Mungret Abbey.

Donal Mór's Land Grant: Transcript from Black Book of Limerick.
Mungret

By REV. MICHAEL MOLONEY, L.Ph.

The Four Masters record the death of Nessan under the year 551. Within a century his Mungret foundation ranked with the first monasteries in the land as Cummian makes clear in his letter to the abbot of Iona, written about the year 662. This treatise cites the comarba of Nessan at Mungret along with the successors of Ailbe at Emly, Ciaran at Clonmacnois, Brendan of Birr, and Molua of Clonfert Molua as the prominent churchmen from whom Cummian had sought light on the vexed question of the Easter date. And yet of the founder of this notable house we have really no more information than the scant entry in the Martyrology of Oengus under July 25: "Nessan. i. deochan Nessan o munghairit." For Nessan is a baffling figure. There is no Life of him on record: the Book of Leinster places his name first in the long list of deacons, but from no source can we learn the name of his parents, his sept, or his home. "The excellent and most saintly deacon Nessan" visited Emly, we are told in Ailbe's Life, to consult that saint as to whether he should accept or reject men's gifts. And in the Life of Colum of Tir-dá-glas there is the story of Nessan's visit to ask the saint's intercession, while Colum was staying at Inis Eirc in the Fergus estuary.

That Mungret maintained its prominent rank down to the Norse raids appears from the bequest of King Cormac, who fell in battle in the autumn of 908. His favours were bestowed on Armagh, Glendalough, and Kildare, and in Munster upon Ardfield, Lismore, Emly, Scattery, and Mungret. To Mungret he left three ounces of gold and a satin chasuble, and Keating, who is our authority, goes on to say: "High indeed was the testimony Cormac bore to the community of Mungaird, as we read in the poem which begins: O servant bind our provisions, in which he gives the number of the monks who were in the community serving the six temples that were in the church. Cathair Dheochain Neasain that church is called."

The Tripartite Life, compiled about the time of Cormac's bequest, bears similar testimony to Mungret's position at that date, a decade or two before the Danes founded Limerick. In the narrative of his visit to Mullach Cae and the journey thence to the Shannon side, (1) Patrick is made to foretell the future greatness of Nessan's Mungret and of the Inis Cathaigh of St. Senan, while there is no word of Inis Ibiton or of Mainchin. The Tripartite actually makes the boy Nessan meet Patrick on the slope of Mullach Cae: the lad did the saint a favour and in return Patrick founded Mungret for him. There is a well to the north of the Mungret churches dedicated to St. Patrick.

COIN AND BELL FINDS.

Apart from the evidence of Cormac's bequest and the Tripartite reference, we have a curious and tangible confirmation of Mungret's wide appeal in that early tenth century. Writing in the *Memorials of Adare* (1865), the third Earl of Dunraven says: "Some years ago a considerable number of Anglo-Saxon coins and small ingots of silver were discovered by some workmen in opening a quarry in a field near the old churches of Mungret . . . . Seven of the ingots of silver, and nine of the coins, in beautiful preservation, came into my possession." They now form part of the Dunraven Collection in Limerick City Museum. Four of the coins bear the name of Edward of Wessex, two of Aethelstan—son and grandson of the gallant Saxon, Alfred the Great, the contemporary of Cormac Mac Cuileannain. Two bell finds from Mungret are on record. One was described in the Dublin Penny Journal of January 23, 1836, and the illustration was reproduced by Revd. E. Cahill, S.J., in his essay on Mungret in the Mungret Annual for 1907. The original account speaks of a square altar bell "of very rude workmanship, much corroded by time, and composed of a mixed metal, hammered and rivetted together, dug up at Loughmore, near the celebrated abbey of Mungret." Of the other bell the National Museum authorities have supplied me with the following note from Wilde's List: "Bronze bell found near Mungret Abbey, 1849. Looped handle (fractured). Still retains iron clapper. Height, 4 3/4", or 5 5/8" including handle. Mouth 3" by 3 1/2".

Roadside Church: Lintelled Doorway.

THE EARLY CHURCH RUINS.

The three ruined churches still surviving at Mungret have been vested in the Board of Works since 1880. The two smaller date from the monastic period, while the more imposing building in the main graveyard is a parish church built after Mungret had ceased to be a monastic centre. General repairs were carried out at the churches twelve years ago and the Report(2) issued at

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2. 101st annual report of the Comm. of Public Works, 1932/33.
the time gives an ample description of the remains together with an abstract of the Annal references to the monastery, its abbots and enrenaghs. The plates used to illustrate the Report are reproduced in this paper by kind permission of the Commissioners.

