MISCELLANEA

AN EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY TRAVELLER
IN LIMERICK

John Bernard Trotter was a County Down man, born in 1775, the second of three sons of a Church of Ireland clergyman. His older brother became an MP and a strong supporter of O'Connell. John Bernard was educated at Trinity College and called to the Irish Bar in 1802. However his interests were mainly literary and he published a variety of works, some of which were widely read, going into two and three editions. He developed a friendship with Charles James Fox during a stay in Paris and became private secretary to him when he was appointed Foreign Secretary in 1806. His subsequent biography of Fox was poorly received and his career went into decline thereafter. His final years were spent in abject poverty before his death in Cork in 1818. His account of the extensive walking tours he undertook in Ireland in the years 1812, 1814 and 1817, was published posthumously.1

His writing is of particular interest due to his concern for the poor. He often stayed the night in the poorest peasant houses, sleeping in their beds of straw shaken on the ground and sharing the potatoes, milk and salt, their staple diet. While he was interested in ‘the natural beauties of the country’, his main purpose was ‘to observe the character of the people’. An impartial observer, he was distressed by the destitution he saw everywhere, and was convinced that an enlightened policy on the part of the Government was the only effective means by which this grinding poverty could be alleviated. His narrative is a mixture of comments on Irish history, remedies for its political ills and observations on those he met. It is the last element which is of most interest especially when he enters an Irish cottage or falls into conversation with someone he meets on his way.

Kilmallock was his first stop in county Limerick where he found ‘a tolerably small inn’. The ruined walls, castles and churches impressed him. As he was examining the tomb of the White Knight in the ruined Dominican friary he was distressed to see a ‘person ill of fever’ left in the ruins ‘lest he should communicate the infection to the family where he lodged’. He promised to get the man a drink but noted that there was neither hospital nor dispensary for the sick. Sadly this practice of abandoning those dying of fever in the friary is again noted by observers during the Great Famine.2

He rested in ‘a very pleasant inn situated near the respectable small town of Bruff’. From there he took the Limerick road through very fine countryside. But there was fever everywhere and despair among the people. He stopped to examine the great stone circle at Grange but confesses his ignorance as to its date or significance. As he approached Limerick he passed several handsome residences and the whole was a very rich and noble scene of agricultural beauty’. He observed that though the soil was rich, ‘the farmers want skill and capital to make it sufficiently productive’. Green crops, such as turnips, cabbage, beans and peas were scarce due, he was told, to the danger that if the landowners sat them, the impoverished peasants would uproot them overnight. And so he reflects ‘that it is vain to expect agriculture to thrive, where there is so much misery’. While things looked peaceful he learned unrest was widespread. He observed that unjust laws harshly applied would not placate the Irish peasantry. This was like ‘the sword of Damocles suspended over a people’, and ‘excessive harshness in laws, renders the mind of men callous’.

1John Bernard Trotter, Walks throughout Ireland in the Years 1812, 1814 and 1817 Described in a Series of Letters to an English Gentleman, London 1819.
While his analysis was sound his remedies were less so. The ferocity which he regarded as evident in the Irish character, was due ‘to a constant use of raw spirits by the lower classes, and the introduction in their stead of ale and other malt drinks would be a very considerable civilising step’. This changeover would, he acknowledged, mean less revenue for the government, but ‘public peace would be well bought’ as a result. All through his book we get dissertations such as this on how to secure peace in Ireland and how to ameliorate poverty, all well-intentioned but somehow impractical.

Near the city he stopped at a small inn where the landlord told him that rents were beyond the power of the small farmers to pay and that unless there was another war they would never be paid. The son of the landlord played several Irish airs on a flute for the party, and his mother, at Trotter’s request, ‘sang several plaintive and mournful airs in the genuine Irish manner…every cadence of her songs (Aileen a room in particular) was performed with genuine pathos, and her voice did them much justice. It told to the feelings the tale of Erin’s, or of some lover’s woes, in language that could not be misunderstood; and we almost wept, that Munster had no longer her royal halls, her poets, and warriors…’.

