

KILFARBOY CHURCH, CO. CLARE, FROM S.E.

ANTIQUITIES NEAR MILTOWN MALBAY, COUNTY CLARE.

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Western Clare has for over a century enjoyed an ever widening fame for its health resorts. Kilkee, Lehinch and Lisdoonvarna have advanced from unknown hamlets to widely known places of enjoyment. Another bathing place, however, has retrograded rather than advanced. Miltown Malbay gets little attention in the popular guides, and has almost escaped the notice of antiquaries and scientists. It is, however, well worthy of a better fate. Those who have loitered in its thyme-scented fields, along its open and, at times, too stormy bay, or watched the solemn but glorious sunsets, or the mirages, from the tops of its sandhills, will agree with us as to its charm. Its very quietness, as compared with the better-known watering places, adds not a little to its fascination for those who do not desire to be in a transported Dublin or Limerick such as they find at Lehinch or Kilkee.

To deal with its neighbourhood as an antiquary is our object in this paper. Those who take an interest in the ancient remains of the place may need a hint as to where to find the most characteristic objects. We purpose to take them to specimens of the churches, castles, forts and cromlechs, and hope that, though no Clonmacnoise or Quin be found there, we may note objects of no little interest in our rambles.

Miltown village plays no part in the older history of Clare. It evidently lies where once a wild, wolf-haunted district lay, near "the white strand and ever complaining wave, sea flanked, rich in ocean's teeming wealth," as Macgrath described the western half of Thomond in the fourteenth century; "the land of the two invers," the creeks of Doonbeg and Liscannor, as O'Huidhrin sang half a century later. The townland of Breffy still commemorates the savage beasts in its name, "place of wolves," and by a strange coincidence the wolf is also commemorated near Lisdoonvarna and Kilkee. The next name, Poulavullin,

becoming Ballyvullen, still retained in the translation Miltown, marks human settlement and civilisation. It also was found as a forgotten townland name, Poulavullin, or mill-pool.

The older history is more suggestive than definite. The great tidal wave and earthquake of 802, which split Inis Fita (Mutton Island) into three, heaped the coast with sand, and destroyed a multitude of people—the flight of king Turlough O'Brien, when his expelled uncle was reinstated at Clonroad by a dangerous ally, Thomas de Clare, in 1276, and he himself fled down the coast to the hospitable Teige O'Brien of Tromra, and the MacMahons,—and that of Turlough O'Brien to Cathairruis, or Caberrush castle, on the southern horn of the bay, in 1573. Such are a few of these events. Still earlier there were rude settlements on the sandhills, people living on shell-fish and sea-birds, and using stone weapons. Their hut-circles and hearths lie under the harsh grass and sand of the sandhills. Miltown also claims its memories of the “great fleet invincible” in the name “Spanish Point” and the Spaniards' graves. No wreck is recorded to have taken place on the point, but we can easily believe that the currents heaped its reefs with bodies from the wrecks at Tromra and Doonbeg.

The more interesting ruins are, however, to be found in the “hinterland” and we purpose describing those in the parishes of Kilfarboy and Kilmurry-Ibricane, together with the remains at BoulynaGreina Lake on Mount Callan—all within a radius of ten miles from Miltown.

KILFARBOY (O. S. Map 31).

The nearest church to Miltown, in fact its ancient parish church, is Kilfarboy. The pseudo-tradition vendors long satisfied visitors as ignorant as themselves with legends of burials of “tawny men” (*i.e.*, the drowned Spaniards) in the church, that from this circumstance took the name of Kilfearboy. (1) That this silly derivation should find any supporters in later days is indeed wonderful.

The place was probably founded by St. Lachtin or Laughteen, to whom its well is dedicated. He was either the friend of St. Senan in A.D. 550, or another of the name who died in A.D. 622, probably the first. It possibly got its name from the pass of Bealach Feabrath,

(1) For earlier notes see the new edition of Archdall's *Monasticon Hibernicum*, vol. I, p. 85; Canon Dwyer's *Diocese of Killaloe*, p. 505, and Mr. J. Frost's *History and Topography of the County of Clare*, p. 147.