Of the two older churches the Report says: "The northern church by the roadside and the small church to the south-east of the graveyard are both very simple rectangular buildings of that early Irish type which cannot be assigned to a definite date but which is certainly pre-Norman and probably belongs to the period 800 to 1100. Both these churches have undergone much re-building in ancient as well as in modern times and retain only small traces of some of their original features." The Annals record the usual Norse raids, also the burning of the monastery by the Ulster-Connacht force which raided Thomond in 1088.\(^{(3)}\)

**THE SUPPRESSION OF MUNGRET.**

By the end of the eleventh century the monastic centres for the most part had ceased to be more than important estates controlled by family vested interests. Mungret may have counted for more than that if we are to credit the annalist's eulogy of the abbot Conn mac Giolla buidhe, who died in 1100. The epithet 'distinguished wise man and most learned senior in Munster' is applied to him by the Four Masters: perhaps it is no mere stock phrase as Mungret was the resort of notable scholars at the time. Two years later the Prefect of Studies at Armagh died while on a visit to Mungret; he was Mughron Ua Morgair, St. Malachy's father.

Yet already the fate of Mungret was sealed. Shortly before the close of the century Muirchertach O Briain, claimant to the high-kingship, had moved from Kincora to make his headquarters at the island city of Limerick. Soon there appears beside him the mysterious Gilbert,\(^{(4)}\) the churchman who was to guide his king in the work of reform. In 1107 we find Gilbert describing himself as bishop of Limerick in a letter to St. Anselm. That same year Mungret makes its last appearance in the Annals with the record of its dismantling by King Muirchertach. A few years later the reforming campaign of Gilbert, the papal legate, and Muirchertach, the ard-ri, reached its climax at Rath Breasail. By the decrees of that synod the Munster sees for the most part were located at the sites of old monastic centres—Emly, Lismore, Cork, Ross—with their lines of abbot and enrenach in long succession. Cashel, Killaloe, and Limerick on the other hand had no such background: they were chosen as sees under O'Brien influence for political and family reasons.\(^{(5)}\)

The struggle of Malachy with the lay enrenach family battening on sacred things at Armagh must have been reproduced on a less dramatic scale up and down the country. Muirchertach's raid on Mungret may be taken as an incident in this campaign; it has its parallel seven years later when the Annals record the burning of Fore, Clonard, Cill Beneoin, Kilcullen, Kilkenny, and Ardpatick. That Mungret did not yield at once to the new arrangement is clear from the Montpellier document,\(^{(6)}\) which lists the provincial sees fifty

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6. Cf. Lawlor, *A fresh authority for the Synod of Kells in PRIA, xxxvi, C.3*
years after Rath Breasail, and adds under Cashel: "there are two churches under the archbishop which claim they should have their own bishops, namely Ardmor and Mungarath." The protest was unavailing, and before the century was out Donal Mór, grandson of Muirchertach, bestowed the lands of Mungret on "Briccius, bishop of Luimneach (episcopo Luminicano) and his successors, and to the clergy of St. Mary's in free and perpetual alms, to wit, from Mungret arch to the lands of Imailin and from the ford of Ceim to the Shannon."

LANDS OF LIMERICK SEE.

The earliest formal account we possess of the episcopal manors is Bishop Rochfort's (1336-53) rental in the Black Book. Here Kilmallock, Clonshire, Ardagh, and Loughill appear with Mungret as manor centres. Among outlying places where the bishop claimed manorial rights the Black Book mentions Clonagh, Cloncrew, Clouncagh, Disert Oengus, Disert Morgans, Kilfergus, Kilsceannell, Rath na Saor, Shanagolden, and Scattery. Most of these places had churches whose importance before the Rath Breasail reform can be shown on documentary, architectural or other grounds: perhaps it is not too much to suggest that it was because of this importance that their church lands became, as at Mungret, bishop's manors.