A tradesman, who joined him as he approached Limerick, told him that the country was suffering from want of provisions, high rents, sickness and stagnation of trade. Though he devotes over twenty pages to the city itself, he adds but little to our knowledge, most of what he has to say being a wearisome reiteration of its well-known history. Large towns never excited his curiosity, and no sooner is he in one, than he is usually off on some excursion or other to some place of interest in the neighbourhood.

He did note that ‘the new part of Limerick was extremely handsome and well planned’, but the older part was formed of ‘ill shaped streets and narrow lanes, crowded by a great and distressed population’. From Limerick he went to see the falls of Doonass which he had heard were beautiful. He was delighted with them and with the numerous and handsome county seats he saw on his way there and back. He found the Shannon above Limerick ‘grand and majestic beyond anything we had seen in Ireland’, and he doubted if the walk along the Shannon could be paralleled for its beauty anywhere. The view from Hugh Massey’s house sends him into ecstasies, and from there he walked to Alderman Vincent’s residence opposite Castleconnell where he had a most hospitable reception and was invited to dinner. He had hoped to see a painting of the poet Spenser here, instead he saw a rare collection of paintings which originated in Germany. On his way back to Limerick the boatman, who ferried him across the Shannon, sang a melancholy Irish air, though poverty and sickness had made his voice weak.

On the next day we find him wandering around Askeaton where he heard ‘the loud song of labourers returning from work. They sang Irish airs in the Irish language, with surprising beauty and effect! Their airs were not always plaintive, but we heard some finely martial ones. You cannot imagine how we enjoyed them’.

He was pleased with the service he attended on Sunday in St. Mary’s Cathedral, remarking that the congregation was small. A ‘vast population’ attended the Catholic churches in the city, and he was pleased to note that there was considerable harmony between the Catholics and Protestants. While he inspected the custom-house and the gaol, he tells us nothing about them. The spacious streets of the new city were crowded with genteel, well-dressed people. Although trade had apparently suffered along the quays he was pleased with the shipping he saw there. Apparently he had read about the beauty of the Limerick ladies, and with this he concurs. ‘On Sundays’, he writes, ‘there is a great display of it, as well as consummate elegance and taste in the dress of the ladies’. He is impressed with the ‘graceful and genteel appearance in both sexes, of all the better classes’ and observes that this beauty cannot be without a corresponding ‘mental excellence and superiority’. In these respects he thinks that the Irish resemble the French, but the former ‘have more personal beauty and the men have
more strength’.

Since accounts of visits to St. Thomas's Island on the Shannon above the city are almost non-existent, Trotter's detailed account of his visit there is especially valuable. He notes that Mr. Tuthill, ‘who has contended for the honour of representing Limerick in the Imperial Parliament’ lived there on occasions, ‘in a most commodious and elegant villa, placed in the midst of a garden, washed by the Shannon's lovely waves’. He was charmed with the view he saw from the island - cattle grazing along the Shannon's banks, charming villas at intervals and ‘William's ruined castle in the distance crowned the bewitching scene’. Apparently Mr. Tuthill claimed that bones were often discovered on the island and that they resulted from an action that had been fought on the island during the sieges. We are tantalisingly informed that a covered way had formerly existed on the island, but not where it was located or what it looked like. Trotter correctly says that the ford William crossed in 1690 is in view of the island. He also tells us that Mr. Tuthill's gardens and greenhouses were very elegant and impressive. At present, there are a few trees growing on a tiny island about a half mile upstream from the island, and it is most interesting to find that Trotter noted this same island so long ago.

Having devoted over fifty pages of his narrative to his sojourn in Limerick, he departed from thence to Clare. While his book is disappointing in some respects, he could have told us so much more that we would now like to know, his account nevertheless provides a valuable insight into conditions in Ireland in the early nineteenth century.