where, in A.D. 740, was a monastery which was subsequently governed by a bishop named Cormac, who died in A.D. 837. The church appears in the Papal Taxation of 1302-7 as Kellinfearbreygy or Kellinfearbuygy. As in later days, in the sixteenth century we find such forms as Kilforbrick and Kilfearbaigh. In June, 1394, an important Papal letter licenses Cornelius O'Deayg, sub-deacon of Killaloe, despite his illegitimacy, to get the tonsure and the benefices of Killnafearwagy, Disert Molacala, and Kyllkady in the said diocese. The cure to be performed by vicars (2) The parishes were Kilfarboy, Disert Tola (or manawla as locally pronounced) and Kilkeedy. O'Dea rose to be archdeacon of Killaloe and bishop of Limerick. He was a man of artistic taste, an antiquary and organiser. The splendid crosier and mitre preserved in Limerick attest the first, the compilation of the "Black Book of Limerick," and the surveys of that diocese in 1418 to 1422 attest the latter qualities. His tomb is among us in his own cathedral unto this day. (3) I find no trace of the restoration or usage of the church in Tudor times. In an important survey of Clare dating about 1675, and now at Edenvale, we find the Earl of Thomond holding all the parish of Kilfarboy, 3,228 acres profitable and 4,405 acres unprofitable, including Kildeemo, Cloghanebegg and more, Killcorkerane, Ghandeine, Poulemullin (Milltown), Doogh, Legarda and Breagha, also Carrookeile, Fintraghmore and begg, Freagh of the Castle, Freagh Falline, Ballyvaskin, Island, Killfarboy, Lackamore, Moybegg and more, with its castle, a rude sketch of the latter and a conventional one of Freagh castle appearing on the margin. In 1712 Henry, Earl of Thomond, sold in this barony—Annagh to John Stacpoole, Carhuduff to William Stacpoole, Knocklisacorane to Henry Widenham, Killards to Montifort Westropp, Kilfarboy and Moygh to William Fitzgerald, and Quiltie and Trumroe, with its castle, to William Fitzgerald.

The church, an interesting little 15th century building was (at least in 1887) in apparently the same condition as when described in the ordnance survey letters half a century before. It stands on the bank of a little rivulet among low rounded hills, with a distant view of the Atlantic, a peaceful nook well suited for monastic retirement. The

(2) *Calendar of Papal Letters*, vol. iv, pp. 473-474.

(3) See our notes in the *Roy. Soc. Ant. (Irelana) Journal*, vol. xxviii, pp. 41, 112, 122. The crosier is figured in *Archæologia*, vol. xvii, p. 30, and in our pages, vol. i, No. 3.

ruin measures 66 feet by 17 feet internally; the west gable had fallen before 1839. It was most probably featureless like those of most of the Clare churches, for the better security of the building against the fierce western gales of the ocean. The south wall has a very neat pointed door, 14 feet from the west, a very pleasing effect is produced by the neatness of the arching, (4) the whole walls being of thin gritstone slabs. In the inner angle of the right jamb is a quaint holy water stoup, with two round headed opes like those at Canon's Island, Kiltinanlea, Rathborney and elsewhere in Clare; the inner door arch is flat. The east and south windows have single lights with ogee heads, and are nearly alike save that the former has neat little trefoils in the angular spandrels with delicate ribbing in the leaves. The east gable is shaken and mainly supported by the vault of the Fitzgerald family, 1778. The north wall is, as usual, featureless. The Fitzgerald arms are unusual, being shown as a chevron, with two lions *counter passant regardant* above, a cross florette below. The crest being a knight on horseback. (5)

MOUNT CALLAN (O. S. Map 31).

One of the most curious problems in Clare (if not in Irish) archæology is bound up in this conspicuous mountain. The place certainly figures in early Irish legend, for we find in the *Dind Senchas* (20) (6) that Eochy Garbh, son of Dua, king of Erin, made proclamation to his subjects to cut down the wood of Cuan with spears, in honour of the king's wife, Tailtin; the clearing being called Oenach Tailtinn. Three famous rath builders had, however, neglected the summons, their names were Nas, Ronc and Alestair, and indignant at the slight, the angry queen had them arrested and condemned them to death. The king, however, intervened, entreating that they might be spared, and gained them their lives on the condition of their building certain forts. Nas built the great mote of Naas in Kildare, and a fort in the heritage of Gan (Connaught); Ronc made others in Dalaradia and in the heritage of Genann (Connaught), while Alestar made his fort on Slieve Collain, then Sliabh Leitrech in Sengann's heritage, and named it Cluain Alestair.