While the temporalities passed to the bishop, the church livings at these notable old centres were conferred upon the Cathedral Fabric or on the dignitaries of the Chapter. Thus Disert Oengus gave its name to a prebend; the archdeacon's livings included Ardagh and Cloncrew; the chancellor held Kilsceannell and Clonshire. The precentor claimed spiritualities at Scattery, and was rector of Kilmurry, Kilfergus, Loughill, Shanagolden, Disert Morgans and Tomdeely; while the bishop held manorial rights on the island and in each of these parishes. Surely this suggests an ancient connection between Inis CATHAIGH and the above named group of churches on the Shannon fringe of UI CONAILLE and the above.

As some recognition of its ancient rank Mungret as a parish became a living of the dean, the chief dignity of the cathedral chapter. It was first conferred by William de Burgo's son, Bishop Hubert (1223-50) on William de Wodeford (BBL, p. 83). Earlier in his reign Hubert had obtained a royal grant for a market each Tuesday at his Mungret manor; his successor, Bishop Robert, granted, or re-granted, the burgesses there a charter of self-government according to the custom of Bréteuil. These rights, less ample than those granted to cities by royal charter, were conceded to several manorial towns, including the episcopal boroughs of Leihlin and Cloyne.

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7. Imailin is presumably named from the Ul Maithe sept which the Top. Poems place in Tuath Luimnigh. The early 15th century Taxation of Bishop O Dea places a parish of Crewymallia in Limerick diocese: a comparison with White's 17th century list suggests its identity with Knocknagall, which with Creeora forms the southern part of the present parish of Mungret. King John eventually granted from the City Liberties the 10 ploughlands of O'may near Mungret to the Bishop (BBL, pp. 87, 120). For a grant of two ploughlands at the western extremity by William de Burgo see Black Book, pp. 110-111.

In a manuscript note the late James Greene Barry suggested that the 'ford of Ceim' was "probably the ford on the river at Fort Etne which is the extreme southern end of the parish." Incidentally Fort Etne is a rendering of Cathair na tanátha, a townland mentioned in the O'Brien rentals.

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9. Cf. BBL, p. 162; Curtis Medieval Ireland, p. 410. For Leiglin see Analeacta, I, p. 168;
THE PARISH CHURCH.

To this period of civic ambition belongs the parish church of which considerable remains survive in the larger churchyard. To quote from the B.O.W. Report: "This is the largest and most important building and stands in the centre of the graveyard. It is long and narrow, approximately 109 feet by 30 feet exclusive of projections, and is divided into three parts built at various dates from the 13th century to the 15th. Alterations and rebuildings of parts have destroyed or covered evidence of date and have made an analysis of the growth of the structure a matter of difficulty. In general terms, however, it can be said that the eastern section, or Choir, is mainly of the 13th century, the Nave of doubtful date, and the western portion of the 15th century. The eastern gable of the choir contains a pair of pointed windows of 13th century date, the embrasures inwards being widely splayed and having a moulded rear-arch over. All the dressings are of sandstone. In the southern wall is a trefoil headed piscina niche and the splayed embrasures of four pointed windows grouped in pairs: one light in each pair remains complete but built up externally." As Lenihan has something of interest to say about the piscina he may usefully be quoted here: "The great eastern window was some time ago quite covered with ivy externally, but some treasure-seekers removed it without doing any further mischief. Internally on the right side of the same window there stood, until the last few years, a fine specimen of a piscina, the bottom resembling the impress of a human face, which some vandal or dishonest antiquarian visitor has lately destroyed if not removed. The venerable ash trees which occupied the northern side have also disappeared. And indeed even the very walls of this truly venerable house would have long been destroyed had the builder of the new church been permitted to construct the new edifice on the site of the old. But the people of the neighbourhood firmly opposed it, and fortunately carried their point."

The Report goes on to describe the nave and the western tower. As a certain number of Limerick churches had such residential quarters, the description should be of general interest: "No details by which the Nave can be dated remain in situ; the three-quarter columns which form the lower jambs of the north door do not properly belong to it but to some other work now destroyed. The upper room or gallery which covered the western end of the Nave was contemporaneous with the western annexe, which may indicate that the nave also belongs to the 15th century. That this western annexe is, however, an addition of the 15th century is indicated by the details and the 'straight joint' between the small tower and the Nave wall. It is a small building of two storeys with a slender square tower on the northern side containing a staircase and a belfry; the topmost storey is of somewhat later date than the rest. The rooms were obviously residential and have numerous small windows of late medieval type; the external entrance doorway now built up, was at the south-east corner. There are several cupboard recesses in the walls; there is a small projection for a flue in the western gable of the Nave but no trace of a fireplace now remains."

