

## NEWCASTLE CLANWILLIAM CASTLE



Fig. 1: Newcastle Clanwilliam Castle (Barony; Clanwilliam; Parish, Kilmurry)

Newcastle (*Caisleán Nua*) was traditionally held by the Bourkes or De Burghs of Clanwilliam. In 1583, after the end of the Desmond Rebellion, it was named as one of the possessions of William Bourke of Clanwilliam. It was however, held then by Walter Bane FitzWilliam Bourke, also known as 'Walter Bane': he is named as being a free tenant in the vill, castle and land of 'Castelano Trylan', or the 'new castle of Trylan' near the city of Limerick.

The castle was next in the possession of Dominic Roche, Alderman. He held Newcastle Clanwilliam until 1599, but was later embroiled in a legal dispute concerning the estate. This case was recorded in the Council Book of Munster for that year. In 1599, Roche had leased the castle, town and lands of Newcastle (with the exception of a mill, a garden, and a meadow) to David Hurley, a gentleman of 'Kylalloe in [thel County of Tipperary]' for a term of seven years. In August 1603,

however, Roche – ignoring the terms of the lease – entered the castle and lands and evicted Hurley with his wife and family, and confiscated his wheat, oats and barley. Hurley then brought his eviction case before the magistrates in Limerick.

Roche defended his actions before the court by claiming that the plaintiff had ‘fraudulently and deceitfully’ intended to deprive him of his due rent by selling the ‘crop of sheaf’ being grown upon the said land in May 1603 for pure silver offered by an attorney not lawfully authorized onto the said defendant, and contrary to the terms of the lease which was to be paid of sterling money current within the realm of England. In September 1604, the court (whose jury included Francis Barkley of Askeaton and George Boucher of Lough Gur) ruled in favour of Hurley and ordered that he should recover his said term and damages from his eviction, along with his court costs.

It was again held by Roche in 1607. In 1619, the castle and bawn were granted to Henry Holcroft; but Jordan Roche held it from 1623 to 1655. Following the end of the Cromwellian wars, the castle and lands of 306 acres (including a fifteen-acre orchard) was recorded as being the late property of Jordan Roche Esq., of Limerick. Though local tradition claimed that – like most other ruined castles in Limerick – it was attacked and largely destroyed by Cromwell’s forces, Newcastle was not described as being in a ruinous state in the *Civil Survey*, unlike nearby Castletroy and Ballysimon, both described as being ruined castles in 1655.



Fig. 2: Newcastle Clanwilliam Castle

The castle and lands were granted to James, Duke of York (the future King James II) following the restoration of Charles II in 1660 and, following the defeat of James II by William III, the estate was again confiscated. In 1703, it came into the possession of the Hollow Blade Company after they purchased over 800 acres of James's late estate in this area, including Newcastle, Kilmurry, and other adjoining parcels of lands.

Newcastle Clanwilliam – built during the sixteenth century – is a tower house of a later date. With its large windows, high gables and chimneys, cruciform roof and thin walls, it was constructed as more of a residential building, rather than that of a defensive nature.

According to local tradition, another square tower was situated at the south-west corner of the building, but this tower had fallen, along with the aforementioned west wall by about 1800. Another 'improbable' tradition claimed that the castle was used as a residence by King William III during the first Siege of Limerick in 1690.