(4) The church is briefly described in *Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad.*, ser. iii, vol. vi, p. 161, the doorway and stoup illustrated, *ibid.* Plate xii, Nos. 10 and 11.

(5) *Journal of Assoc. Pres. Memorials of the Dead in Ireland*, vol. iii, p. 39^b.

(6) *Revue Celtique*, 1894, p. 317.

The names have perished from Callan (7) perhaps the rath, stone-faced and with an artificial cave, which lay on the flank of the hill is intended.

Callan, however, enjoyed little ancient fame till 1778; John Lloyd, a schoolmaster, then published a little shilling guide book, "An Impartial Tour in Clare," in it he mentions the discovery of a monument with an ogmic inscription—"Beneath this stone lies Conan the fierce and long-legged," and describes this Conan quaintly—"This gentleman was a very uncouth officer and voracious eater." Theophilus Flanagain brought the matter into full notoriety by publishing the inscription in "Archæologia," and in the first volume of the "Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy." The paper was read in 1785 and published three years later. It is a most brilliant specimen of the perverted ingenuity which made the name "antiquary" a by-word, and helped Scott to create his delightful "Sir Arthur and Oldbuck." Flanagan and the exponents of the famous *DELI DIUOCE* (8) inscription mark the low water of Irish archæology. The Callan ogham was tortured till it said all its tormentors desired and what it never meant to say. Flanagan read it forward and backward and upside down, and then he varied the F and N signs, and thereby extracted five readings—(a) "Beneath this stone lies Conan (Conaf) the fierce and swift-footed;" (b) "Obscure not the remains of Conan the fierce and swift-footed;" (c) "Long may he lie at ease on the brink of this lake that never saw his faithful clan depressed;" (d) "Long may he lie at rest beneath this \diamond darling of the sacred;" (e) "Hail with reverend sorrow the drooping heath around his lamentable tomb." (9)

Then came the antiquaries from the four winds of heaven, and they contended with Theophilus O'Flanagan, and prevailed not. One side lauded him and his discovery, the other cried "forger" and "forgery." No one thought of looking at the matter from a common sense standpoint of asking, why the one rational reading gave the name Conaf or Collas instead of "Conan" if it was the work of a forger. One forgery certainly existed—the passage interpolated in copies of "The Battle of Gabhra," alluding to Conan's assassination and burial on Callan. The

(7) The names subsisting imply ancient residences, as in the case of Knockalassa and Knockerribul, or cattle pasturages like Boolinrudda, Boolynamiscaun, Boolyduff, and Boolynagreana.

(8) Found to be really a reversed EConid 1739.

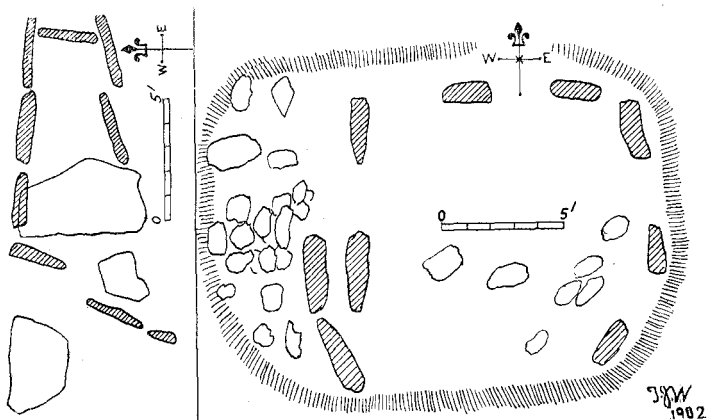
(9) See *Archæologia*, vol. vii, p. 282. *Transactions Royal Irish Acaaeemy*, vol. i, *Proc. R. I. A.*, vol. i., ser. ii, p. 269.

