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# I.T.A. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL SURVEY

## NATURAL FEATURES, ANTIQUITIES, HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS, ETC.

BARONY OF Burrishoole

~~Town or~~ VILLAGE Aghagower PARISH Aghagower COUNTY Mayo S.W.

### TOPOGRAPHY

*Brief description of outstanding scenic views in the district, natural attractions, or unusual*

*topographical features.*

~~The parish of Aghagower~~ is a narrow strip, over twenty miles in length extending from within a couple of miles of Westport town southwards to the mouth of the Erriff River at Killary Harbour. The northern portion of the parish is featured by many low hills and numerous small, gleaming lakes. The woods of the now dismembered Mountbrown Estate and at Brackloon add welcome splashes of colour and the majestic Reek, Croagh Patrick, is seldom obscured from the view.

Aille Caves, hidden in a secluded, lonely spot about a quarter of a mile to the right of the road to Ballinrobe and about five miles from Westport, are regarded with interest by historian and sightseer. St. Patrick is said to have celebrated Mass here and a large white rock is pointed out as a Mass Stone of the Penal Days. The Aille River enters the caves and

### GEOLOGY

*Brief notes on unusual geological features, such as caves, eskers, etc.* Cont'd page 2.

~~Aille Caves, five miles from Westport, are very frequently visited by visitors to the district. There are two large caverns the mouths of which are now almost blocked up by accumulated silt and large stones. The caves are situated in a secluded spot about a quarter of a mile off the main Ballinrobe road; to the right coming from Westport, a rough, narrow passage leads part of the way to the caves. In this lonely, wild looking spot, St. Patrick is believed to have celebrated Mass and a large stone to the southwest, near the face of the cliff is believed to have been used as a Mass stone in the Penal Days.~~

The caves are on the lands of Mr J. King, Westport. *See Page 2/3*

### MANSIONS, CASTLES AND ESTATES

OF IMPOSING CHARACTER

*Location and brief description. Owner. Past associations. Libraries or art collections?  
Gardens? Open to visitors? Admission charge?*

~~Note: the Mountbrown Estate, near Aghagower has been taken over and divided by the Land Commission, the mansion having been demolished.~~

TOPOGRAPHY - cont'd.

flows underground, reappearing a few miles further north. In flood seasons, when the cavern mouths are choked with silt and rising water, the river overflows its banks causing great havoc to surrounding lands which are pitted and scarred from the actions of the underground river and floods.

The tiny village of Aghagower with its ruined Abbey and Round Tower, presents a charming, old-world picture.

Exciting, in its own peculiar way, is the wild, beautiful scenery of the southern half of the parish which from Carrowkennedy, on the Westport-Leenaun road, southwards, possesses many of the characteristics of Connemara; indeed this district is locally referred to as Connemara\*.

From Shrahlea Bridge the road winds in beautiful harmony with the Erriff River. All the way, magnificent, flanking mountain ranges dominate the scene, the Sheeffry Hills to the right and on the left, the even more imposing, bolder mountains of the Partry Range. Reaching the little hamlet of Aasleagh, Killary Harbour comes into view and with it, the grandest sight of precipitous mountain slopes dropping sheer to the water's edge. Leenaun is less than three miles further on.

Aghagower is five miles from Westport and eleven miles from Castlebar.

forming the northern tip of

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## Geology. Continued overleaf.

A great portion of this territory is mountainous and

there are large tracts of bog.

The existence of lead in the mountains prompted the opening ~~making~~ of mines over a Century ago but workings have long been discontinued. A very heavy quality slate was quarried here also.

Five miles from Westport, on the Ballinobee road, Aille Caves are about a quarter mile to the right of the road and <sup>are</sup> approached by means of a narrow passage; a guide should be procured since the location of the caves is such that much time may <sup>otherwise</sup> be spent in searching for them. A steep slope leads downwardly to the two large caverns, about 100 yards apart but in flood season the place is inaccessible.

The Aille River flows under a magnificent calcareous arch and continues underground, to re-appear a few miles northward.

After heavy rains, the mouths of the caverns, already partly choked by silt and fallen boulders, fail to take the heavy flood and so the water ~~may~~ <sup>usually</sup> rises to a height of fifty feet or more at the cliff-face