

## ANTIQUITIES

*Abbeys, Castles, Fortresses, Round Towers, Early Churches, Sculptured Crosses, Stone Circles, Ogham Stones, Cairns, Souterrams, Pillar Stones, Cromlechs, Forts, Rathes, Moats, Tumuli or ancient monuments of any kind. Exact location of each with short description, noting condition, etc. Relate local legend or tradition associated with building or object. State if in charge of Office of Public Works. Right of way to public? Admission charge (if any). Name and address of caretaker, or where key is kept.*

### THE CONVENT OF MOYNE (MOYNE ABBEY).

This wonderful ruin stands on the left bank of the River Moy, about 2 miles from Killala, and may be reached by any of several roads which branch off to the right from the main road, travelling from Ballina to Killala. From Killala, take the second road to the left and on reaching the lands in which the ruin is located, there is a gate and a right of way down to the Abbey. The ruin is in the care of the Office of Public Works and the caretaker, Mr John McLoughlin, lives in the farmhouse near the entrance gate. The ruin is in very good condition, although obviously in need of more care and attention than ~~that which~~ it has received.

A great deal has been written of Moyne and the following is a brief summary of the history of the convent.

Tomas Og De Burgo (otherwise known as MacWilliam Iochtair) a man of many rich possessions in the district, granted a piece of land for the construction of the convent, at the request of Father Nehemias O'Donoghoe, first provincial-vicar in Ireland of the Observantine Order of St. Francis. The site was most suitably chosen by the provincial and we are told how 'MacWilliam, accompanied by his subordinate chieftains, warriors, bards and brehons, set about immediately to lay the first stone of the new church and monastery'. That was in the year 1460 and in 1462, the church was consecrated by Donatus O'Connor, Dominican Bishop of Killala.

The completed work has been described as follows :-

"The exquisite beauty of the architecture of both church and monastery, was the theme of every tongue; and the rich display of ornamentation in the tracery of the windows, and the completed pillars of the cloister, even to this day, attest that the men who executed the work were thoroughly skilled in their craft, and enthusiastic cultivators of art in every department. The entire edifice, even to the very altars, was constructed of colite, or that stone so like marble which is composed of petrified sea-shells; and what is no less remarkable, the mortar used in the building was made of burnt shells, which, as the fact proves, is the most binding description of cement that can be found."

Moyne became the provincial school of the order and two years after the consecration, in 1464, a Provincial Chapter was held there; other Chapters were held at Moyne in 1498, 1512, 1541 and 1550. The entire community, including priests, professors, students and lay-brothers, usually numbered around fifty.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the community at Moyne suffered greatly at the hands of the English soldiers and it is related how a priest, captured and charged with knowledge of a plot against Elizabeth, protested his innocence but was ordered to be hanged. The priest craved permission to confess his sins to a friar and when this was granted, the priest was executed and the friar exhorted by every means to reveal the secrets of the confessional. The friar, John O'Dowd, nobly refused and was put to death.

The English soldiery had garrisoned the convent at that time. In the following year, the community were advised of another impending raid by a party of marauding soldiers and so the inhabitants, with one exception, put out to sea in their boats in order to escape. After some time, they returned to find the aged lay-brother, Felix O'Hara, lying dead in a pool of blood on the steps of the high altar; the church had been plundered by the soldiers.

Following years of persecution at the hands of the English, the convent was confiscated and granted in 1595, to Edmond Barrett at an annual rent of five shillings. It was in possession of an English widow in 1606 and to her, one Thomas de Burgh paid an annual rent for the church and a few cells occupied by half a dozen friars. The convent passed into the hands of Sir William Tentor in 1630, from him to Richard Boyle, First Earl of Cork and thence to the Lindsays who blew off the roof and sold the bells which had been presented by the Queen of Spain. Having been owned by several families since then, the lands have recently been purchased by Mr Goldrick,

Continued - Page 3.

(Plain sheets of foolscap paper to be used, if necessary, for recording additional information).

*Had been*MANSIONS ETC. Cont'd.

Mr Knox informed me that the original Palmerstown Manor was destroyed by fire when the French forces passed by here after their landing at Kilcummin in 1798 and that the present building ~~was~~ erected in the sixteenth century and used as a coach house and stable until after the burning, when it was converted into a dwellinghouse.

The doorways and windows of the house are of cut stone in the early style. Nearby are the vestiges of what would appear to have been a very large mansion. In 1798, Palmerstown Manor was owned by a Mr Palmer.