slab was certainly a late scholastic inscription by some mediæval antiquary proud of his rare knowledge of ogham. It differs from all known inscriptions in the character and by its border, by its vowels, straight strokes crossing the stem line. Strange to say this was probably once correct, as the slope lines presuppose straight lines, and not short "dots" for the vowels. The monument is probably genuine as far as honest intention goes, but it commemorates no known person, and is certainly many centuries later than the introduction of Christianity into Ireland. O'Donovan and O'Curry dealt hardly with the literary forgery, but did not commit themselves on the question of the inscription, in 1839. (10) Sir Samuel Ferguson practically set the question at rest in a paper published in the "Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy" in 1872, and we think, after careful examination of the slab in 1888, that his conclusions are most sound. He reads "*Fan lia do lica conas [collas] colgac cos obad.*" Flanagan reads "*Fan li da fica conaf colgac cos obmda.*" There were also some wild readings—Vallancey (11) publishes Flanagan's sketch, but it reads "*Fan li si ta conan * colgac cos fada;*" and a certain Mr. Kennedy sent John Windell a sketch, reading "*Fol lita jeca terulgac cos obmda.*" Professor Brian O'Looney reads, "*Fan lia do lica conaf colgac cos obada[c];*" my sketch, "*Fan lia do liqa col(l?)as colgac cos obata(?)*." It is hard to say whether some of the scores are not natural cracks, making *lica* into *liqua* and *obadac* into *obata*. Clare is not an ogham district, lying blank, so far as undoubted inscriptions are concerned, between Kerry and Connaught. The oghams so-called at Bohneill are idle scorings, that at Scatterry has three scores and looks old, the Knockastoolery pillar has meaningless scores, and a bead with an ogmic inscription was found at Ennis. Lewis mentions three dolmens on Callan, two remained in later days. One has been described by Professor O'Looney. (12) It was a boxlike cist of four slabs with a heavy cover, and at each end were two pillars rising about a foot above the cover, like a dolmen in Ballyganner. This has been long demolished. Another still exists, and is well known from its proximity to the road from Miltown to Ennis. It has been planned and illustrated by the late

(10) Ordnance Survey Letters, Clare, MSS. Roy. Ir. Acad.

(11) *Archæologia*, vol. vii, p. 282.

(12) *Proc. R. I. A.*, vol. i, ser. ii (1872), p. 269.



PLAN OF THE DOLMENS OF CARNCREAGH AND KILTUMPER,
CO. CLARE.

Mr. W. Chambers Borlase. (13) It is a very regular and characteristic cist, tapering eastward with two remaining side blocks and a large cover.

CARNCREAGH (O. S. Map 39).

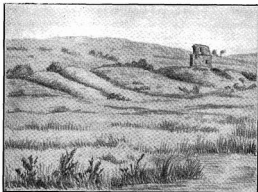
There is another "Labba" to the east of Doolough, a dreary treeless place in a monotonous undulating country, with no good distant views. Doolough only enjoys the legendary fame of being the place where St. Senan, after defeating the horrible monster Cata on Iniscatha, or Scatterry Island, deposited it in chains till the last day. Where the road past the lake turns northward we find in a marshy field on the edge of a slope a fallen dolmen, a long, tapering chamber of gritstone slabs, five to the north and three to the south. It is 17 feet 2 inches long over all, the chamber being 13 feet long and tapering from 6 feet 5 inches to 2 feet 9 inches. One cover remains, and traces of a parallel row of slabs along the northern face. It lies on the extreme edge of the long parish of Kilmaley. Carncreagh and Booleybanuff were sold as confiscated lands in 1652, to Murtagh MacMahon and Benjamin Lucas.

CAHER MURPHY (O. S. Map 48).

Near the western end of the lake a very hilly road leads from Doolough house southwards. It passes over a high boggy ridge called Gortnaneera, which rises 581 feet above the sea and commands a wide view of the coast from Moher to Beltard, and on to the silver thread of Moyarta creek and the round hills of Rehy and Caher Crocaun, near Loop Head, the "two Invers," Mutton Island and the Kerry mountains, and "a tumbled mass of heathery hills" being plainly visible. As we go down the southward slope we see below us to the right a large stone fort on a knoll, which proves to be no mean hill when we reach it.

The fort is circular, the wall for the most part well preserved, but levelled to the north-west, near the gateway of which hardly a trace remains. The interior garth is 110 feet in diameter. The wall (as so often) is built in two sections, the inner from 4 feet 4 inches to 6 feet 6 inches thick, the outer from 13 feet to 13 feet 3 inches, or, to give the entire thickness, 17 feet 6 inches to 19 feet 6 inches. The inner face is coarsely built in layers of flagstone, but the outer beautifully pieced together in polygonal masonry, small but closely fitted, with a regular

(13) *Dolmens of Ireland*, vol. i, p. 79.