The Dean of course lived near the Cathedral in Limerick (10); the accommodation at Mungeret was provided, no doubt, for a resident curate. The buildings duly passed to the state church, and in 1611 a Commission sitting in Limerick reported that the church and chancel were in good repair, and that

10. Cf. BBL, p. 120; also Elizabethan map of Limerick in Hardiman collection (copy in Limerick City Library).
Philip Jenkins, reading minister, served the cure. When the medieval church went out of use, the new church mentioned by Lenihan was raised in the vicinity for Protestant service in 1822. This was demolished a century later, and the material employed in building the presbytery at Raheen.

MUNGRET WALLS.

Three hundred years ago the Civil Survey jurors recited four ruinous churches at Mungret; three are still extant, perhaps the fourth stood on one of the neighbouring enclosures marked as glebes in the O.S. sheet for 1844. As the glebes are not shown on the current ordnance sheets, a tracing from the relevant parts of the 1844 map is used to illustrate this paper. The Survey jurors listed after the churches “other stone walls” which probably puzzled them as much as they did subsequent investigators. They did not worry the map makers, for the surviving stretch of old masonry coincides with a hedged fence and so escaped the notice of the ordnance sappers. The wall continues eastward from the southern fence of the field in which the smaller graveyard
stands. To describe the remains, obscured by a thorn hedge and thick undergrowth, we cannot do better than follow the account given by Father Cahill, who was familiar with the Mungret scene from the early eighteen-eighties. Father Cahill mentions the ruins of a stretch of wall of cemented masonry, four feet thick and twelve feet high, extending eastward to a gateway about three hundred yards from the church ruins—a gateway whose towers, he says, were still standing early in the last century.

What is the age and purpose of this wall? The Tripartite Life has a pleasing story about the grave of Nessan’s mother, which lay outside the monastic cathair to the west where the ringing of the church bell could not be heard. Father Cahill suggested that the wall just described was a part of that ancient enclosure, and that the gateway was the Mungret Arch mentioned in the land grant of Donal Mór. As, however, the places named in the charter appear to be boundary points, it is improbable that a gateway in the very heart of the monastic lands would be cited with limits like the Shannon and the lands of Úi Mhaille. The remains, too, indicate something more ambitious than the vallum of an early monastery. Mungret had a borough charter and if there were any evidence that its civic ambitions were realized we might suspect that we had come upon the trace of the town enclosure. It is doubtful if the vill of Mungret were ever more than the rural village represented by the “one tatch house, fifteen cabbins, foure ruinous churches, and other stone walls” of the Civil Survey.

What purpose then did the mysterious walls serve? Perhaps the name of the townland in which the walls stand holds the best clue. The Temple Mungret of the Civil Survey maps covered the area of the present townlands of Drumarrig, Cahiranardrish, Moneteen, Skehaacreggaun, Loughmore, and Baunacloka. Our ruined walls stood in Baunacloka and formed part of its boundary at one point—where the 1844 map shows a globe. I have argued elsewhere that the townland name represents a castle green—Bán na Cloiche, and I submit as at least plausible the opinion that the long straight stretch of masonry is part of the courtyard wall of an imposing castle. To quote again from Father Cahill: “A little to the west of the place where the ruins of the cashel cease to be traceable, and about 200 yards from the nearest of the churches, the foundations of an old building existed which are now removed. The natives called it the Monks’ Kitchen and in digging the foundations some years ago a flag was discovered which looked like a hearth stone. This building seems to have been of about the same dimensions as the old church on the road-side.” Was this the missing fourth church, or was it the castle keep?

THE BISHOPS’ CASTLE.

Of course the bishops had a residence half a mile away to the north-west in Castle Mungret; part of its basement survives beneath a farmhouse south of the modern corcass road to Limerick Docks. Peyton in his survey,

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11. The Monastery of Mungret, his paper in the Mungret Annual, reappeared in 1908 as a C.T.S. pamphlet. It is now out of print, but the files of the Mungret Annual may be consulted at Limerick City Library.

For the map this paper is indebted to M. Ni Mhaille, B.Arch.


