Gleaning in Seventeenth Century Kilrush.

By Very Rev. John Clancy, P.P.

FATHER GALLERY.

History mentions only two parish priests of Kilrush between 1600 and 1681, and of them it has little to say. What is known of "Mahoon c. Jurkan" is published in Molua, and the main theme of the present article is Father Gallery, fortunately rescued from oblivion by the document that ordered his arrest. I am sorry to have to admit that up to a few years ago, Father Gallery's name was lost to Kilrush, although in the eighties of the seventeenth century he openly defied tyranny, in order to secure for his people the freedom to hear Mass.

The following is the document referred to:

"Council to the Sheriff of Clare, May 4, 1681:

There is one Richard Gillareagh, Popish priest of Kilrush who as we are informed did lately take the boldness publiquely to celebrate mass neare to the Church doore of Kilrush and that although he was forbidden the same by one of the Justices of the Peace, yet in contemp of his Malesties authoritic he persisted to celebrate mass there and used unfitting expressions to the said Justice of the Peace. We require you to cause him to be apprehended and committed to safe custody.

And in case any other popish priest doe publiquely celebrate mass there, or that those of the popish religion doe assemble in any great numbers within the said Countie we require you to disperse them."

The Sheriff of Clare for the year 1681 was George Stamers of Carnelly, in the parish of Clare Abbey; the Justices of the Peace were John Cooper and Daniel, Viscount Clare. Did Daniel, third Viscount Clare come over from his Castle of Carrigaholt to lay down the law for the parish priest of Kilrush, or did he shirk the task, leaving it to John Cooper of Cromwellian fame? Clare's Dragoons, the Battle of the Boyne, and, I may add, his last Will, have so magnified this Moyarta aristocrat, that readers of the History of Clare by Frost and by White will, on the grounds of incongruity, summarily acquit him of restraining Father Gallery. But, if Viscount Clare is to be acquitted by the historian, it must be for another reason. There is nothing incongruous in this Justice of the Peace brandishing a penal enactment over the head of a parish priest. The man who apostatised and then betrayed Dr. O'Molony, Bishop of Killaloe, his kinsman and benefactor, might be expected to show no leniency to Father Gallery.

1. Molua, 1939, p. 70.
2. Burke, Irish Priests in the Penal Times, p. 70.
3. Frost, History and Topography of the County of Clare, pp. 161, 626.
4. Moyarta is the name of the parish and the barony in which the Castle of Carrigaholt is situated.
5. Frost, History and Topography of the County of Clare; White, History of Clare and the Dalcaasan Clans.
A more cogent reason makes one hesitate to assert dogmatically that Viscount Clare was the Justice of the Peace before whom Father Gallery "did take the boldness publiquely to celebrate mass neare to the church doore of Kilrush." The Earl of Conway, writing to the Earl of Ormonde, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on March 25, 1681, says "that his Majesty commands my Lord Clare to be put out of the Commission of the Peace and out of the Militia, and out of all other employments whatsoever, by order of the Council Board of Ireland."(7) Clare's dismissal was read at the Council Board April 2,(8) and a little less than five weeks from that date the Council ordered Father Gallery's arrest for offences committed "lately." But surely it does not strain the meaning of "lately" to make it cover things that happened five or six weeks previously, when Viscount Clare was a Justice of the Peace. Moreover, it must be admitted that he fits into the picture.

Reading over the Council's Order to the Sheriff of Clare, one wonders how Father Gallery's action brought so much trouble on his head. The organised persecution of the Penal Code did not yet exist,(9) and there is nothing to show that the few Protestants of Kilrush were not satisfied, once they had taken over the parish Church, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Deprived of their ancient Church, it may be assumed that the Catholics provided for themselves a Mass-house, and that Father Gallery, having taken charge of the parish, continued to celebrate Mass there. The problem is to explain the withdrawal of toleration in the Spring of 1681, from a practice that had been tolerated for sixty or seventy years. Viscount Clare had conformed to the Protestant religion, and the motives that induced him to betray the Bishop of Killaloe, namely, to show his zeal in the suppression of Popery and to cover something that had given offence to the Viceroy and the Privy Council,(10) would also induce him to close the Kilrush Mass-house. In this case, however, the situation of the Mass-house may have given him a convenient excuse, although the village at that date could be said to be near the Church of Kilrush. The parish priest was not one to submit easily. "He persisted to celebrate mass there," and, when one remembers all the unpleasant things that could be said of Lord Clare, it is no wonder that Father Gallery, who called a spade a spade, was accused of using "unfitting expressions to the said Justice of the Peace." Is it necessary to say that while the reasons given point to Lord Clare as Father Gallery's accuser, the evidence to make it an historical fact is not forthcoming?

