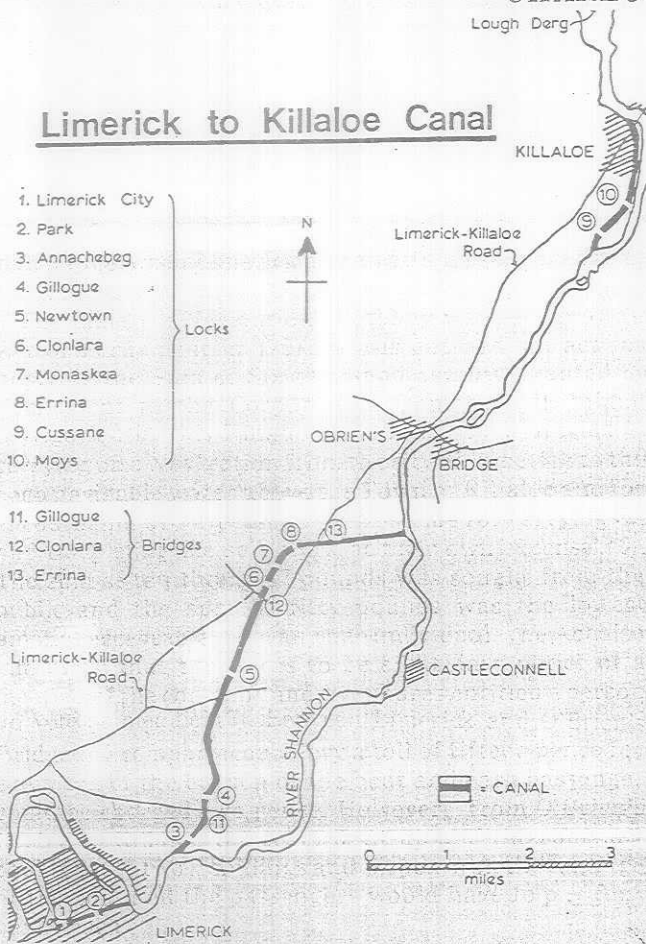


The Limerick To Killaloe Canal

CHARLOTTE MURPHY



1761, a committee was appointed by the House of Commons to enquire into the application of £4,000 (part of a sum allocated by Parliament to make the Shannon navigable from Limerick to Killaloe) and to examine the state of the work on the navigation. The accounts were found to be true and accurate; the opinion was also expressed that the sum of £401,2.9 would complete the section from Limerick to Rhebogoue, which is roughly halfway between Limerick city and its present suburb of Castletroy.

The Limerick Navigation Company was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1767; it was entitled 'an act for applying the Sum of Six thousand pounds, granted by Parliament to the Corporation promoting an inland Navigation in this Kingdom, to be by them applied in carrying on a Navigation from the city of Limerick to the deep navigable water above the Town of Killaloe and for encouraging other persons to subscribe for carrying on and completing the said work at their own expense' (6). The sum of ten thousand pounds was sought from the public and the sum of fifty pounds was the lowest amount acceptable from any one individual. The Act also laid down that there was to be eight days notice of a meeting of the company and five shares entitled a person 'to vote or meddle' (7). Between Limerick and O'Brien's Bridge the company could levy a toll of fifteen pence for every ton of the burden of the boat and each passenger could be charged two pence. However, from O'Brien's Bridge to Killaloe the costs went up and the company could charge two shillings and six pence on the tonnage of the boat and the passengers would have to pay four pence each.

On September 9, 1697, a report was returned to the Irish House of Commons from a committee appointed to consider the petition of 'The Grand Jury, Justices of the Peace, Gentlemen and Free holders of the County Galway' (1) to make the river Shannon navigable from Limerick, to Co. Leitrim. In the opinion of the committee, making the Shannon Navigable 'will be an Advantage to this Kingdom' (2) and it was estimated that the cost would not exceed £14,000. Nothing further was done until 29th Sept. 1703, when it was ordered that a committee be appointed to meet in the Speaker's Chamber at 4 o'clock the same day and prepare and bring in the heads of a bill to make the Shannon navigable from the city of Limerick to Jamestown, Co. Leitrim, at the Charge of the adjoining Counties' (3). However there was another time lapse and the matter resumed on 20th May, 1709, when a committee set up to consider the petition of Mortimer Heylen and Stephen Costelloe for making the Shannon navigable, concluded that such an undertaking 'will very much conduce to the increase of Trade in this Kingdom' (4).