13. The Castle Mungret of the Civil Survey contains as well as the townland of that name Conigar, Rathmale, Camheen, Loughanleagh, and Ballyduane. For the castle see Westropp, Ancient castles of Co. Limerick, PRIA (1909), p. 159.
made after the Desmond Wars, sketches two castles on the margin of his entries for Mungret. The medieval bishops had their chief residence beside St. Munchin's churchyard just within the Englishtown walls. According to Dr. Webb (Begley, II, 415) some of them, including Conor O Dea, “for the most part kept their residence” at Tomdeely. Mungret was so near their city home that it can rarely have tempted them in their travels.

To conclude the survey of Mungret’s material remains we must list the featureless building standing in Mr. Quaid’s farm at Dooradoyle—a townland which formed part of the Manor of Mungret. Of this ruin Father Cahill says: “About midway between Mungret and Limerick, but within the parish of Mungret, there is a ruin which the natives call the Monks’ Mill. It seems, however, to be medieval.” John O Donovan records in the Place Name books that the local people called it Shannillian Mill.

**The Fourteenth Century Tenants.**

If our information about Mungret’s ancient buildings is meagre in the extreme, we are compensated by the fulness of the record affecting the changes of fortune through the centuries in the wide acres that had once been the ten- monn of Nessan. Bishop Rochfort’s fourteenth century Rental shows that there were three grades of tenants, the *betagii*—all native, the free tenants, and the burgesses of the vill of Mungret. The name *Betagii*, common in feudal Ireland, derives from the word ‘bidhtaih,’ and is often used as a synonym for *nativi* or *hibernici*. The betagh tenants in the earliest Norman manors ranked as serfs. As late as the second part of the fourteenth century the betagh groups in the bishop’s manor at Cloyne are described as ‘hibernici of the church of Colman, and born in servitude.’ Elsewhere in the manor it is claimed that the betaghs may not remove without the bishop’s sanction. At Cloyne, however, the position of the Irish settlements may have been better in fact than in legal theory. This was certainly so at Mungret under Bishop Rochfort in 1336. Practically all those named as betaghs appear again as free tenants paying rent instead of rendering services. This had happened in the Fitzgerald manor of Shanid before the end of the thirteenth century as appears from the entry “there are no works of betagii because they are charged with rent for works, gifts, and presents.” The name survived though the servile status had ended.

As the betagh names are, perhaps, the most interesting feature of the rental, the particulars are translated here in full:

**The Betaghs and their lands:**

- O Dowayn holds Ballydwane (villam Dowaynn) in the west part of Mungret.
- O Crynan holds Ballycrynan beside Ballydwane.
- O Molcassell holds Ballymocassil in the north-west.

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16. Bishop Conor O Dea copied the original rental into the Black Book in 1418, and may have made some additions.
In the east part of the bishop's manor are the lands of four betaghys from the manor castle to Ballycummin and to Ban na Cloiche (? campum de Clochdown) on the east, and their names are Oearthany, Oecogan, Ohilyle, Oconuyrk.

The last surname probably represents O Connor as Nicholas Connor appears with an O Kearney among the rent-paying freemen. The Irish O Cogans are, of course, distinct from the Norman de Cogans; Crynan may stand for the modern Crinion or Greenan. The 1659 Census ranks O Hally among the principal Irish names in the Liberties of Limerick, and this surname may possibly be concealed under the spelling 'Ohilye.'

There were Gaels even among the burgesses of the rural town which as we saw had municipal rights based on those of Breteuil. Mac Giolla Padraig appears among them as well as an O Galvin, probably one of the family whose name is preserved in Derrygalvin, an ancient parish now included in St. Patrick's. It is a Dal Caisil surname, as is O Kearney. Probably the Irish families were connected with the monastic lands even before they passed into the possession of the bishops. Anyhow, this is very likely the case with Maol Caisil, as a Mungrat abbot of that name died in 909. Another Irish name that appears more than once among the Mungrat tenants is Laighneach, and this naming of a family from its province of origin has a parallel in the name Connachtach held by several burgesses in the bishop's town of Shanagolden, and in the term Ultach naming another townsman there (BBL. 159). Midheach (Meade) was the most common surname among the residents in the bishop's town of Kilmallock.

