12th Cent. Window, Ballinacloough House, Nenagh.

Grave Slab in the O'Meara Inscription, Toomeveara Priory.
Churches in the Deanery of Ormond
II.

By Dr. Dermot F. Gleeson, M.R.I.A.

N.B.—Churches marked with an asterisk have been recently visited.

*32. Ballinaclough. Parish Church (O.S. 27).—The name appears to be Beal Atha na Clogh. Found in Cal. Ormond Deeds as “Weyperous,” i.e., gué pierroux (Norman French) or ‘stoney ford’; in Cal. Papal Letters “Vadum Petrosum.” The ‘ford’ is still there. Vide my “Manor of Ballinaclough in Ormond” in our Journal, 1943. The Church is now (and was also in O’Donovan’s time) very heavily smothered in ivy so that one at first would suspect an early church with high pitched roof. This is not so. Inspection reveals a uniform erection or re-erection of the 15th century. There is a very fine chancel arch (round headed) in masonry. The E. window has two lights with the mullion missing. Externally it has a fine hood moulding with deeply cut spandrels. There are two other windows on south wall which (so far as they can be seen) are in similar style. There is a pointed door at the w. end of the south wall. The w. gable is so obscured by ivy as to be invisible. The chancel measures internally 23 feet by 20 feet and the nave 58 feet by 26 feet—the whole if cleaned of ivy would be a fine example of 15th century work in excellent masonry. The graves in the chancel are entirely of O’Kennedy stock. Most of them are from far away, e.g., Coumnaillig and Glastrigan, and represent the descendants of the family who held Ballinaclough from the Ormond family up to the end of the 17th century. Traditionally no one save an O’Kennedy may be buried in the chancel.

*33. Ballinaclough. Domestic Chapel or Chantry (O.S. 27).—Behind Mr. John Bayly’s residence and a short distance from the parish church is a ruined building of perhaps 16th cent. provenance. At its west end and between it and what appear to be the remains of a Norman mote and early castle, is a magnificent transitional window which appears to have formed part of a domestic chapel in early Norman times. It is now incorporated in the later structure. Its date can hardly have been earlier than 1200/1220, when the Normans first came to Ballinaclough and established a Manor there in the time of the first two Theobald Walters. My suggestion is that there then resided at Ballinaclough, Bishop Robert Travers who was intruded into the See of Killaloe in A.D. 1216, by his uncle, Geoffrey de Marisco, the Justiciar, without a Papal provision and was subsequently deprived by the Pope in 1221. The De Marisco family held this Manor from the Butlers at this time and Geoffrey was the guardian of the then minor Theobald Walter Butler II and the King’s Escheator of his estates. The place name “Traverston” is found close by, in the Civil Survey, and still survives. The chapel is roughly oriented N/S. The window is in the typical Norman transitional style such as may be seen in Corcomroe Abbey. The 16th Cent. Inq.p.m. of James 9th, Earl of Ormond (C.O.D.VI.), recites that he had ‘in Weyperous 200 acres in the Lordship usually under plough, value 2d. per acre in time of peace, nothing in time of war, and in the said Manor there are one caste, one hall, once chapel with a thatched roof and two
rooms covered with tiles.” I add that Mr. John Hunt thinks that the roof over the window was not thatched and that the room may have been a banqueting hall rather than a chapel of a type common in the early 12th century.

34. Kilmore. Parish Church (O.S. 26).—Colgan claims that this is the ‘Cill Mór Aradh Thire’ of the Vita S. Senani. It is now in Upper Ormond but there is a whole body of evidence that Aradh once included the greater part if not the whole of Kilmore parish, e.g., the Ul Glesain who owned the greater part of the parish in 1653 (C. Survey) are of the Aradh race. From evidence in the Tripartite Life it would appear as if the ‘River of Geagh’ (Nenagh River) or its tributary the Tullowmoylan river was the ancient bounds of Aradh on the east. (Vide also O’Donovan O.S. Letters Tipp. III. p. 342). The ruin is 51 1/2 feet by 24 feet eleven inches. There are remains of arched windows but the whole structure presents the appearance of having been reconstructed in comparatively modern times, i.e. in the late 17th or early 18th centuries—and probably by the family of Colonel Henry Pringle who settled here in Cromwellian times and some of whose descendants are buried here—the later family graves being at Kilboy church. (vide infra). There is now no ancient feature. The graveyard is very extensive. Per Bishop Rider the parish was inappropriate for the fabric of the Choir of the Cathedral.