Paddy Lysaght

SHANAGOLDEN CELEBRATES O’CONNELL’S VICTORY

An anonymous correspondent provided this vivid and interesting report for the Limerick Evening Post & Clare Sentinel of July 11th 1828. The author is clearly a catholic nationalist strongly sympathetic to O'Connell. In describing the activities in the wake of O'Connells' victory, some were obviously planned. The contrast between the carefully stage-managed celebration arranged by the parish priest and the subsequent independent, impromptu and fascinating activities of the people is of immense interest. The dispersal of the crowd from the parish chapel would have been of concern to the priest because of the frequency of drunkenness and (faction) fighting where large crowds gathered. He may even have encouraged them to go to local graveyards. It is unlikely that he would have approved of the activities which occurred there with its suggestions of ancestor worship. In this period the Catholic Church frequently tried to suppress manifestations of popular religion. Thus Holy Wells came under sustained and prolonged attack. Given his Roman contacts and senior status within the diocese one would expect Dean McNamara to share this view.

The news of the glorious Victory at Clare2 reached Shanagolden early on the evening of Sunday; the sensation produced by the cheering intelligence baffled all description. Preparations, novel and interesting in a high degree, were immediately commenced to commemorate that memorable event. Early on the morning of Monday, the light-hearted peasantry of the surrounding country were seen flocking in all directions towards the parish Chapel; where after the Holy Sacrifice was offered and the fervent thanksgiving of the assembled multitude sent up to heaven, a most pathetic exhortation to

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1. Daniel O'Connell was elected to parliament in the Clare by election of July 1828. His victory convinced Pitt that the ban on catholics sitting in parliament had to be removed thus paving the way for the grant of Catholic Emancipation in 1829.
2. The burning of a cross is an activity associated in the modern mind with the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in the U.S.A. It would appear from this description that the practice was popular in Ireland at this time though with less threatening associations.
observe an inviolable fidelity to their Religion and their Country was delivered by the Very Rev. Dean MacNamara. A feeling not to be described was produced by this admirable appeal. Immediately after, the whole multitude divided into four distinct groups, which repaired to as many Cemeteries in the vicinity, where, over the Tombs of their Fathers they embraced each other and swore on the sacred Turf an eternal friendship and mutual oblivion of all past injuries. This over, they proceeded to decorate the graves of their sainted and persecuted Ancestors. Every stone was covered with laurel. Garlands of flowers and evergreens, wrought in the most tasteful and fanciful manner, were suspended from the trees or hung from the tombs of the dead, and with the most fervent prayers for their eternal repose were mingled a thousand regrets that they had not lived to witness the regeneration of their Country. At the approach of evening, all were seen repairing towards the hills, the whole line of which, from Shanet Castle to Knockpatrick, soon presented a continuous sheet of flame. Every spot, every eminence, on this lofty range, was crowned with a pyramid of fire. Two lofty trees with transverse beams in the form of a cross and covered in convenient places with pitch, tar and other combustibles, were placed one on each of the two great landmarks already mentioned, and, at a given signal, set on fire. The effect was sublime and imposing in a high degree. The innumerable bonfires on the intermediate hills, the flickering of the torches, (called clears by the peasantry,) moved as if by some invisible hands, alternately appearing and disappearing in the distance, and all terminated at either extremity by illuminated crosses of 30 feet high, perched on the mouldering battlements of Shanet and Knockpatrick, presented a bold and magnificent panorama, curving through a space of five miles, which, coupled with the occasion that called forth this grand exhibition of national feeling, filled the mind with the most elevated sentiments of devotion to and love of country. Almost at the very instant that one hundred fires were lit up, and as if it were nothing could be wanting to brighten the interest and magnificence of the scene, three grand peals of thunder rolled over the hills, and shook the whole firmament. The people, no way intimidated, caught the auspicious omen, and three rapturous cheers echoing to the celestial feu de joie, wafted to the immortal shores of Clare the blessings and approbation of the southern inhabitants of old Father Shannon. During the whole day the chapel bell chimed merrily - at might the villagers illuminated their houses, and though their town be not celebrated for its architectural beauty, they amply compensated for that effect by the multitude and variety of their illuminated trees, arches, garlands and crosses. Doctor Kennedy that good man and admirable patriot addressed the multitude, and exhorted them to obey the laws, and conduct themselves with moderation under the present glorious victory. At this moment of virtuous enthusiasm the people would have chaired their beloved Pastor who addressed them frequently in the course of the evening - but yielding to his representation, they seized a little boy of the name of Connell (thenceforth to be dignified by the addition of the great O to his patronimic), and carried him in triumph thro’ the town, cheering, shouting and huzzaing for his immortal namesake. Two days and nights were dedicated to the celebration of the great festival of Irish liberty, and both passed over without anything to disturb the happy tranquillity of the joyous scene, save the ridiculous exhibition of two Police, who walked armed cap-a-pee through the immense multitude, to the no small amusement of the spectators.