A private house converted into a temporary chapel, to accommodate the parishioners for Mass is difficult for Kilrush people to imagine, accustomed as they are to large congregations. But I am dealing with a period 260 years ago, when, allowing for the absence of children, the aged and infirm, provision of such accommodation was by no means difficult. It is well to remember that the nave of the old Church was only 44 feet by 19 feet.(11) Assuming

9. For the Life of the Clergy and people in the 17th century, see MacLysaght, Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century, Chapter IX.
that the Census of 1659 (12) is a census of population, we get the low figure of 267 (13) for the population of the parish, and this includes the town, of which the population was 89. What a difference between the Kilrush of Father Gallery’s time and the Kilrush of to-day, when Crawford Street has a population of 187! (14) Allowing for an increase of fifty per cent.—a figure which errs on the side of generosity—in the population from 1659 to 1681, (15) Father Gallery would not have charge of 400 souls. It must be remembered, however, that throughout the eighteenth and half the nineteenth century the parish priest of Kilrush was in charge of Killimer also, (16) an arrangement which existed in the days of Father Gallery’s successor, (17) and presumably in the days of Father Gallery himself. That would add about 150 (18) to his flock and would require us to think of this seventeenth century parish priest as being in charge of some 550 Catholics, scattered over an area of twenty-two thousand acres. (19)

When we meet with Father Gallery again, he is parish priest of Bunratty, Drumline, Clonloaghan, Kilmaleary, and Kilconry. Furthermore, the Registry of 1704 specifies that he was ordained in 1676 at Athleague, by Dr. Dominick Burke, Bishop of Elphin, and that he was forty years at the time of his registration. The last statement is absurd, as Father Gallery would have to be ordained at the age of twelve.

FATHER GALLERY’S PARISH.

As the reader will see, I have not been successful in my search for information about this pastor, and when I turn to the parish of which he had charge, I find that here also, material for a detailed description is not available. In the circumstances, all I can do is to bring together a number of references which may help to form a picture of seventeenth century Kilrush. The town was emerging from the fishing hamlet stage, and the tracks connecting it with Ennis were euphemistically called roads. Although the oyster beds of Moyasta Bay were not cultivated at that period, the river abounded in fish, and references in Elizabethan documents to the “fish-town of Iniscathay” are significant. But the difficulty of providing fish for dinner in Kilrush at the present day should be a warning to us not to draw the conclusion that the natives lived on fish. Looking towards Iniscathay the scenery was magnificent as it is to-day. Looking inland, however, the absence of trees was more marked than in the early years of the twentieth century. A little colony of Protestants, imported about 1625, had by 1649 accumulated wealth and power. These points will be developed in the following pages.

12. Census of Ireland, c. 1659, edited by Pender. Mr. R. C. Semington, the learned editor of the Civil Survey holds that it is not a census of population. See Introduction, pp. 111, IV; see also Journ. R. Soc. Antiq. I., Vol. LXXIII, Part I.

13. This includes the townlands of Molougha and Knockerry which do not belong to the modern ecclesiastical parish.


15. Census of Ireland, c. 1659, Introduction XII.

16. This arrangement ended in October, 1848, when Father Kenny, P.P., of Kilrush and Killimer, was transferred to Ennis.

17. Registry of Irish Parish Priests, County of Clare, Anno 1704.

18. According to the Census of 1659, the population of Killimer was 120.

19. Griffith. General Valuation of Rateable Property in Ireland, gives the area of Killimer as slightly over 6,302 acres, that of Kilrush as slightly over 15,587 acres.
KILRUSH TOWN ORIGINALLY A FISHING HAMLET.