35. Ballycahill (Donemona). Parish Church (O.S. 20).—This ancient parish of Donemona stretching ‘from Tullaheady to Bawn’ was ‘lost’ even before the Civil Survey of 1653 in which it does not appear. It will be found in Bishop River’s Visitation of 1615, as an entire Rectory (Dwyer p. 119). It will be found also in Cal. O. Deeds. There is now nothing left of the old Church though in O’Donovan’s time there were remains of the walls to the height of about three feet. The site was then on the lands of Mr. John Ryan on the N. side of the public road (O.S. Letters Tipp. III. p. 352). There was a graveyard then used as a haggard, Nearby is St. Patrick’s Well where the Saint traditionally rested and prayed—the marks of his knee and staff being shown on a stone.

36. Tinnekinilla, Parish Kilmore (O.S. 26).—Church site. There are now no remains though the O.S. Letters (Tipp. III. p. 354) say that ‘a portion of the Church walls existed within living memory.’ There are many curious traditions still preserved for some of which see O.S. Names Books Tipperary for this parish.

37. Cill Churnain, Donemona Parish (O.S. 20).—Children’s graveyard by tradition. No modern interments. No remains.

38. Kilboy. Kilmore Parish. Parish Church (?) (O.S. 26).—This church is now in Kilmore parish though O’Donovan claims it is the parish church of the ancient parish of Dolla. This is borne out by the fact that there are no other church remains in Dolla. It is a 67 feet long by 20 feet. It is one of two churches in Ormond which has a square tower at the w. end—the other is Ardcroney. The parish ‘spectat ad mensam episcopi’ per Bishop Rider’s Visitation as did Ardcroney also so perhaps this is the reason. The E. window in sandstone is now formless and may have been early but not enough is left to determine. The tower which is described in O.S. Letters as “a
square tower 11 feet high” does not now appear and what is left looks more like an Iardom or sacristy but may once have been a residential tower. The N. wall appears to be out of line with the E. gable but this may be due to a buttress having been added to the N. side of the gable. The present ruin is 15th century in excellent masonry but the Iardom is later in date. There are no visible earlier features. The name O’Donovan ascribes to the yellow colour of the mortar. No trace of such a colour now appears. It is more likely to be due to the fact that the graveyard was used for the interment of famine and cholera victims—the road from the village of Silvermines leading to it is known as ‘Boherbee.’ Graves—O’Meara of Fawnlough, 1800. Ml. Harrington and Mary, his wife, 1806. Keating, 1775. John Meara, 1824. John Walsh, 1794. Mary Ryan, als. Gleeson, 1791. Mary Eilard of Kilnashanalla, 1837. Some of these stones, including one to the family of Hill, are finely cut. The Hill family were themselves stone cutters and the stones show Angel with Trumpet, Instruments of the Passion, etc.

39. Kilkeary. Parish Church (O.S. 21).—Nothing is left of this ancient church now except a few stumps of formless masonry. The name Cill Cera refers to a female Saint of the monastic age who is said to have had a convent here. The graveyard contains the tomb of Sir William Parker Carroll, one of Wellington’s generals in the Peninsular war. He was a direct descendant of Anthony Fada O’Carroll who defended Nenagh Castle against the Williamites in 1690. On Sir William’s return from the wars he lived at Tulla in Kilmore parish, where he was instrumental in settling local trouble during the tithe war. The family (who had come from Birr to Lisheen, Kilkeary) later lived at Lissenhall. The graveyard also contains tombs of the dispossessed O’Kennedys who had to leave this area in Cromwell’s time for the mountains, but who still use it as a burial place. Cill Cheri per the Scholiast of Oengus ‘in the territory of Muscraighe Thire.’

40. Lisbunny. Parish Church (O.S. 21).—Now in Nenagh union. The church is divided into nave and choir—the nave 50ft. 6 in. long by 25ft., the choir 29ft. 6in. by 19ft. 6in. The masonry is poor and all identifiable features have been destroyed—the S. wall of the nave being entirely gone. What O’Donovan describes as a Sacristy extends from the N. wall of the choir (26ft. x 16ft. 6 in.). O’Donovan gives the place name as “Arx Bunniae—mulliæ insigne” but this, it is submitted, has nothing to warrant it. There is an extensive graveyard where generations of Nenagh people are buried.