Patrick Coleman

3 The most probable cemeteries to which people dispersed were Shanagolden, Robertstown, Knockpatrick and Kilmoyley.
4 Shanet
5 The burning of a cross is an activity associated in the modern mind with the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in the U.S.A. It would appear from this description that the practice was popular in Ireland at this time though with less threatening associations.
6 Possibly the local pronunciation of Shanid.
GRANAGH-BALLINGARRY FARMERS

One of the most contentious issues in pre-famine Ireland was the requirement to pay tithes. This levy on catholic tenants for the support of the ministers of the Established Church was bitterly resented. The men who assessed and collected the tax, the tithe proctors and tithe farmers, were among the most reviled groups in Irish society. They were often themselves local catholic farmers who acted as agents for the Church of Ireland clergymen. Opposition to tithes became a major issue in the 1820s and 1830s leading to, what historians term, ‘the tithe war’. This was often violent leading to attacks on proctors or their families followed by harsh retaliation from the authorities.

This account from the Limerick Star newspaper of 25 March 1837 is interesting for a number of reasons. It stresses the value of constitutional rather than violent agitation and is clearly O’Connellite in its approach. The people involved are generally well off tenant farmers as is clear from their possession of carts, ploughs and horses. Indeed the correspondent stresses, with pride, the improved economic position of farmers in the parish. This provides an interesting contrast with the evidence given to the Devon Commission a few years earlier by the parish priest of Ballingarry who stressed the wretched economic conditions in the area. Clearly those with a decent sized holding of land were reasonably well off in contrast to the small holders, cottiers and landless labourers. The fact that James Lynch had a field comprising 25 acres indicates his comfortable economic position. Large farmers were prominent in the tithe agitation, unlike other agrarian protest movements, as the restoration of tithe on pasture land in 1823 had particularly affected them. Support for the tithe agitation was not always limited to tenant farmers or even to catholics. In 1832 Godfrey Massy of Ballinakill House, in the adjoining parish of Kilfinny, had stood for election partly on a platform of opposition to tithes.

The immediate background to the incident of solidarity and communal co-operation described here was a campaign against the method of assessing the local tithes. James Lynch, who lived in the Granagh part of the parish, was the leader of this agitation. He had used legal and constitutional means to question the activities of the proctor and this had eventually resulted in his dismissal from office. The newspaper account details the interesting aftermath:

The independent farmers of the parish, not unmindful of the services which Mr Lynch had rendered them, determined to seize the first opportunity of expressing their gratitude to him, and of showing, at the same time, to their enemies, that that spirit of unanimity and determination which had enabled them to achieve one victory, still remained firm and unimpaired. Having learned that Mr Lynch had a large field of oats to sow, a deputation waited on him, and obtained his consent to allow the farmers to assemble to put the seed into ground. The 21st of this month was fixed as the day of meeting, and at an early hour on the morning of Tuesday, every road leading to Grenagh was thronged with cars, arriving from every part of the parish.