**Anglo-Irish Tenants.**

And now for the tenant families of English origin on the Mungrat manor. Geoffrey Cooks appears both as burgess and landholder: no doubt the family connection with the place dates to Thomas de Cocis, who in the late thirteenth century took a holding formerly in the tenancy of a Bagot. Thomas became dean of Limerick and so must have held the parish of Mungrat among his livings. Other notable tenants were Keating and Brown, while the burgesses included Butler, Rice, Ellis, White, Lewis, MacAdam, Glain (Glynn ?). Smythe, another burgess name, may represent Smithwick; at least the Justiciary Rolls show about 1300 a Smythe family at Kilkenny, who may well be the forebears of the Smithwick family there. A glance at the townland names in the vicinity (cf. Mac Spealain, op. cit.) will show that many of these Mungrat tenants, native and colonial, have left their trace even on the modern map.

**The Loftus Family.**

The ordnance map of 1844 names the lane leading from the church ruins at Mungrat to Raheen Cross as Loftus Road. The name does not appear on the modern map and the district has lost all memory of the remarkable family that for three centuries at least lived as unruly tenants on the Manor of Mungrat. The first entry regarding them in the rental sets the turbulent note maintained throughout the record by this vigorous family. "Lofte had 40 acres but his heir claims as many more as held by his father." In 1434 the Papal Letters show John Loft, citizen of Limerick, with Richard and Nicholas Arthur, appealing to Rome against their excommunication by the bishop. The

19. Ferrar says it was the lane leading to Loughmore.
event must have been a sensation of the first magnitude in the Limerick of that age for the Arthurs all through the century were the leading family of the city. Indeed, Nicholas’s son, who abandoned a merchant’s career for the church (20), eventually became bishop, second in succession from John Mothel, who had placed his father under the ban of the church. A Piers Loftus was mayor three times in the first quarter of the fifteenth century; while John held the office of bailiff at least seven times, his last tenure of the office being in 1444-5 during the mayoralties of Richard and Nicholas Arthur, his erstwhile colleagues in disgrace. During one of his periods as bailiff, according to the White MSS., as quoted by Ferrar, John Loftus built part of the east wall of the Irishtown just north of the point where it was breached in 1690.

John Loftus, the excommunicate or his full namesake, appears in conflict with Bishop Creagh, John Mothel’s successor, in 1463. The Statute Rolls for that year recite the bishop’s plaint against this burgess who instead of discharging his duties at Munger under the charter of Breteuil “gives the said burgage (rent) to the king’s enemies”—no doubt the lords of Pobal Briain. And it was decreed that “it shall be lawful for the said bishop to issue censures of Holy Church without any contradiction from our sovereign lord the King . . . against those who object and refuse to pay the rents and duties belonging to the said bishop.” This decision throws light on the excommunication of twenty years before, which the appeal merely imputed to the false allegation of ‘grave excesses and crimes.’ So we need not be surprised a century later to find a ‘Piers Lofte of Mongery’ appearing as in need of pardon from Elizabeth after the Desmond Wars. (21) With him in the list are various O Briens of Carrigogunnell, Purcells of Croagh, Maurice Hurley of Knocklong, and—for good measure—two Rochforts of Limerick city.

They have done so much to enliven the staid records of the manor that it is with regret we have to record the severance of the Loftus family from Munger in the seventeenth century. Writing late in 1633 to Laud, his friend and future fellow-victim, Lord Deputy Wentworth (22) mentions the case of Loftus who had been paying his rent of £80 to the Catholic instead of the Protestant bishop. The following August he recorded that Stritch, son-in-law and heir to Loftus, would not accept the deputy’s offer “so the bishop hath the land,” meaning of course Dr. Gough, the Protestant bishop, who died within a week of the dating of the letter. Now Dr. Webb writing in 1641 speaks of the lands of Ballykeefe and Dooradoyle as being “lately recovered by Bishop Gough, now leased forth to his widow for 21 years whereof four years only are expired, paid by yearly rent eighty pounds.” The date of recovery and the identity of the rent can scarcely be a coincidence, and we may assume that the townlands named were the ancient Loftus holding. As shown on the contemporary Petty map, these townlands included also the present Sluggary and Gouldavoher.

Writing in Studies in 1939, Marquis MacSwiney throws some light on the last Loftus of Munger. Sir John Higgins, who died at Seville in 1729, had been chief physician to the king of Spain; Saint-Simon in his memoirs wondered “whether it would be too much to say that Higgins was the first physician

21. Fiant, an. 1584; In the Peyton survey two years later he figures as Pierce Laughtes holding four quarters from the bishop.
in Europe." He was the son of Dr. Pat Higgins of Limerick, and Mary, daughter of John Loftus of Annacotty. Sir John had once informed a correspondent that his "grandfather, John Loftus, was heir to the estate of Mungret, near Limerick," adding "if I had what belongs to me I should enjoy several considerable tenements both in Limerick and in the county." The severance from Limerick probably came about Strafford's time, for though John Loftus appears among the merchants in the Limerick Charter of 1609, the Loftus name is absent from the list of 1641 proprietors in the Civil Survey.