Graham says that "the town of Kilrush, which is very ancient, is built on a commodious creek about 15 miles from the mouth of the Shannon, and 45 miles from the City of Limerick." It was probably 300 years when these words were written in 1816; but Graham could have said, with equal truth, that in the antiquity of its Church lay its only claim to distinction, down to 1802, when Mr. Patterson set the town pulsating with industrial life. He tells us that in the second decade of the nineteenth century there were living, men who remembered "when the inhabitants of Kilrush were under the necessity of resorting to the market of Couracclare, a small decayed village at the distance of a few miles from it, for oatmeal and the other necessaries of life which from the low state of agriculture, were not easily procured in any part of the Country."

In the same page, this authority informs us that things were not much better in 1797, when Kilrush had but two small shops "badly assorted, and the articles in them one hundred per cent. dearer than in Limerick." When Hely Dutton was preparing his Survey in 1807, Kilrush was according to him, "fast rising into some consequence." The statements of Graham and of Dutton cannot all be accepted, but, in this instance there is no reason to question them. They bear witness to the low status of Kilrush at the end of the eighteenth century. What must it have been in the seventeenth century?

Confirmation comes from an unexpected source. In a report on the state of the prisons in Ireland, 1819, the inspector says that "the bridewell was built when Kilrush was only a small fishing village and the bridewell was then sufficient, but, since that time the population of the town and vicinity is so increased that the present bridewell is insufficient." That Kilrush had its origin in a fishing hamlet is what we should expect. A magnificent harbour was provided by Nature's hand; but, in its early days the town stood back from the creek and in the vicinity of the Church, which was built on the right bank of a little stream flowing down from Knockerry Lake. Even as late as the end of the eighteenth century, the town did not reach as far as the present square. It was just a village, built on the rising ground between the Church and the Glen. In 1780 Lloyd described it as "a great Herring Fishery, a handsome village with a long and wide street and some good houses." It is worthy of note that the old road linking up Kilrush with the far west of Clare passed through the Glen and close to the Workhouse grounds. The old parish Church consisted of nave and chancel, but the building which was to be seen in the cemetery at the end of Moore Street, in the second decade of

22. Ibid.
24. Limerick Chronicle, August 14, 1819.
27. The Workhouse is much later, but I give it as a well known landmark. For the old roads see Presentments of the Clare Grand Jury, 1800-1832.
the nineteenth century, showed that it had been altered considerably. A doorway of great antiquity with lintel and inclined jambs, in the west gable, had been built up and a pointed doorway broken in the south wall. Of the old chancel, only a small portion of the arch survived, and this was of the same age as the doorway in the west gable. The rest of the chancel was quite modern. The nave measured 44 feet by 19 feet and the chancel about 18 feet square. (28) The Church had been taken over by the Protestants early in the reign of James I, and for two hundred years served as their house of worship, until the existing Church was built near by in 1819. (29) It had gone to ruin in 1839, when O'Donovan examined it, and later in the century it disappeared—all but a fragment—when the Vandeleur family erected a mausoleum on the site. It is a relief that it does not come within the scope of this paper to discuss who the founder was, because one would have to mention Senanus, about whom something is known, and Accobran. (30) "in Cell rois in the termen of Inis Cathaig," about whom nothing is known. Westropp says that the founder was "possibly Senanus." (31) Tradition undoubtedly associates it with his name, and the Kilrush Vandeleurs, whose ancestor, the Rev. John Vandeleur, was incumbent of the parish for forty years, refer to it as "the old Church of St. Senan." (32) But the evidence seems to warrant no more than a dedication to the saint.

Roads such as we are accustomed to were unknown, but, as the roads of the eighteenth century followed the lines of the older tracks, we can tell with tolerable accuracy how Kilrush was linked with Ennis. The oldest road, I think, was that by the Shannon, through Ballymacrennan, Kilmore, Clonderlaw, Kildysart, and Clarecastle to Ennis. This was the route taken by Ludlow, being concerned, as he was, to keep in touch with his ships on the river. Another road took the line from Kilrush to Kilcarroll, Ballykett, Cooraclare, over the hills to Kilmaley, Cahercalla, and Ennis. Finally there was the Atlantic coast road by Miltown-Malbay to Ennistymon and Ennis. A traveller from Kilrush could get on to this road at Doonbeg. (33)

KILRUSH—THE CHURCH OF THE WOOD.