Stewards had been appointed to regulate the arrival of the cars, and see that no confusion or accident should occur. At the entrance gate was stationed the Secretary of the Parish, Mr O’Dea, who took down the names of the owner of each plough, as it entered the field, and the town-land from whence it came. A steward then gave directions to each ploughman where he was to take up his position, and the work he had to perform. The field measures 25 acres, lying north and south, and it had been previously marked out in plates, so that every plough had its allotted portion of work. While this was going on, and it occupied nearly four hours to have the ploughs enter and take up their position, 20 seed-men with their white cloths were spread over the broad expanse of the field, sowing the seed. Each sower was accompanied by a seed-
carrier and four stewards, intelligent farmers, walked the field after them, to see that this most important part of the business should be properly executed; in fact, everything was done with the greatest order and regularity, and each farmer present seemed to take as deep an interest in the work as if it were on his own farm. At 11 o'clock, 90 iron ploughs, with long reins, stood along the head-land of the field, which runs parallel with the Grenaugh road. It was a splendid sight for a farmer, and we doubt very much, if there is a parish in Ireland where the working farmers could furnish the same number of ploughs, so well horsed and appointed. It affords a proof of the improved state of agriculture in this district, and of the rapid progress it has made within the last few years. Everything being now ready, the field cleared, the seed sown, and the men standing at their ploughs, Mr Lynch gave the word to commence — "God speed the plough" — while an excellent amateur band, in attendance, struck up the farmers' favourite tune. It was a beautiful spectacle to see the 90 pair of horses with their ploughs get into motion, and proceeded slowly over the bosom of the large field in one unbroken line. The greatest order and regularity prevailed, and every man seemed to do his work as if he were contending for a prize. The day was beautiful, and an immense number of people had assembled to witness the proceedings. We heard some of the farmers express a wish that their enemies — those who revile and would oppress them, — those who call them "aliens", and dare assert that they are unworthy to enjoy the rights of free citizens — were placed on the neighbouring hills, the silent spectators of this grand, peaceable, and constitutional expression of Irish feeling. At two o'clock the work was finished, and the field ploughed in. Tho' Mr Lynch had expressed an earnest wish to give some refreshment to the men who had conducted themselves so well, he would not be allowed to incur any expense. Not a drop of spirits was drunk — for they had met not to feast and riot, but to give a proof of their unconquerable hatred to Tithes, and their determination to support the cause of religious freedom. The immense concourse then dispersed quietly and in perfect order. On the whole, Mr Lynch and his friends had every reason to be proud of the proceedings of the day, while the bitterest enemies of the cause he has so successfully advocated could find nothing in them to censure or condemn. One of the most interesting events of the day was the arrival of a deputation from Croagh, with an address to Mr Lynch, stating that the Rev. Mr Ashe had commenced proceedings against them for the recovery of Tithes, and requesting that Mr Lynch would consent to visit their Parish, and aid them to adopt the same organised system of constitutional proceedings against the odious import, which had proved so successful in Ballingarry.

Patrick Coleman

REV. PATRICK MACNAMARA

Dean Patrick MacNamara was born in Bruff in 1792 and studied for the priesthood in Rome. Following his ordination there he became a curate in St. John's parish. He returned to Rome in 1822 to represent the Bishop, Dr Tuohy, in a dispute about the appointment of a coadjutor bishop for the diocese. He was rewarded for this work by being made Dean and parish priest of Mungret. The parishioners there resented his appointment and prevented him from entering the church. Only after the parish was placed under interdict was he able to take up the position. His appointment as Dean of the diocese at the young age of 30 appears to have been secured through his contacts in Rome. He was transferred to Shanagolden two years later where he was responsible for the building of a church at Ballyhahill, then
attached to Shanagolden parish. In 1831 he was appointed to his native parish of Bruff. ¹ In the same year Rev. Godfrey Massy was appointed Church of Ireland vicar there² and he has left us an interesting picture of Dean MacNamara. According to Massy:

