval church, not Staad, that twelve unfortunate Spaniards were hung, a church building being used as a further act of humiliation for the Spanish Catholics.