As there is no promontory, we may take it that Kilrush means the Church of the wood. (34) Whether the wood was great or small we do not know, but it would be a mistake to assume that Kilrush was a place of forests in the seventeenth century. The wood which gave a name to the district had disappeared long before that time, and the references in the Book of Survey and Distributions (1655), indicate only dwarf wood, (35) and that in small quantity.

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31. Westropp, op. cit., p. 188.

32 The inscription reads "This mausoleum was erected on the site of the old Church of St. Senan."


There is some evidence that the vicinity of the town had been denuded before 1605. In November of that year, Sir Arthur Chichester wrote to Sir Dominic Sarisfield, Hugh Norton, and others "requiring their opinion concerning the suit of James Scoles seeking to set up passage boats at divers places below Limerick."(36) The reply states that there are no places more convenient for a ferry than between Rhinana and Beth, between Carrigafarry and Kilrush, being "places that have no covert to hide stelthis (sic) in . . . . there are no other places but have wodes adjoining close to them wherein stelthis may be hid."

THE PROTESTANT COLONY.

Swiftly on the defeat of the Irish at Kinsale came the confiscation of Tadg Caoch MacMahon's property. Thus Ballykett, Moyadamonore, Moyadabeg, Moilougha, and Gowerhass, about three thousand acres, comprising the MacMahon lands in Kilrush, were granted in July, 1601, to Daniel O'Brien, grandfather of that Lord Clare who has figured in these pages.(37) That, I presume was the last gracious act of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, to the parish of Kilrush.

In 1621, James I, by letters patent, granted an extensive territory in County Clare to Donough, 4th Earl of Thomond. By the said patent, specified lands in Kilrush, Killard, Killearagh, Moyarta, Kilmacduane, and Killimer were erected into the Manor of Kilrush and bestowed on the Earl.(38) At the beginning of the twentieth century a law-suit—Glyn v. Vandeleur(39)—was heard before the Court of Appeal in Ireland, and before the House of Lords. During the hearing of the case this three hundred years old grant was examined under the legal lens and it surprised me not a little to find that the profession had no difficulty in identifying the lands under their archaic names. It is enough to say here that all Kilrush parish, with the exception of those lands that were the subject of Daniel O’Brien’s grant and Iniscathay were granted to the Earl.

It may seem strange that a miserable town without any kind of industry, without commerce, without a castle, and without a history should give its name to the manor. In other words, is it wrong to represent Kilrush as a fishing hamlet, rather than as a town of such importance as to recommend itself to the counsellors of the royal grantor? Doonbeg had a castle to recommend it, and Doonbeg was not passed over inadvertently, as the patent shows. "We do give and grant to our aforesaid Cousin Donough, Earl of Thomond, . . . . also the Castle and two quarters of land of Donbegg, with the appurtenances." It is not too much to assume that the grantee was allowed to choose names for the several manors, and that he chose for his manor in western Thomond the name of Kilrush because in July 1600, it had been the starting point of an expedition which secured for him a mention in dispatches. The Earl's help was appreciated when the President of Munster marched from Limerick "to Kilrush, a place in Thomond, opposite Carrigafoyle, and, by the eight and twentieth of the same, all the foot, the troops and baggage were

36. Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, James I, Nov. 1605.
37. Calendar of Patent Rolls, Ireland, 18th to 45th of Queen Elizabeth.
38. Patent Roll, Chancery, 18th James I.
transported, which in respect of the breadth of the river in that place being at least one league and a half, was expedited beyond all expectation. In the speedy dispatch whereof much was attributed and that worthily to the Earl of Thomond, who provided boats and such other necessaries as his country could afford." (40) The name of Kilrush town may, for all we know, commemorate the founding by Saint Senanus, of a church in the wood; but the name of Kilrush Manor commemorates a military feat, in which the Earl of Thomond, the grantee of 1621, played a prominent part.

The Earl of Thomond, to whom the Manor of Kilrush was granted, manifested his interest in the town by establishing a little colony of Protestants there. (41) The colonists were not all British, but all may have come via Britain. (42) Whether it was their religion, or their loyalty, or their skill in industry, or all three, that urged the Earl to welcome them to Clare, I do not know; but so far I have failed to connect the Grangers, the Chambersees, the Abrahams or the Blounts with any form of industry in Kilrush.