    His smooth oily manners and insinuating address, his electioneering power and ready wit secured his welcome at the tables of the rich. While his singular skill in ruling and pleasing the mob made him a perfect dictator among the poor. It would be hard to meet a priest who had such a complete command of countenance and as thoroughly knew his own strength. His fine intellectual forehead, the bland smile which ever played over his handsome face and his plausible address would make you set him down as particularly mild and peaceable but to a close observer he occasionally exhibited a keen, sly, fox-like aspect that bespoke him a dangerous adversary to the new Vicar of Bruff.³

His popularity among the Protestant gentry had resulted in one family converting to Catholicism hence Massy’s hostility and reference to the ‘tables of the rich’. Dean MacNamara was a noted orator and an energetic and popular priest. He died unexpectedly in 1838 at the age of 46 and is buried in Bruff church.⁴

Patrick Coleman

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⁴ Begley, *Diocese of Limerick*, pp 480-3.

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**THE EVOLUTION OF THE LYCH STILE**

The medieval church of Ardkilmartin near Bughaden in County Limerick is now, sadly, indicated only by a low wall showing the original position of the building.¹ However, the surrounding enclosure walls still remain and are noteworthy for the two lych stiles still to be seen. In two of the walls there is a flat area on top about eight feet in length and underneath, protruding from the stonework on the inside and outside, are three flat stones set as steps to allow the wall to be climbed (Plate 1). These two features are original lych (lich) stiles and were used when a corpse was brought for burial in the early days of the churchyard’s existence. The corpse, wrapped in a shroud, would have been conveyed on a litter across the fields to whichever lich stile was convenient. The reference to a ‘corpse’ is deliberate because coffins were used only by those who could afford them and wrapping a corpse in a shroud was then an acceptable method of preparation for burial. The use of coffins did not become more general until the 18th century.

Lych or Lich is an old English word for a corpse and the lych stile was positioned in the church boundary wall surrounding the consecrated ground in which the

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church building stood and in which burials took place. The corpse and cortege had to wait at the lych stile until the clergymen came to commence the burial service. In King Edward VI's Prayer Book the 'Order for the burial of the dead' refers to the priest meeting the corpse at the 'church style' and indicated that the burial service commences at that point. Presumably the mourners climbed over the stile and conveyed the corpse to the prepared grave (Plate 2). Perhaps some delay arose on occasion because a covering of thatch supported by poles came to be erected over these lych stiles as protection in wet weather. In time the form of covering became more substantial and an opening was made in the wall to allow the mourners easier access. The well-established trackway leading to the lych stile became a footpath then a laneway and finally a road so what had been a stile became the entrance to the church grounds.

The final stage in the evolution of the lych stile was the opening of the gap in the wall to make a gateway and the altering of the roof cover to a position across the wall instead of lengthwise (Plate 3). This was done to accommodate the coffins, now in use, to be carried by the walking coffin bearers who could, if necessary, lower the coffin onto supports under cover of the lych gate roof to await the arrival of the clergymen.

In later times when many earlier church buildings in Ireland were used for worship by members of the Anglican or Protestant churches, the practice of leaving the corpse at the boundary wall continued although, it is said, for a different reason. A change in the liturgy used is usually advanced, but traditions, like habits, are hard to break.

Morgan McCloskey

INTERESTING FEATURE AT TEMPLE MUIREGUIDAN

Finding what remains of the church building originally called Temple Muireguidan, at Morgans North, Askeaton is not made easy by the fact that the name 'Mount Pleasant' appears on the entrance gate. This leads to a tidy cemetery surrounding the ruins of a church building reputed to have been founded by the Knights Templar and rebuilt by the Franciscans of Askeaton about 1496. The pathway from the gate leads one to the west wall in which there is a small, round-headed doorway set towards the right hand corner (Plate 1). Inside, this doorway has a lintel at the top and there are corbels set in the wall on either side (Plate 2). Unfortunately, only two of them

Plate 1 Temple Muireguidan doorway, west wall.

