

(Mayo East)

I.T.A. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL SURVEY

NATURAL FEATURES, ANTIQUITIES, HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS, ETC.

BARONY OF Clannorris

TOWN OR VILLAGE Balla PARISH Balla & Manulla COUNTY Mayo

TOPOGRAPHY

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

This is a large parish. Its area is 29 sq. miles, 618 acres, 2 woods and 19 ny. perches, of which 557 acs. 35 perches are under water. It is situated some 11 1/2 miles from Castlebar (W.W.), 4 from Rallyway (N), 5 from Kiltinagh (E), and 6 from Clannorris (S.W.).

In general, the area is not one of scenic distinction, being mainly featured by grass lands, timbered belts, creeks, and village - the terrain is rolling - low level - except to the north where there is a semi-mountain stretch running N/S for a few miles and roughly bisecting the northern end of the parish.

GEOLOGY

(CONTD. ON PAGE 2.)

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

The area is completely of limestone except for a small hill range to the north (highest point 648') which is of the millstone, grit and shale (carboniferous) series. The land is suited, for the most part, to cultivation and the parish is almost fully an agricultural one.

MANSIONS, CASTLES AND ESTATES

OF IMPOSING CHARACTER

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

Sacred Heart College at Ballinacree situated some 3 1/2 M. (by road) S.W. of Balla. College is conducted by the African Mission Fathers. Houses annually about 40 students who, having obtained their Intermediate Certs., are sent to main local house for educational and religious completion before entering the mission fields of Nigeria and Liberia.

The building is a rectangular, three-story edifice. Apart from a modern wing added in 1932 the construction is of brown stone. No ornamental featuring. Total size of college now is perhaps 90' x 40'.

With the house goes about 400 acres of grass lands, tillage, and timbered belts. There are no libraries, art collections etc.

This was the residence of the Blake family from the year 1827 to 1908, in which year it was donated to the African Mission by its last owner Isabel Blake. Later a Count of the Holy See. The Blake history is, as far as can be ascertained, a quiet one even though the family remained Catholic throughout.

Irish and English style. Prior to the erection of the present house in 1827 the family dwelt in a residence whose featureless remains still exist an hundred yards from the college.

The house is known as Ballinacred House - the term 'Ballinacred' is said to be an impropriation from Galway, the location of the original Blakes - one of the 'Twelve Tribes'. In their day the Blakes of Ballinacred held a sizable estate (an 18th century map in the college shows it in full).

On March 27th 1619 (James 1st), Marcus Blakes was granted lands in Galway and Mayo.

Andrew Blakes Sir John (living in Henry III's time) had three sons. Two are unknown. The third, Walter Blakes, was the founder of the Ballinacred branch. He purchased lands at Doonamona which is near Ballinacred. His son, Marcus O'g or Maurice, in 1681, obtained a regrant (Charles II) of the lands allotted to Marcus in 1619. Presumably Marcus O'g also came by title into the Doonamona estate, which, together with the regrant formed the estate (or part of it) of the Ballinacred successors. Marcus O'g may have established his residence there - the site of the erection of the former house whose ruins now stand, is uncertain.

Marcus O'g's son was Mark who married in 1712. The latter was succeeded by a son called Maurice who married in 1733. Maurice was in turn followed by his son Mark who married in 1777. This was he who ruled at Ballinacred when the French forces passed through in 1798 and who is said to have entertained the officers on his lawn.

Mark's son Maurice, inherited and built the present house in 1827. He had two sons, Mark, Joseph and the first owner Col. Blakes also a daughter, Mary. Maurice's wife was of the Galway Lynch family.

The first of his sons, Mark, succeeded. He was twice elected M.P. for Co. Mayo; was High Sheriff also. He died, and Joseph Blakes inherited. This owner achieved much notice as a breeder of hunters and racehorses. On his death, Colonel (or Count) Blakes came into the property. The Count had resided on his Galway lands until his succession. He lived in Ballinacred for a time and then donated it to the African Mission. He died in 1916 aged 76 and is buried at the African Mission College (St. Joseph's), Wilton, Cork.

Maurice's daughter Mary i.e. Count Blakes's sister, was the mother of the famous George Moore of Moorshill on the shores of Lough Lanna.

+ Cloughballinacred. INFORMATION:- FROM AFRICAN FEELERS OF THE COLLEGE

Parish of Bella Chamella. County of Llanmorris. W. Mayo.
manors, tithes & Estates. Page 4. ITA/3/4(4)

The family of Lynch-Blosse lived at Bella for many generations. The various baronets held sway over a large estate which included the town proper. The original Lynch-Blosse residence was situated near the present convent of St. Louis but was destroyed by fire circa the beginning of the last century. Subsequently, until their disappearance from the district the family residence formed part of the present convent.

It would appear from local account that the family of Lynch-Blosse came into the district originally by the marriage of Lynch to a Miss Moore of Buge Castle which was first held by the Pendergasts who were ousted by the Moores in Elizabethan times.

Of the family history there would seem to be nothing of primary interest. The Lynch-Blosse union has some local tradition. It is said that Sir Harry Lynch, who was landlord in the days of Great Britain's Parliament, was the handsomest man in Britain and even in those days of style and fashion was unique in sartorial elegance. On one occasion Sir Harry called upon his tailor in London. A lady whose name was Blosse and of great wealth, saw Sir Harry and desired an introduction. The tailor refused, even on being offered £100 to effect a meeting. The lady left and the tailor hesitatingly informed Sir Harry who promptly said "Go, man, and earn your hundred pounds." A meeting was arranged and marriage followed.

Sir Francis Lynch Blosse was a parson and an excellent landlord. He was followed by Sir Robert. In his man's time, in 1844, a civil engineer named S. Nicholson was employed on a detailed survey of the estate. Nicholson devoted much time to an intensive study of conditions and modes of living in Bella and throughout the estate which he gives as 36377 acs. 2 rods, 25 perches, of which 9000 acs. was arable. Nicholson wrote an account of his survey - now in the library of the Archbishop of Tuam. The last of the line was Sir Harry Lynch-Blosse who left the district about 1912. The estate was divided.