41. Ballymackey. Parish Church (O.S. 21).—Of this the O.S. Letters give “The old church of this parish is situate in the centre of a large graveyard in the townland of Cloonmore; the n. end of the w. gable remains being incorporated with the e. wall of a small schoolhouse.” There is nothing else left of the old church, the stones of which may have been used to erect the Protestant Church beside it in about 1800. (Vide “The Parishes of Ballymackey, Annaghmeadle and Kilruane” by Dr. R. Wyse Jackson (The Guardian, Nenagh). The place name derives from the O’Kennedys (Baile Mhíc Aídh).”

42. Ballygibbon, Parish Church (O.S. 15).—This is a Norman name but Cal. P. Letters give the original Irish name as “Disert Thene.” The
place name Rathenny is in the area. The Church ruin is 54 feet by 24 feet. It is a plain structure apparently all of one period, viz., 15th century from such of its features as are left.

43. Toomeveara O.S.A. Priory (O.S. 22)—Ware (Harris ed. II. p. 267) places here a monastic foundation of St. Donan in the 7th century. This is confirmed by the discovery by Mr. John Hunt of a cross slab of 7/8th centuries in 1953 beside the small ruin (see infra). Beside the Catholic Church is the Abbey (Vide the ‘Priory of Tuaim Donain’ in ‘Molua,’ 1940). The E. gable is gone. The ruin is 60 feet long in the walls that remain and 21 ft. 8 in. wide. It is a unified erection of the 15th century. The w. gable has a window of two lights with the remains of a mullion. Outside by the N. wall is a 15th cent. stone slab showing an ecclesiastic and inscribed in raised letters now partly erased. The name “Joannes O'Meara” can be read. Per Cal. P. Letters (V. 598) under date 6. Kal. Feb., 1404, the Parish church of St. Dubuinius, Thom (i.e., Teampull Donain als. Templedowney) was granted to John O'Meara, Warden of the Priory, O.S.A., of St. Mary, Thom, it being recited that “the fruits of the Priory are too slender for the Warden's support. It was dependant on Monaincha (Cal. P.L.V. 74). There is a succession of O'Meara Wardens up to the dissolution when (in 1541) Donald O'Meara the last Warden became the “Warder” on the dissolution as “he was building a castle there as well to resist the Irish there as for the defence of the King's subjects” (Morrin, Cal. P. Rolls I. 73).

The property of the Priory then was ‘one castle and other buildings on the site and 150 acres arable and 59 pasture in the town of Toume,’ etc. In 1597, Archbishop Miler Magrath (whose wife was Aine O'Meara of Lissimisky nearby) had a grant of “the site circuit and precint of the late Priory of Thome” with a “butt of a ruined castle with certain ruined chambers thatched,” etc. (Morrin II. 460). Inserted in the N. wall of the Priory externally is an inscription by Dr. Dermot O'Meara, the Latin Poet of the 17th cent. A reading of 1877 (Tipperary Advocate, 4th January) when it was more legible gives:

Clara Meara dum tumulo jacet hocce propago
  Cui aetherum precibus pande, viator, iter,
Gulielmus Deus Fili, regale Mearo,
  Helenae Burcae pande cruroris iter,
  Ille viam meritis stravit, sed sternere pergit.
  Marmoreum hoc, Lector, sit tibi testis, opus.
  1624. Educ. a malo.

This inscription was examined on the recent visit of the Society to Toomeveara. Very Rev. Canon Molloy suggests that the phrase “sed sternere pergit,” is an error and should be read “sed sternere Christus regit.”

On an island site and now separated from the Priory by a road is another ruin surrounded by graves. O'Donovan (O.S. Letters Tipp. I. 547) mistook this for the ‘Parish Church.’ It bears little resemblance to a church and the site on which it stands is part of the ‘scite and ambit’ of the Priory across the road. This road is of comparatively recent construction and the finding of human bones both here and in the making of the parish hall show that the graveyard site once comprehended the whole. It is submitted that this small ruin is either
O'Meara’s castle of 1541, or the ‘ruined chambers thatched’ of 1597 (see supra). There is curious early water font (inserted) in the E. doorway. This ruin is oriented roughly N/S. See also ref. to ‘the ruined castle and decayed slate house’ which is obviously in Toomeveara from the context in C. Survey, Tipp. II, p. 211. It was on this site near the E door that the Cross Slab was found by Mr. Hunt on a loose heap of stones. It was later seen, photographed, and a rubbing taken by Mr. S. Stewart, Right Rev. Monsignor Moloney and the author. When the Society visited the site in May it had vanished. Enquiries reveal that some of the loose stones had been put into a dump in the interval and others built into a wall by County Council workers. Efforts have so far failed to trace the Cross Slab.