1 Map ref: 515306.O.S. Scale 1:50 000.
remain out of the number required to provide the supports for an upper chamber. A similar feature can be seen in Kilnaughtin church, near Tarbert in County Kerry, with the corbels and corner supports for a floor and the window arrangement for an upper chamber which would have been the priest's quarters (Plate 3). A wall originally extended across the interior of Kilnaughtin and there would have been a doorway in this wall with a stairs or ladder arrangement to permit access to the upper floor. The interesting feature at Temple Muiregaidhan is that the access door to the priest's quarters is in the gable wall allowing entry from the outside, a feature not found in other church buildings of a similar date.

With the establishment of a diocesan and parochial system in Ireland and the erection of parish church buildings, vicars or curates were appointed to administer to the spiritual needs of the residents among whom they had to reside. In the 1584 Report of the Queen's Commissioners there is a mention of the church buildings on the land north of the river Shannon -"to every of which there is a priest incumbent having a manse to himself appointed for his service and lands granted to the quantity of 120 acres of good measure". At that time 'Manse' meant a dwelling and later came to be used by Presbyterians as the name for their ministers' houses. At the time when parishes were created travel was difficult and it was also important that the priests appointed to them should be able to reside there. The method of combining church building and dwelling was both practical and economical. The section of a church devoted to living accommodation consisted of a ground floor room and an upper room which allowed two incumbents, vicar and curate, to reside there if necessary. At Aghavallon, near Tarbert in Co. Kerry, there is a variation of this feature in the substantial remains of a 15th century church building. Here, the Church of Ireland authority reversed the process and had a wall built across the nave at the altar end behind which living accommodation was made for the vicar and his family.

Morgan McCloskey

Plate 2 Temple Muiregaidhan interior showing corbels on west wall.

Plate 3 Kilnaughtin west wall with corbels and corner supports.

LENIHAN'S MAYORAL LIST.

In the course of writing his history of Limerick, Maurice Lenihan drew up a list of the names of the men who had held the offices first of Provost (1195-97 AD) then Mayor (1197 AD onwards) of Limerick. This list, by no means complete for the early years, has regularly been brought up to date and is used in Corporation publications to the present day. Lenihan states that the list is a composite based on lists found in the White Manuscript, the Sexten Chartulary and the Arthur Mss. He further notes that White stated that his list was based on three ancient manuscripts. Disagreements between sources are noted within the list, so from the outset there is an implication that it is an unreliable record.


\[2\] Ibid., p. 691.
The only one way to verify names on the list is through cross-checking with contemporary documents which name officials. Unfortunately for Limerick these sources are few. Six individuals named as mayor in medieval sources but not included by Lenihan will be discussed. Two names are to be found in the Black Book of Limerick. Syward is named as provost in a document dated to 1200-1201 and another undated one. Lenihan gives no name for 1200-1201 but the name Syward was common at the time. Siward Minutor was mayor in 1214 while Siwardus de Fferendon served in 1215. This gives two basic possibilities, the Siward of 1200-1201, is the same person as one of the later Siwards but serving an earlier term, or it is a completely different person who served one or more terms depending on the date of the second document.

Mayor Simon Hereward was witness to three undated charters of the early to mid 13th century. Lenihan acknowledged one of the Black Book references as a note between 1230 and 1231, both years with known mayors. The implication is that the man has to be fitted in around this period, with one of the blank years, i.e. 1220-29, 1232-33, 1239-40 and 1242-54 the most likely. The three undated charters also name two pairs of provosts, Maurice Blund and Walter of Adare and Richard de la Lowe and Hugo Rycolf, who presumably served under Hereward. If the period of office of provost was coterminal with that of mayor then the implication is, given two pairs, that Hereward held the position of mayor on at least two occasions.