Granger was a man of resourcefulness, and did not allow the grass to grow under his feet. As early as 1629, Thomas Edens, Prebendary of Iniscathay, complained that his glebe land in the parish of Kilrush was held by James Granger, "ye Dutchman and others clamying under ye Earle of Thomond." (43) One wonders whether seizing the glebe lands appealed to the Dutchman as a good method of professing his Protestantism. In April, 1627, a few years after he had settled in Kilrush, James Granger was granted a licence "to hold a market on Tuesday at Kilrush in the County Clare, and two fairs, one on the 8th of March and the other on the 4th October, with a court of pie-powder." (44) The tolls of fair and market, the grabbed glebe lands, and other means of accumulating wealth were turned to good account, so that in 1641 the planters excited the envy of the spoiler. (45) Their depositions are excellently dealt with by Dean White, (46) and further discussion is unnecessary. Sir Daniel O'Brien (47) is named so often that one has to conclude he was looked on as the robber-in-chief. Reading over the statements, one can easily visualise the rapacious knight issuing orders for the apprehension of the Dutch Grangers, and Abrahams, the British Chambersees and Mubrells. These were imprisoned in the Castle of Ballykett, while their cattle were impounded in the adjoining fields. (48)


42. Dwyer, The Diocese of Killaloe, p. 223.

43. Dwyer, The Diocese of Killaloe, p. 223.

44. Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Ireland, 3rd Charles I.

45. Dwyer, The Diocese of Killaloe, p. 223; Frost, History and Topography of the County Clare, p. 360.


47. Later created Viscount Clare.

The subsequent history of this little colony proves that the Revolution of 1641 did not excite terror in the planters of Kilrush. After the storm they settled down once more in this remote part of Clare, cut away from those who were in sympathy with them in politics and religion; and in ten years, having repaired their shattered fortunes, they dominated Kilrush. In 1659, Isaac and Peter Granger, sons of the original settler, were Titulados. In 1660, Isaac was one of the Poll-tax Commissioners for County Clare, and in 1661, he represented Ennis in Parliament. Lewis tells us that the goods of some of the townspeople were seized in payment of Granger’s salary but were released on their stating that he had agreed to serve gratuitously as their representative. After the restoration he was granted a lease of Kilrush with four and a half ploughlands, the lease to expire in 1675. Here I leave the Grangers to notice what looks like a seventeenth century town-planning scheme for Kilrush. In 1672 a lease in reversion was made to Colonel John Blount. This lease contained a covenant “to lay out the town and settle therein ten English families or in want of them ten tradesmen, and to build no houses but with brick or stone and lime, the houses to be slated.”

KILRUSH DURING THE CONFEDERATION AND THE PROTECTORATE.

In 1646, Kilrush looked with wondering eyes on the passage of ships up and down the Shannon, as well as the disembarkation and embarkation of troops at Iniscathay. After the fall of Bunratty to the Confederates, Admiral Penn spent about seven days between the Island and Carrigaholt, endeavouring to obtain water and provisions. In his Diary he wrote under July 22, “I gave command that all the soldiers of each ship, together with others, women and children should be sent ashore to pick, wash, and refresh themselves, to avoid disease which might grow amongst us.” The reference is to the shore of Iniscathay near Kilrush.

Although General Ludlow passed through the town, or at least quite close to it, on his way to Carrigaholt in November, 1651, he does not mention Kilrush in his Memoirs.

DR. O’MOLONY GOES INTO EXILE FROM KILRUSH?