The Loftus family of Mungret were, of course, in no way related to the family founded by Adam Loftus, Elizabeth's archbishop of Dublin. Neither is there any connection between them and the many families of that name in Mayo, for in their case the surname is an arbitrary English version of their ancestral name—O Lochnán. Dealing with an English family so named, Burke writes "The family of Loftt or Lloft is stated to have been of Danish origin."

And we may take our final leave of this remarkable family of Mungret burgesses with a quotation from John Ferrar: "There were 100 students at Mungret of the name of Loftus who frequently took their evening walk together on a small road leading down to the Lough, from whence it received the name of Loftus's road." Whatever we may think of Ferrar's tale, it shows the Loftus name was vividly remembered in the late eighteenth century.

**REFORMATION AND THE MANOR LANDS: LOSS AND RECOVERY.**

Hugh Lacy was the last Catholic bishop to hold the temporalities. Though he was deprived in 1571, he managed through family influence to retain some see lands in the western manors, and it is probably to him—the Black Bishop as he was called—that we owe the preservation of Bishop Conor O Dea's precious Pontificalia. The prelates of the established church had more influential opponents to cope with in their struggle for the estates. (23) Elizabethan planters like Cullum, Courtenay, Oughtred, and Trenchard, not content with their rich harvest from the Desmond forfeiture, had included in their patents some attractive gleanings from the episcopal globes. Bourchier of Lough Gur actually actually got a grant of Castle Mungret (Fiants Eliz., 5282). Temple Mungret was lost permanently to the Roches, ancestors of the Carass

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23. The position of the manors from the Reformation to the Dissolution can be followed in a series of published documents, viz.:

(a) Dr. Adams' notes on the last pages of the Black Book, with some further material set out by Dr. Begley in his sketch of that prelate's career;

(b) Dr. Cough's land transactions as recorded by Begley, II, 401-2;

(c) Dr. Webb's statement of 1641, published in this Journal in 1916, and later by Dr. Begley in the second volume of his History of Limerick Diocese;

(d) The List of Globes from the Book of Survey and Distribution, published as an appendix to the Civil Survey of Limerick;

(e) Particulars of the lands granted in compensation to the establishment bishops after the Restoration: the Limerick items are given by R. C. Simington, editor of the Civil Survey, in a footnote to the Introduction;

(f) Rental of the Bishopric of Limerick, in Established Church (Ireland) Commission, 1868.
family, and passed through marriage to the Bindons. However, three active Protestant bishops succeeded in their claim to many of the lost lands between the death of Elizabeth and the outbreak of the Confederate Wars. Dr. Adams won back Castle Mungret and Ballycummin. Dr. Gough, aided as we have seen by Laud and Wentworth, got possession of Ballykeeffe and Dooradoyle. Dr. Webb writing in 1641 explains how he had enhanced the value of the property by “making sea banks and other fences about it”—a welcome piece of information beside which we may set a tradition of the Monsell family recalled by the late James Grene Barry that the banks of the river between the Maigue and Ballinacurra were made with the assistance of a grant from the Irish Parliament of 1634 when Wentworth was Lord Deputy.

From the Restoration to the Disestablishment the Protestant bishops had secure possession of the Mungret Manor lands. Like the other landed proprietors, they chose to set whole townlands to middlemen rather than give leases to the working farmers. Even when they were not absentee landlords they were for the most part English or north-country men without local knowledge or connections that might suggest direct dealings with the tenantry. Indeed through the whole period only one of these prelates, Sexten Pery (1784-94), was a Limerick man. His immediate predecessor, Dr. Gore, had built a summer residence at Conigar, but this soon fell into disuse: the Place Name books, compiled about 1840, have this entry: “the old mansion of Conigar almost in ruins, built in 1774 by a son of a former bishop; new farmhouse, 2 storey, built 1827 within two chains of old house.” According to Lewis the residence had been sold to Charles Wilson, and the Griffith Valuation represents Mrs. Wilson as leasing nearly 200 acres at Conigar from the bishop in 1850.