On the 13th June, 1757, the workmen began to cut the canal at Bartlett's Bog' (5). In this manner Lenihan, in his history of Limerick, described the physical beginning of making navigable the twelve miles of river between the city and Killaloe. Work had begun on making the upper part of the Shannon navigable in 1755. In Nov.,

Finally, in 1799 the first boats begin to ply between Limerick and Killaloe. On 19th May, 1800, the Limerick Navigation Company submitted a statement to parliament in which much information was given on the construction, operation and problems of the navigation. On the first Monday or Tuesday of the New Year a committee of ten members and a secretary were elected, any holder of £250 worth of stock was entitled to vote at this election. The committee thus elected met every Friday, at the First Lock House, Limerick, with the duties of ordering the payment of the workmen, looking into the state of work on the project, in short it had the 'entire Management of the Company's affairs' (8). During the winter boats could come from Banagher to Limerick but because of the lack of towing paths and the presence of shoals the journey was not safe in summer. Because of these difficulties, also, only ten boats of a size from fifteen to twenty tons used the navigation. One thousand tons of corn had been brought to Limerick, from lands bounding the Shannon; as had large quantities of slates from the Barony of Doohara, Co. Tipperary.

In 1813 the Limerick Navigation Company were bought out by the British government and the canal was transferred to the Directors-General of Inland Navigation. The first attempt to have steam introduced to this section of navigation was made in April 1815, when a man named R.D. Watson wrote to the Directors-General suggesting the use of a steamboat, which he felt would

Killaloe
2

ounce of gold payable on the land of Ballykett in the 14th Century. It should be noted that this entry, as well as some others in Frost's version, is missing from both the Irish and English versions of the "Rental" as published by Hardiman in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. The castle is marked on the 16th and 17th century maps, as "Ket Castle or Castle Ket". In 1574 it belonged to James Cahane (Keane). In 1604 it was included in the grant of lands and castles to Sir Daniel O'Brien.

However, in an account drawn up by the Protestant Bishop of Killaloe in 1661, it was stated that, in 1641, O'Brien paid an annual rent of 18 shillings to the diocese for "Lands at Ballykett with a good castle". It was occupied by Sir Daniel, from time to time, and by his grandson, Colonel Daniel O'Brien, later the third Viscount Clare. In 1667, Lord Clare was confirmed in the ownership of Ballykett. In 1668, he leased the property to Henry Hickman. The latter lived there in 1680, when Thomas Dineley gave an account of it in his Journal. An illustration of the castle with house attached, taken from Dineley's Journal, is reproduced in Frost's History of Clare. Extracts from Dineley were also published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries in 1867. The illustration of Ballykett accompanying these extracts is quite unlike that in Frost.

Ballykett was included in the confiscated property of Lord Clare, which ended up in the hands of the Syndicate. The Hickmans, however, remained in possession. A new house was built in 1719 and by 1816 the ruins of the castle were barely noticeable.

SCATTERY ISLAND

The O'Cahanes, or Keanes, were the hereditary Coarbs of Inis Cathaigh. The office of Coarb came down from early times, but, even in the 16th century, the coarb, also called the Master of Inis Cathaigh, resided on the island. He was entitled to place a levy on the oyster boats and herring boats going up to Limerick. In 1574, the Coarb, Charles Cahane, occupied a castle on the island. It was stated at Limerick in 1576, that the castle on Scattery was a new one and had not been completed. In 1581, the Annals tell us that Clavagh MacCahan, the Coarb of St. Senan died. In 1604, Nicholas Cahane was coarb.

In a sketch of Scattery Island, taken from Dineley's Journal of 1680, the castle is shown as a tower house similar to the many other towers of the time. In 1808, Dutton included Scattery in his list of castles in Moyarta Barony. Even at that time, much of the tower must have been dismantled. No more than 25 feet still stood in 1816. The vaults, that is, the ground floor rooms, remained in 1839. In this century, the older inhabitants of Scattery remembered the ruin being used for storing turf. The portion of the castle still standing to-day is not much higher than the abandoned houses nearby.

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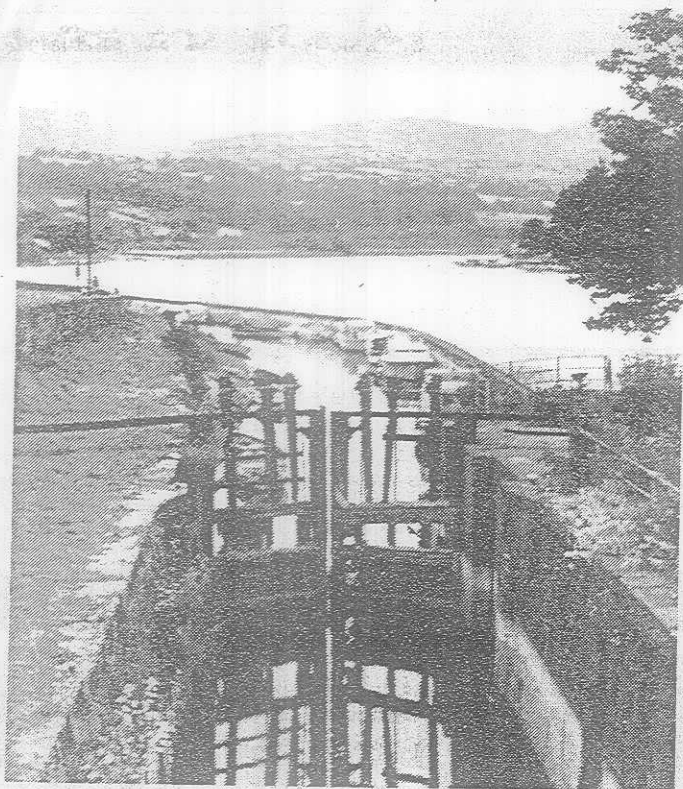
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Ennis Bell Man