Near the front door, lie the barrels of two cannon guns, said to be relics of the French invading army, ~~and which were salvaged from the river bed. I have heard this belief contested however and the assertion made that at least one of the cannon was of English origin. Which ever contention may be true, it seems more than likely that the guns were at least, in some way connected with the landing of the French.~~

visitors will obtain permission from the owners to view the house and gardens, but apart from the dwelling itself and the cannon, ~~the~~ barrels only of which remain, there is not much of interest, here.

CASTLEREAGH. At the opposite side of the Palmerstown Bridge, was Castlereagh, imposing residence of the first of the Knox family to settle in this area.

In recent years, the property has been acquired by the Land Commission. The huge mansion has been demolished and the land divided. The magnificent woods for which Castlereagh was famed, have been almost entirely cleared and thus one of the most beautiful sights, in an otherwise almost treeless region, has been spoiled.

~~The name 'Castlereagh' appears to have been derived from an ancient castle of that name which stood near here. Traces of the old castle, which was last occupied by a branch of the De Burghos, may still be seen from the roadside. I have read of a Carrickansass Castle, said to have been built by the Burkes and to have been 35 feet square and 45 ft. high. I presume that this was Castlereagh since there is no ruin at Carrickansass.~~

ANTIQUITIES.MOYNE CONVENT Cont'd.

Members of many of the great families of the district have been interred in the church and amongst these were the O'Dowds, De Burghos, Barretts and Lynotts.

A rough description of the foundation may serve as a useful guide to the visitor.

The whole of the south side is occupied by the church, which includes nave, aisle, south transept, belfry, choir and Chapel of the Blessed Virgin. East of the cloisters are the chapter house and refectory. North of the cloisters is the kitchen and west, are the store rooms. East of the chapter house is a modern house while traces of former buildings may be seen on the north side. The massive square tower which springs from the gable ends, is about ninety feet high and commands a wonderful view of Killala Bay and the surrounding country.

The Convent of Moyne is said to have been built on the site of an early foundation of St. Muca, or Muicin, patron saint of Moyne.

St. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, KILLALA.

St. Patrick, on his return to Ireland, erected a church at Killala about the year 440 and on that site was built the Cathedral which was seized by the Protestants during the Reformation period, *and is still in use.*

The exact date on which the Cathedral was built seems very difficult to trace but in 1670, Bishop Thomas Otway carried out extensive renovations.

The chief architectural features of the Cathedral are the Gothic south doorway which has survived from the earlier building but which is now blocked up, the Gothic window under the wheel <sup>rose</sup> window to the east and the square tower with a stone steeple, *to which has been added a steeple.*

The Protestant See of Killala was joined to that of Achonry at the beginning of the seventeenth century and to Tuam in 1834.

*G. Buer 15.5.43*



ANTIQUITIES

ROUND TOWER. The Round Tower of Killala was severely damaged by lightning in the eighteenth century. The walls, which have been described as of great strength and nearly perfect were repaired by Bishop Verschoyle about one hundred years ago but the repairs have resulted in a very noticeable bulge to the south west.

The Tower, situated in the heart of the town, is about ninety feet tall. The Office of Public Works has taken charge of the ~~Round Tower~~ but no caretaker has yet been appointed. It is not railed off from the public thoroughfare, nor are there ladders or other means of access to the entrance which is eleven feet from the ground; even should one overcome this obstacle and succeed in entering the Tower, there are no means of ascent on the inside.

RATHFRAN ABBEY. Rathfran, on the left bank of the Cloonaghmore, about 2 miles from Palmerstown Bridge (turn right here) and ~~Five~~ and a half miles from Killala, was formerly known as Rath Branduibh. Many centuries ago Rath Branduibh was the residence of the Chieftains of Hy Fiachrach and in 1274 the Dominicans founded their monastery here.

The Abbey was closed at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the inhabitants shared in the persecution suffered by the Catholic Church. ~~One Father Hugh MacGoilly, Master of the Novices at Rath Bran (or Rathfran), proceeded to Waterford in 1654 to confirm the Catholics of that city in their faith; he was seized there and hanged.~~

During recent years, the Office of Public Works acquired the ruin as a National Monument and amongst other useful works, the ground plan of the conventual buildings ~~have~~ been discovered and outlined in concrete. The walls of the church and portion of the cloister are in quite good condition as are some of the beautiful windows.

The caretaker, Mr Tom Farrell, lives at Mullaghnacrusha, on the summit of the hill facing the ruin and on the road to Rathfran. There is a public right of way ~~through~~ to the Abbey which is on the lands of Mrs Brigid Killeen.