Lewis, too, gives us a picture of the provision for the spiritual needs of the group of middlemen and agents attracted to the Mungret estates. There was the church built in 1822: “a small but handsome cruciform edifice in the later English style with an octagonal tower crowned with battlements and crocketed pinnacles.” And there was the neat three-storey glebe house built a few years later for the vicar. The church went out of use a few years after the Disestablishment and was unroofed in 1900; the vicarage is the residence now known as Mount Mungret. By way of contrast the Place Name books a few years later give us illuminating glimpses of the silent patient men whose toil had given the lands their increase. A few of O Donovan’s entries shed a ray of light on the means by which the humble folk of the soil escaped the utter degradation of their helot status under the Penal code.

At Castle Mungret, school with 60 boys and 20 girls, 2 Prot., rest R.C. supported by pupils.

At Gouldavoher, school with 40 boys and 20 girls, all R.C., established in 1809; teacher paid by pupils.

At Ballycummin, school with 20 boys and 10 girls, all R.C., teacher paid by pupils.

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24. Cf. Civil Survey, p. 480. When the Bindon estates were sold in 1852 trustees bought seventy acres at Drumdarrig for an agricultural school. After a sickly existence, the school expired in 1878, and the Commissioners of National Education, who had operated it, surrendered their lease. Four years later a new lease was made to the Jesuit Fathers by the then trustees—Lord Emily, Sir Stephen de Vere, Sir David Roche, Edward O’Brien, and James Grene Barry. The fabric of the former agricultural school is now embodied in Mungret College.

Cottage residence of Rev. J. Moore, P.P.; orchard attached.

R. C. chapel, thatched and in bad repair, holds 400.

The thatched chapel that O Donovan saw stood by the Derryknockane road some hundred yards south-east from the site of the present church at Raheen Cross. The story of Raheen church is told in a mural tablet fixed within it:

Pray for the soul of Jeremiah Halpin, P.P., who died on 5th October, 1845. Scarce one year pastor of the parish and suffering under a fatal malady he yet commenced and roofed in this church whose completion, interrupted by the Famine, has just been completed together with the erection of this monument by Revd. M. Casey, P.P., Novr. 1856.

SALE OF MUNGRET MANOR LANDS.

Comparing the Rental of 1868, the Griffith Valuation figures, and the particulars in the Place Name books, we find that at the Disestablishment the Bishop owned 3,700 acres at Mungret from which the annual income in rents and fines amounted to £2,100. Mungret was in fact the most profitable of all the manors, as this revenue was almost exactly half of the income from all see lands in the united dioceses of Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe.

Col. Gough of Fethard held the townlands of Ballykeeffe, Dooradoyle, Gouldavoher, and Sluggary—1,570 acres, the former Loftus estate—from the bishop for £447. Except for 100 acres in his own hands, the remainder was sublet, mostly to tenants at will, at rents varying from £2 to £4 per acre.

Sir David Roche held the 700 acres at Ballycummin for £146, retaining more than three parts of it in his own hands. Adjoining his Carass residence he held the lands of Ballyhourigan in perpetuity from the see.

The Compton family, whoever they may have been, had a lease of Camheen, 185 acres for £144. Most of it was set to tenants at will at rents varying from £2 to £8 per acre.

In 1850 Robert Wogan Studdert had succeeded his father as middleman for practically all that remained of the manor lands. In 1868 his name does not appear, and Edward L. Griffin held lands formerly leased to Studdert at Castle-Mungret and Ballymacashel, while the townlands of Rathmale and Loughan were set to tenants at will in farms varying from 6 to 84 acres at an average rent of £1 per acre.

As far as the see estates were concerned the net result of the Disestablishment was that most lands held under lease were sold to the tenants at an average of 22½ years purchase. As most of the farmers held not from the bishop but from middlemen, their position was not affected by such transactions. Eventually, of course, they, too, bought their farms under the Land Purchase Acts from the representatives of the various middlemen. And it is of interest to recall that when the Commission which disposed of the church temporalities was wound up in 1881, its work was taken over by the Land Commission which carried on the same type of work in the same building with much the same staff.

And so the wheel has come full circle: the lands of Mungret have reverted to the sons of the men whose gifts had been the origin of Nessan’s storied patrimony.