Two further names appear in the Calendar of Justiciary Rolls for 1307. In a plea heard before the Justiciary at Kilmallock on July 8th John de Laugeton stood pledge for one Walter who was found to owe 5s. He is also mentioned in a case of novel disseisin (property dispute) on July 12th when, in his role as mayor of Limerick, he successfully argued that the case should be heard in Limerick because of the privileges granted in the city charter. John Wynebold is also named in this same case as the mayor at the time when the case originally arose. Because the change of mayor occurred in mid year it is necessary to check the years either side of the date in the list to be absolutely sure but no John de Laugeton occurs. William Loung is listed for 1307, Thomas Bambury in 1306 and in a disagreement between Lenihan's source texts there is a choice of Robert Yong or Gregory Wainbold for 1308. Regarding the other named mayor, John Wynebold, the only person bearing that surname prior to 1307 is Gregory with the variant spellings of Wanybould in 1272 and Wynebald in 1276. There is, admittedly, a gap in Lenihan's list for 1286-93 but it is highly unlikely that the case in question would have taken 14 years or more simply to reach a decision as to the correct court. John Wynebold must have served sometime between 1300 and 1307 and is simply not named. It is possible to fill one year of the 1286-93 gap from a witness list in the Calendar of Documents of Ireland, which names John White as mayor in an inquisition dated to 1292.

One might perhaps expect the earlier part of the list to contain errors but as one comes up in time towards the era in which Lenihan's source lists were compiled one would expect greater accuracy, but apparently not. In a letter in the Inchiquin manuscripts dated 31st July 1577 John Whyte is named mayor but Lenihan gives Thomas FitzJohn Arthur. A Stephen FitzDominick Whyte is listed for 1576, and if his term ran into 1577 then we have a possible case of right surname but wrong first names.

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3 J. MacCaffrey (ed.), The Black Book of Limerick, Dublin 1907, p. 27.
4 Ibid., p. 98.
5 Ibid., pp 36, 37 & 51.
6 Ibid., p. 36.
7 Ibid., pp 37 & 51.
9 Ibid., p. 458.
In conclusion one has to state that of the six individuals listed none are to be found in Lenihan’s list. In three cases it is possible to argue that the individuals possibly belong in years where there are gaps in the list. The remaining three do not appear in their appropriate year in the list. The Mayoral list is therefore shown to be unreliable, not just in the medieval period, but as late at the sixteenth century and this highlights the need to treat it with caution.

B. J. Hodkinson

LIMERICK CITY URBAN FOLKLORE ARCHIVE

In 1997, at the initiative of the Limerick Civic Trust, a scheme was devised for the collection of urban folklore in Limerick. Similar work has already been undertaken in Cork and Dublin and forms a valuable supplement to the rich collection from rural Ireland which has been built up since the 1930s. A wide range of oral folklore and memories has already been methodically recorded and documented. People interviewed have included fishermen, shopkeepers, priests, teachers, factory workers, artists, dockers even a bellringer.

Limerick Civic Trust through FÁS supervisors and trainees uses a specially devised scheme provided by Dr. Patricia Lysaght, Department of Folklore, University College, Dublin. Interviewees, normally senior citizens, are identified usually by recommendation; questions are prepared and the interviews conducted. The material is then transcribed from the cassette tapes and inputted to computer. Finally a comprehensive index of all material is made.

The material is available for reference by research students and the general public at the Limerick Civic Trust, Bishop’s House, King’s Island, Limerick. Members of the Society and readers of this journal could make a major contribution to this project either by offering to have their own memories of Limerick City recorded for posterity or by suggesting friends and relatives who might be interested. The contact person is David Lee, Tel: 061-313399 Fax: 061-315513 or email: denismleanard@ireland.com

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