SOUTERRAINS. In the churchyard at Killala Cathedral, is the opening to a large souterrain which, ~~it appears,~~ was discovered about fifty years ago. The opening ~~in the graveyard~~ is roughly six feet in diameter and a 2 feet square passage, now blocked, led west and another, 24ft. or so long runs east towards the road, and the original entrance where it is closed. A passage runs south ~~upwards~~ and is blocked at a distance of about 14ft. from the entrance. Three chambers, measuring 18' X 6', 8'6" X 6' and 15'6" X 6' approximately are entered at a distance of about nine feet to the north - one chamber leads into the other, in a northerly direction. At the east side of the last chamber is another which has not been explored. These chambers are four feet in height and judging from the masonry, seem to be later additions to the souterrain.

~~Members of the Royal Antiquarian Society explored the chambers in 1898 and were of the opinion, I am told, that it was the site of a rath or fort, the last bank of which was removed from the doorway of the Cathedral about fifty years ago.~~

About a quarter of a mile distant, in the lands of Miss Wallace at The Acres, is an ~~opening somewhat similar to the entrance to~~ <sup>other souterrain with an entrance similar to that of an</sup> the souterrain. ~~I have met no one who explored this but popular belief is that the Cathedral, Round Tower, Bishop's Palace (since replaced by the old Workhouse) and the Souterrain were all connected underground. I could not ascertain whether the opening at the Acres is another souterrain or another entrance to that in the churchyard.~~

~~On the lands of Mr Loughney at Summerhill, near Rathfran and about six miles from Killala, there is a closed-in entrance to another Souterrain. I could get no information about this souterrain as there is no knowledge of its having been explored at any time.~~

J. Brien  
15.5.43

PILLAR STONE. In the lands of Mr John Langan, at Breastagh a tall Pillar Stone, evenly cut and well shaped. The stone is about ten feet in height from the ground level, and is chamfered for a couple of feet at the top. The top of the stone slopes backwards from the east side, therefore and on this side, down both edges, there is an Ogham inscription, which The inscription has been examined by experts and I am told that a translation reads as under:— Reads GOBERRI MAQI AMALGAIDI. This may be translated freely "The monument of Goberrus son of Amalgaidus."

"HERE LIES GOBERRY THE SON OF AMHALGAIDH"

*Amalgaidus*

Amhalgaidh, it may be mentioned, was the chief king of this region and was a descendant of Conn of the Hundred Battles.

The stone may be seen from the road which connects the Rathfran road at Mr Tom Farrell's house on Mullaghnacrusha, with Carrowmore, Jacken and is about five miles from Killala.

There is no right of way to the stone but the proprietor does not object to visitors crossing this field.

DRUID CIRCLES. There are several collections of large stones in the neighbourhood of Rathfran Abbey and it is obvious that some of these are the remnants of Druidic Circles.

On Mr Martin Farrell's lands at Rathfran Park, on the right as one comes in sight of the Abbey and facing the ruin, there are two rough circles; one was composed of huge boulders and the other, composed of smaller stones, appears to have been much larger in circumference, the diameter being about thirty feet.

Near the Ogham Pillar Stone at Breastagh there are two more circles and a few more may be seen around these parts.

CARN AMHALGAIDH

On the top of Mullaghcarn, half a mile from Killala, (Ballycastle road to P.P.'s residence, continue on old Green Park Road) Amhalgaidh, King of Hy Fiachra erected a place of assembly which was used on ceremonial occasions. Great fairs were held at Carn Amhalgaidh (often anglicised "Carn Awley") and it is said that the chieftains and kings of Hy Fiachra were crowned here. There is also a belief that Awley who was King of Connaught at the beginning of the fifth century and who was converted to Christianity by St. Patrick, was buried under this Carn.

O'Donovan, referring to Carn Awley, says that he found a carn on the top of the hill but that the carn had nearly all been removed. Nearby, on the same hill, he found a monument like an earthen fort with round stones of great size placed round its border in a circle; the internal diameter of this circle was 78 feet and the external diameter 240 ft. He said that the arrangement of the boulders marked it as a sepulchral or ceremonial rath.

All that remains to-day is a heap of very large stones and I am informed that a parish priest of Killala who owned these lands about sixty years ago, destroyed the carn by blowing it up.

Carn Awley and the surrounding land is now the property of Mr P.J. O'Reilly, Merchant, Main Street, Killala and Mr O'Reilly will not object to visitors entering his lands. Mullaghcarn commands a wonderful view of Killala Bay and surrounding country.

ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH AT KILROE. O'Donovan says of this church that it is one of the oldest ruins in Ireland, not excepting even the church of Bishop Mel at Ardagh. It was twenty four feet long and eighteen feet broad, and he says of the walls that they were nearly in the Cyclopean style and that the east gable contained a window in the primitive lancet style.