CAHERMURPHY CASTLE AND EARTHWORKS, FROM S.W.

curve and straight batter. This batter has the unusual slope of one in four, which was probably due to the builder's desire to compensate for the weakness of the small material. The filling is large and the whole an unusual and excellent piece of dry stone masonry. There is an accumulation of debris over two feet deep round the base, over which the wall rises 6 feet 9 inches to the west, 9 feet 6 inches to the south and south-east, *i.e.*, 11 feet 6 inches over the field and about 7 feet over the garth. To give some notion of the unusually small size of the stones, I found 24 courses in 9 feet 6 inches. Two small lakes lie at the foot of the hill, which latter, with the fort, forms a conspicuous object in the landscape even from Kilmihil.

Not far to the south is the earth fort of Lisduff (defaced by burials and a late wall), with an oratory-like vault on top. The remains at Kiltumper, lying about a mile east from the road to Kilmihil, are conspicuously marked on all the O. S. maps (even the key map) as "Tumper's grave." They have been treated as important by the authors of the O. S. Letters, and are given as a dolmen by Miss Stokes in her list. (14) They are only the base of a small cairn, with a kerbing of slabs never exceeding $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet long and forming an enclosure 15 feet east and west by 11 feet north and south. Legend in 1839 said that it was the burial place of a Danish chief, chased from Cahermurroghoo or Cahermurphy by the Dalcassians, slain and buried on this ridge.

The castle of Cahermurphy lies on the edge of a marshy hollow, near a stream and lake south of the stone fort. Only one side remains, featureless and built of flagstones. It is only remarkable for the great earthworks. The enclosure consists of two great mounds, 10 or 12 feet high, with fosses between and outside. Thence slighter mounds enclose a shield-like enclosure with a rounded end, the longer axis lying east and west. There may have been a ring round the peel tower, but all is much overgrown, and I had little time for its examination. It measures about 355 feet east and west, and 200 feet north and south, being over 50 feet across the ditches.

The chief interest attaching to the place lies in its owners, the MacGormans, or, as they preferred to call themselves, O'Gormans. Of them was the chevalier O'Gorman, an indefatigable, if not infallible,

(14) *Early Christian Architecture of Ireland* (1878), p. 146, and *Revue Archeologique*, (1882), pp. 19-21; both lists very defective.

antiquary and genealogist in the eighteenth century. This family, it will be remembered, were of the race of Cathaoir mor, and fled out of their old settlements in Leinster before the Norman settlers early in the thirteenth century. They were gladly received, and "planted" in Ibrickan by Donchad Cairbreach O'Brien. They were known as Ui Bairrché from Daire Barrach, son of Cathaoir mór, and had long dwelt in Slieve Mairgy in Queen's County, and in the plain near Carlow. Mortough, son of Donchad MacGorman, probably harrassed by Walter de Ridelesford, gathered the clan (as Maoilin oge Mac Brody sings) and consulted as to their prospects. They determined to divide and migrate, part to Ulster, part to Uaithné or Owney, in Limerick, and eventually to their settlement "on the edge of the world," which was re-named Ui bracain from their tribal name. They took no prominent part in history, but lived in good repute for hospitality and trustworthiness among their neighbours, keeping for several centuries houses of free hospitality. Daniel MacGorman, for example, died in 1620, owning Cahermurchada and Drimelihy, which last he had conveyed to Daniel O'Brien in 1594. His sons Conor, Melaghlin and Caher succeeded. Melaghlin was succeeded by his son Dermot. In 1641 Sir Daniel O'Brien, Daniel MacGorman, and the latter's sons held the lands. In 1688 they were held by Daniel O'Brien, Lord Clare, from whom they were confiscated, and passed in 1703 to Francis Burton, Charles McDonnell and Nicholas Westby.

As for the castle, if we can trust the "List of Castle Founders," (15) it was built by Murrough MacFergus McCon. It is not named in the castle list of 1584, at least as published, and is named as Cathair Murchadha in 1600, when the great army of Hugh O'Donnell, encumbered with the spoils of Thomond, swept past its walls.

(To be continued)

(15) Standish Hayes O'Grady *Catalogue of Irish MSS.*, Brit. Mus., p. 74.