

(Mayo NJ)

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FORM A.

I. T. A. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL SURVEY

NATURAL FEATURES, ANTIQUITIES,
HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS, ETC.BARONY OF Tirawley.TOWN OR VILLAGE ----- PARISH Backs. COUNTY Mayo (North).

TOPOGRAPHY

Brief description of outstanding scenic views in the district, natural attractions, or unusual topographical features.

The parish of Backs extends from about a mile outside Ballina, southwards for nearly thirteen miles and is bounded, on the east by the River Moy and on the west and south by Lough Conn and Lough Cullin, the lakes forming a considerable portion of the parish territory.

This district is worthy of particular mention, not only on the merits of the lakes or River Moy, which, combined or singly, may be described as an "anglers paradise", but also because of the natural beauty and charm of the lake and mountain scenery, calculated to excite the admiration and wonder of the visitor.

Branching off the Ballina/Castlebar road about a mile from Ballina a rough road leads through the bogland and via Garracloone, brings us out near the north eastern shore of Lough Conn, about five miles from

GEOLOGY

(Continued)

Brief notes on unusual geological features, such as caves, eskers, etc.

Backs district is generally of limestone formation but there are numerous hills and ridges of sandstone. Huge rocks and boulders are found in all parts and there are vast tracts of bog. Mica, in light and dark granite, is found in immense quantities at Pontoon and on the borders of both lakes.

~~There are no caves or other unusual features.~~

MANSIONS, CASTLES AND ESTATES

OF IMPOSING CHARACTER

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

Mount Falcon, the handsome residence of Major R.B. Aldridge, is four miles from Ballina on the Foxford road. Built in 1876 by the Knox family and at great cost, the mansion is of remarkable and elaborate design, the solid front door being of oak and in Tudor style and it is said that the white limestone slabs of doors and windows were brought from Wicklow quarries.

The estate was purchased a few years ago by Major Aldridge who later established a guest house there but this was discontinued on the outbreak of war. The proprietor's family is now in occupation for a month or two but for the remaining period and each year, the house, with fishing, shooting etc is offered for letting.

The larger part of the once extensive demesne has been acquired and distributed by the Irish Land Commission and now the demesne comprises less than fifty acres. Of this fifty acres, twenty two acres are devoted to forest tree and shrub nurseries and fruit farming. The one large glass house is used exclusively for tomato growing.

Permission to view the nurseries and fruit garden will be granted on application to Mr Henry, manager.

(Continued)

Form A. (2).

TOPOGRAPHY - Continued.

the town.

is the site

(nothing remains of the town and its history is not known)

Here are the ruins of the ancient Castle Kelly, and from the mound on which the old castle was built, a strikingly picturesque view is obtained. The waters of the lake break gently at the very base of the ruin and the huge expanse of water, dotted with pretty and often wooded islands, is most effectively set off by the mountain background, rugged Nephin Mountain (2,646 feet) towering over all and easing it's rock-strewn slopes almost to the fringe of the lake on the western shore. The lake is about nine miles in length and in some parts, four miles in breadth.

Back on the road again, we may follow the lake shore southwards to Clohans (2 miles) and here is a secluded little bay where the old established Lough Conn Hotel is very appropriately situated. Boats with gillies, for fishing or pleasure trips, may be engaged here or almost anywhere on the banks of the lakes.

Both the islands, Annaghmore and Annaghroe (on which latter one family resides) as well as Innislee, on which at one time it is said locally that King Dathi's wife lived, are quite close at hand and may be explored from Clohans.

About two miles further along the road are Knockmore village and bay and the whitewashed cottages of historic Glass Island (Illaun-aglashy) may be clearly seen from the bay.

At Knockmore we re-join the good road which from there, skirts the shore of the lake and presents many amazingly beautiful and romantic scenes. A few miles further on we meet the Pontoon, single arch bridge at which the two lakes meet.

Pontoon, with it's wealth of colour and beauty, defies flattering description; the delightful little coves and sandy beaches, the massive rocks and boulders carelessly scattered and the result of age old glacial action, the overwhelming mountains and many beautiful trees, all combine in producing an effect as enchanting as it is rare. There are two cosy, well regulated hotels at Pontoon, one being in the parish of Backs and situated as they are between the two lakes, they are ideal centres from which to explore and enjoy the scenery and sport of the lakes.

Returning about a mile to the crossroads, we find a good road branching off to the right. This road affords many enthralling views of Lough Cullin and at the end of three miles we arrive at Foxford. From the bridge on the Moy we can see on the opposite bank, the Providence Woolen Mills, seemingly guarded by the steep Ox Mountains in the immediate background.

Turning off to the north here without entering the town, our road runs almost parallel with the river and we are afforded many interesting views of mountain, wood, river and bog. Roughly half way to Ballina we pass the attractive Coolcronan Demesne (home of Mr Perry Knox Gore) on the right and less than five miles more of first class road ends in Ballina.

The total mileage of the journey described is little more than twenty five miles. Castlebar and Ballina are each about eleven miles from Pontoon.

MANSIONS & ESTATES.

On the Foxford road and about two miles past Mount Falcon, Coolcronan demesne lies on the left bank of the River Moy. This pretty house, which I have heard compared to a Swiss Chalet, was erected in 1860 by the Knox Gores; it's present owner, Mr E.M. Perry Knox Gore now lives in England. The house is very pleasantly situated amid picturesque surroundings and the river runs within a few yards of the rere of the house.

As in the case of Mount Falcon and other demesnes, much of the original territory has been acquired by the Land Commission. This house also, with shooting and almost two miles of fishing on the Moy, may be rented each year or for a shorter period. Adjoining the house is a one acre walled garden in which fruit, mainly apples, is grown. The house contains ten bedrooms, a mixed library of 2,000 books and a billiard table.

Visitors will not be admitted, unless perhaps those interested in renting the house. The steward is Mr Moylett.