The church is at the rere of Mr Cuffe's house and is a little over a mile from Killala, on the road to Moyne Abbey. The remains are in such a ruinous and neglected state, overgrown with weeds and filled with loose stones, that without previous knowledge, it would be impossible for the lay observer to guess the origin of this heap of rubble.

The owner of the site, Mr Cuffe, will allow visitors to inspect the ruin which is not in the care of the O.P.W.

The Life of St. Patrick contains the following reference:— to the church:— "And St. Patrick baptized in those parts, the seven sons of Drogenius and selected one of them, Mac Erca, to be his own disciple;"



ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH AT KILROE cont'd.

"but seeing he was very much beloved by his parents, and that he durst not bring him to distant parts, he gave him over to be instructed by Bishop Bronius. He (MacErca) is the person who ruled the Church of Kilroe Mor in the Country of Amalgadia."

CROSSPATRICK - ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH.

The graveyard on the right of the main road from Ballina to Killala, and about one and a half miles from the latter, contains traces of the ruin of an ancient church, said to have been built by St. Patrick. The church appears to have been quite small but nothing remains but a small portion of the walls.

The Tripartite Life of St. Patrick tells us that Aengus, son of King Awley, attempted to murder his own nephew Conall and St. Patrick, at the instigation of the Ard Ri, Laoghaire.

With bodies of troops and two Magi, Rechet and Roen, (the latter promised to kill the saint with his evil eye) they lay in wait at Cill Phoirclinn, now Killybrone, to the west of Crosspatrick. St. Patrick who was at Crosspatrick about a mile away, realised in spirit their evil designs (this territory was at that time thickly wooded) and caused ~~the~~ the ground to swallow the two druids. Aengus repented and was baptised by Patrick who restored to life his sister Belimia who had just died.

There is free access to the graveyard which, with the ruin, is not in the care of the O.P.W.

~~Within a hundred yards of the graveyard, at the rere of the house occupied by Mr Molloy, are two stones said to be connected with St. Patrick.~~

~~One stone, measuring about fourteen inches by twelve, is inscribed with a cross and the other, about three feet long, is partly hollowed and tradition has it that St. Patrick sat on this stone. An incision, about three inches long in this latter stone, is said by O'Donovan to represent "imperfectly the form of the upper part of a crozier and is said to be the mark of St. Patrick's pipe". I do not think however that pipes were fashionable in those early days.~~

HISTORIC SITES ETC.

1798 - cont'd.

There was practically no opposition offered by the regular soldiers of the English garrison at Killala; the soldiers fled towards Ballina and the yeomanry barricaded themselves in the the Castle, residence of the Protestant Bishop Stock. Within twenty four hours, several hundred men had allied themselves to French army, headquarters being established at the castle which had been taken without difficulty. (It should be mentioned here that the castle made way in later years for the workhouse, now a derelict building at the commencement of the Ballina road).

With the minimum delay, Humbert pushed on and after some sharp engagements, captured Ballina and Killala. History tells us of the continued successes of the Franco-Irish army during the three weeks following the landing at Kilcummin and the sad tale of Ballinamuck in the County Longford. Here, opposed by 30,000 English soldiers under General Lake, the French surrendered and the Irish were given no quarter but mercilessly hounded until five hundred of them lay dead on the field of battle; many more of them were pursued and killed and of over a hundred taken prisoner, a great many were hanged. The French had suffered but little loss and were accorded full military honours and were then moved to Dublin and on to Liverpool.

News of the disaster was received with joy by the English sympathisers at Killala but the brave insurgents of Killala and Ballina, to the number of about 600 collected all available arms and worked feverishly until they had forged sufficient pikes and then set out to again attack Castlebar. The attack was made but proved abortive and the insurgents retreated to Killala.

Bishop Stock, by means of a wily ruse acquainted the English General Trench of the position at Killala and so on Sunday, September 23rd in the same year, 3000 English soldiers with a great many guns, attacked the insurgents at Killala and then commenced the final massacre of the Irish.

A month later, three more French ships carrying another army arrived in Killala Bay but hurriedly left on hearing the bad tidings.

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TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY.

Tirawley Boreny, Killala Parish, Mayo (North).

Correction.PILLAR STONE AT BREASTAGH.

I have checked the height of this stone and find that the correct height is 8 feet, 7 inches.

I am also informed that the translation of Ogham inscription as rendered, is not reliable and although I have gone to considerable trouble in this connection, I have been unable to obtain any authentic information. I believe that the stone was examined some years ago by Mr Leask of the O.P.W.

*Amos O'Brien*  
Surveyor.

21.5.43.

*Previous note  
on this stone  
corrected by  
N. J. O'R.*