44. (O.S. 22).—No. 43 above is in parish of Annaghmeadle (not Templedowney as O'Donovan thought (vide C. Survey Tipp. Bar. Upper Ormond). The parish church of Templedowney parish is therefore to be sought elsewhere. There is no ruin but the site well may be where the Protestant church in Toomeveara now stands at the e. end of the village to n. of the road. The parish church was (vide supra) held by the O.S.A. Priory from the 15th cent. and was probably allowed to fall into ruin.

45. Annaghmeadle. Parish Church (O.S. 22).—15th century erection in very poor masonry. There are no features. In the graveyard and to E. of the church is a curious structure called ‘Turner’s house’ on the O.S. Local tradition says it is the tomb of two brothers of the Mac Egan family of Annaghmeadle Court across the road. The old Brehon family in this branch came here in the late 17th or early 18th cent. In the building is a 15th cent. inserted door. The roof is corbelled like the ancient beehive huts but not grated and there is no sign of wicker work. There is no window or ope of any kind. It is not thought to be earlier than the 17th cent., and may have been either a tomb or a dwelling for a Friar in the penal times.

46. Kilderryhadrurn. Parish Church site (O.S. 27). This parish was ‘lost’ even before 1653 and does not appear in the Civil Survey. It is “the parish church of Kyllydirdruim” in Cal. P.L. X. 453 (A.D. 1450) when it was united to the Convent of “St. Mary Thomdonyn” (Toomeveara Priory). Local pron. “Kilderry, dha drum.” It consists of that portion (detached) of Annaghmeadle parish by the O.S. maps, consisting of the tds. for Tiermoyle, Lackenvourney, Middleplow, Ballyconnor and Kielty. In the Catholic arrangement these are now in Templederry union though the rest of the old parish of Annaghmeadle is in Toomeveara. The ancient graveyard (and perhaps the church foundations now obliterated) will be found marked on the earliest issues of the O.S. It lies between two hills—hence the place name. It borders on Tiermoyle lane and contains now but one single stone standing upright in the field, very thick and weather worn.

47. Templederry. Parish Church (O.S. 33).—This Church is now completely destroyed. Its site is occupied by the Protestant Church built in 1828, which itself (per John O’Donovan) stands “on the site of a more ancient Protestant Church which contained some of the stones of the primitive Templederry.” The ancient name of the parish in Cal. P. Letters is “Meadhonaca” or “Middle” which used to be the name of the village of Templederry up to about a century ago, when it was changed to Templederry by Father John Kenyon who was then Parish Priest.
48. Kilaneave, Parish Church. (O.S. 27). Cill na Naomh. The church is a complete ruin only a piece of the west gable and N. wall being left. The Church was approximately 52 feet in length by 21 feet 6 ins. The remaining masonry is poor and there is no identifiable feature.

*49. Latteragh, Lethrach Odhrain, Parish Church (O.S. 28).—This parish represents the ancient monastic Termon of St. Odhran. The O.S. Letters describe the ancient church as ‘consisting of a nave and choir, the former 39 feet by 29 feet and the latter 34 feet by 20 feet.’ The existing remains, however, do not confirm this. There are now two distinct and separated ruins and they do not appear to be in line. That at the west end of the site is completely formless being merely heaps of stones and the remains of a wall and gable covered with ivy. The e. end of the ruin or ruins is now walled across where one would expect to find a chancel arch if it were a chancel. It has a pointed door of 15th cent. date or even later. It would appear that the west end or nave of this church was abandoned at an early date and the choir walled across and a door put in it to make a smaller edifice. The E. window has suggestions of 12th century construction and there are a number of stones scattered through the graveyard which might repay examination in this connection but there is not now sufficient left of this feature to say anything with certainty. Of this window O’Donovan writes: “it forms a semi-circular arch at the top, the part remaining is of chisselled brown sandstone. The tombstones include that of Lord Orkney (Fitzmaurice).

50. Borrisnafarney, Parish Church (O.S. 22).—This parish is in Ikerrin but the church is included in the Deanery of Ormond by Bishop Rider’s return to 1615 (Dwyer p. 122). The Burgage of the Alder Wood per J. O’D. There are no remains of the old parish church, but its site is in the graveyard called Teampull Shone (Teampull Eoin or St. John’s Church). The stones of the old church were (per tradition) taken to a little eminence nearby where they may still be seen. It was intended to build a house with them but the prospective builder died. The new site is locally called ‘the monastery.” The Church is known locally as “the church of the seven Johns.” It was inappropriate to the Abbey of Holy Cross.