Later in the seventeenth century, Kilrush is mentioned as the scene of a sad incident in the life of Dr. O’Molony, Bishop of Killaloe. This great prelate

49. Census of Ireland c. 1659, edited by Pender.
50. Ibid, Appendix, p. 624.
54. Throughout I have given this form of the name in agreement with the Hon. Robert O’Brien in his notes to Dineley’s Journal. In the Census of Ireland c. 1659, Frost’s History and White’s History, Granler is the form adopted.
57. Memorials of the Professional Life and Times of Sir William Penn, by Granville Penn.
left the diocese and went into exile with a price of £150 on his head. That he "took shipping at Kilrush" was asserted by Father O'Grady, sometime before April 25, 1681, but this unfortunate man, who had forced himself on Tulla as parish priest, is not a reliable source of information. The Judas referred to in Bishop O'Molony's Letter to Propaganda, a contumacious delinquent under censure by his Ordinary, and a man with a history of treachery may well be suspected of wishing Dr. O'Molony far from Killaloe. Reading the Bishop's letter one comes to the conclusion that he did not leave his diocese before the end of May, 1681, and the embarkation of his Lordship at Kilrush may be dismissed as an effort of Father O'Grady's imagination. The letter is dated June 13, and clearly states that Dr. O'Molony was in his diocese "about fifteen days ago."

THE KILRUSH VANDELEURS AND THEIR TITLE TO THE ESTATE.

For three hundred years the Vandeleurs have been associated with Kilrush, and if one were to depend on tradition, one would have to take cognisance of a Cromwellian soldier, thoroughly dissatisfied with the bog-land that had fallen to his lot, eagerly offering for a consideration to the first Kilrush Vandeleur as much of it as he could ride around in a day. That has no foundation in fact; neither has the tradition that the Rev. John Vandeleur, having donned a military uniform and fought on the winning side at the Boyne and Aughrim had the Kilrush estate thrust upon him.

The ancestor of the Kilrush Vandeleurs was the Rev. John Vandeleur, appointed to the prebend of Iniscathay in March 1687. He was the son of Giles Vandeleur of Rathlaheen, and this Giles Vandeleur was the first of the name to establish a connection with the parish of Kilrush, by becoming tenant to the Earl of Thomond for Ballynote which he held in 1656. But that has little to do with the Vandeleur title, which may be stated in a few words. On September, 26, 1712, Henry, Earl of Thomond, leased to Boyle Vandeleur, in trust for the Rev. John Vandeleur, prebendary of Iniscathay, "the Towns and lands of Kilrush, Monenmore, Leadmore, Carrowmacalla, and Cappagh, containing by estimation 3,381 acres." On January 7, 1749, John Vandeleur, son of the above-mentioned Rev. John Vandeleur, purchased those lands inter alia in West Clare, for the sum of £9,826 0. 6\(\frac{2}{3}\). Such are the facts of the Vandeleur title, which goes back neither to the time of Cromwell nor to the Battle of the Boyne. In face of a document which was examined minutely before two courts of law in Ireland, and before the House of Lords in England, early in the present century, the traditional version of the title must be discarded. A statement in the Parochial Survey of Ireland, that Mr. Van-

60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
64. The Hon. Robert O'Brien's Notes to Dineley's Journal.
66. Ibid.
deleur purchased the Earl of Thomond's Kilrush estates in 1703,\(^{67}\) must also be discarded. I have relied on the evidence laid before the Master of the Rolls and before the Court of Appeal in Ireland, which is incorporated in a volume of 438 pages, and referred to as Glynn v. Vandeleur.

Another of those embellished traditions which lack foundation, maintains that the Vandeleurs resided at Kilrush from 1687 until Kilrush House was destroyed by fire on March 25, 1897.\(^{68}\) The unwary seeker after information who visits the district will have various ruins pointed out to him and described with convincing assurance as the one-time home of some member of the Vandeleur family. The truth is that from the death of the Rev. John Vandeleur, in 1727,\(^{69}\) the family lived in Dublin or in England, having no residence in Kilrush, until Kilrush House was built in 1808.\(^{70}\) I notice that when Mr. Vandeleur purchased the Kilrush estate in 1749, he was described in the deed of purchase as "John Vandeleur of the City of Dublin." The Vandeleurs occupy a prominent position in nineteenth century Kilrush and consequently will come before us again. As this paper is already long enough, I shall devote another to the parish of Kilrush in the Census of 1659 and in the Book of Survey and Distribution.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to the Very Rev. John Canon Meade, P.P., V.F., Kilrush; to Mr. R. Simington, to Mr. Richard Hayes, author of Irish Swordsmen of France, etc., and to the proprietors of the Limerick Chronicle.

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68. Vide inscription on Vandeleur mausoleum in Kilrush cemetery.
70. Ennis Chronicle, May 7, 1808.