The influx of the mendicant tribe, into our streets, so increased the appearance of misery, that the bell man has just now passed our windows, declaring that by order of the Provost, every strange beggar found in the streets after the hour of three o'clock, will be carted out of town!

Clare Journal, 30 June 1817.



Lock at Killaloe

greatly assist boats through the lakes of the Shannon particularly in the face of strong winds. While the Directors-General agreed with all his conclusions, it was felt that money could not be spent on such a venture when the actual navigation itself was still incomplete. The Grand Canal Company was also very interested in improving the effectiveness of the canal. The passage at O'Brien's Bridge was proving fatal, a boat had been sunk there in April and another in May, 1818, and the crew of one of the boats drowned. Consequently many merchants and boatmen were reluctant to use the navigation and the Grand Canal Company felt that the solution lay in the use of steamboats along with the construction of a lock and a new section of canal at O'Brien's Bridge. However, the Directors General turned down both suggestions.

In 1822 John Grantham made a report on the navigation for the Limerick Chamber of Commerce. He commented that O'Brien's Bridge was a great hazard. In winter the current flowed very swiftly and as the boats used the centre of the river it could prove very difficult to pass up or down stream. He felt that a lock, while a very good idea in itself, would be too expensive a method of solving the problem, so he suggested that two arches of the bridge, nearest the Clare side of the bank, should be made into one and the trackway continued underneath.

At Parteen a violent stream ran in the river, both in summer and winter, and here Grantham felt a lock would solve the problem and its construction should be seriously considered.

Another report was made in July of the same year, by John Stokes, engineer for the Grand Canal Company. He laid out a line for a canal from the head of the falls at Parteen to the deep water below O'Brien's Bridge. This,

he felt, would not only make the canal more safe and useful but would also provide employment to the poor of 'an immense population' and would give to 'the poorest wretches human eyes ever beheld' money which would 'save thousands from starvation' (9). He went on to describe how a boat discharging potatoes at O'Brien's Bride had been surrounded by hundreds of wretched women and children, who made attempts to catch the occasional potato which fell to the ground during the process of unloading and weighing, but even if they did succeed in securing a potato they were compelled to return it.

The Limerick to Killaloe canal ceased to operate in 1929 because the hydro-electric station at Ardnacrusha required the flooding of the navigation from below Killaloe to Parteen. It is now very sad to walk the canal and see the overgrown towing-paths and blocked-up locks, the gateless hinges and the bed of the canal itself, full no longer with water but now richly green with the growth of bushes and even the occasional tree.

- 1 Irish Commons Journal, Sept. 9, 1697, 11, p. 190.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid, 29th September, 1703, 11, p. 322.
- 4 Ibid, 20th May, 1709, 11, p. 586.
- 5 Maurice Lenihan, Limerick, Its History and Antiquities, Limerick 1866 (reprinted Cork 1967) p. 346.
- 6 7 Geo III c 26 (Ir.) 1767.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Irish Commons Journal 23rd June, 1800, XIX App. VI p.mxxxviii
- 9 Minutes of the Grand Canal Company, 8th May, 1822.

We Never Shall See Clare

John A. Irvine

"Oh little Corca Bascinn, the wild, the bleak, the fair,
The whole night long we dream of you, and waking think
we're there,

Vain dream, and foolish waking, we never shall see
Clare".

From "*Fontenoy, 1745, Before the Battle*" by Emily Lawless.

There is probably no more poignant tribute to the Wild Geese than the two Fontenoy poems written by Emily Lawless. Fontenoy was the epic encounter at which the troops of the Irish brigade on the side of Louis XV of France turned the tide of the battle against the allied forces of the British, Austrians and Dutch to the ferocious battle cry of "*Remember Limerick*".

The triumphs and tragedies of the Wild Geese as soldiers of fortune in many countries are legendary. Men from Clare figure prominently in the battalions and Maurice Hennessy recounts how at Fontenoy the emotional character of the conflict was heightened by an episode of single combat between an officer of the English Brigade of Guards and Anthony MacDonough