The Place-Names of the Parish of Croom

By D. Cantwell.

In the following list the names of the various physical features of the parish, fields, hills, river-pools, etc., are included with those of the townlands and are entered as secondary items, (a), (b), under the townland in which they arise. The whole collection is neither very large, nor, perhaps, very striking, but a rather big number of the names in it will have a twofold attraction for those interested in the things of the past, namely their great age and their historic and prehistoric suggestions and associations.

One naturally expects a place name to be old; it ought to be old but is not always so. Many of those names from Croom were venerable in their antiquity more than a thousand years ago and of the others those which have a background of only three or four centuries are almost modern. While these conquerors of time and circumstance have survived the various vicissitudes they have encountered down the ages, there are others, and not a few, that have been eroded quietly, but none the less utterly, in our own time, and that in spite of the broadly national and cultural renaissance which has been in progress in that period. At least ten of the names given below have been lost from the lips and minds of the people within the past forty years and because of social progress, strange to say, are likely to be followed in the years to come by similar losses.

The preservation of these names and the recording in safe and accessible records of those which have so recently vanished from their proper sphere, the speech of the people, is a matter of some little concern and could hardly be undertaken by a more competent body than an Archaeological Society whose members would be sympathetically disposed towards their study and the pages of whose journal would enshrine them for future generations.

Anait—"This is the correct form of the name. It signifies the chief Church in a Monastery" (Fiachra Eilgeach). The Church was a pre-Norman foundation and was a prebend of the Bishop. It included in its lands much of the present parish of Ballynabanoge and part of Croom, in which parish Anhid is now an extensive townland. The western gable of a seventeenth century Church still stands surrounded by a burial ground in which at least one stone dates from 1691.

(a) Egan's Well

Tobar Uí Aogáin—A holy well on the river (Maigue) bank a short distance from the ruin above. "Rounds" were paid here on the Eve of the Assumption and the water was reputed to cure sore eyes.

(b) Tbredainc

Tir an Aonaigh—"The land or territory of the fair." Name now lost. This is a field on Mrs. Conba's farm at Anhid Cross. The tradition of a fair having been held there survived until recently.

Anock

Ait Tighe Floinn—"The site of Flinn's house."

Attyflinn

Ballypercoon

Baile Phuicín—"The townland of the little pooka"—Feecoon here presents an example of metathesis, a change of position in this case of two long vowel sounds. A caher in the townland with a circular enclosing wall more than six feet thick is dominated by a pooka.
Ballygeels — “Baile Gaill”—“The residence of the foreigner.”

Ballygrennan — “Baile Grionáin”—“The townland of the sunny fort.”

Ballymacscrabadan — “Baile Mac Scráidin”—“The townland of the sons of Scráidin.” This is one of the lands confirmed to the monks of Mainister by the English King John. At the dissolution the monks had an eel weir here on the Comogue; it still exists.

(a) Clash Na Marbh — “Clais na Marbh”—“The trench of the dead.” This is to be read in connection with Poll Cró under Camogue, as another reminder of the victory of Brian Cath an Aonaigh over the Fitzgeralds in 1367.

Ballylusk — “Baile Loiscoth”—“The burnt place,” that is, the surface soil dug and burnt to improve it.

Ballynahown — “Béal Atha na hAbhann”—“The mouth of the river ford.” Through this ford an old road led to Dysert Aongus from Munget.

Ballynooigan — “Baile Crucháin” (Ballynoocane CS)—“The townland of the little hill.” This name now points out a fort only; in the time of Cromwell it was name to a holding of seventy plantation acres.

Ballyoukeigan — “Baile Ui Amnracháin”—“O’Hanrahan’s place.”

The Branner — “An Breamar”—“The Fallow,” a field on the farm of Mr. Bourke of Tory Hill.

Bushfield — “Gort na dTóir”—This Irish form and equivalent of the English name occurs in the Church Register of Croom on various occasions from 1770 to the 50s of the last century, when it disappears. The Famine and subsequent clearances had liquidated the native and with him went the townland name. The Irish form is, however, still remembered by a diminishing few.

Cahirass (Carass) — (1) Cathair Easa (Caherassy CS) (2) Eas Máighe (ODH)—(1) “The stone fort of the waterfall;” (2) “The waterfall of the Maigue.” A Geraldine castle of which there is now no trace once stood here. One Captain Edward Fitzgerald, “one of the chiefest attackers” of the amazos Lady Dowdall of Kilfinny, held the castle in 1649.

Camogues — “Camóg”—“The little winding stream.” It enters the Maigue by the ruin of Anhid.

(a)

Poll na Carraige — “The rock pool.” (Poll Cró)—“The pool of slaughter.” Here about was fought the battle which gained the name of Brian Cath an Aonaigh for its bearer.

Carnadeisha — “Carn na Drise”—“The cairn or burial ground of the briars.” Name now lost. A cairn all of which except a large stone has disappeared. It is on the farm of Mr. MacNamara near Tory Hill. Name gone.

Carhue — “Ceathrú”—“Quarter ground.”

(a) Auchaclareen — “Ath an Chláirín”—“The ford of the board.” Presumably a plank footbridge across the Carrow linking Carhue and Clos Merrigeen. Name now lost.

(b) The Carrow — “An Ceathrú”—A stream which rises in or near Carhue and flows eastward to join the Maigue above Croom.

Carrowkeal — “Ceathrú Caol (CS)—“Narrow Quarter.”
"Carraigín—"The little rock." A part of the ancient Church lands of Dysert Aongus.

"Camhaoir—"The Morning Star"—the small stream from Ballycahan, which enters the lake at Tory Hill. Name only found in the Civil Survey.

"Claidhe Droighin—"The blackthorn fence or bank." It is a high wide bank covered with blackthorn bushes and having a stream of water at its base for some distance, when the stream disappears. It was obviously meant as a protective barrier and it stems from a small fort in Honeypond.

"Clóis Meirgin—"Meirgin's enclosure." There were four families here at end of the 18th century: a fox covert named Cloosh alone perpetuates the name now, which is replaced by that of "Plowlands." The later would seem to be the equivalent in English of the name of the adjoining townland, Carheue.

"Corbad—In the Civil Survey this name is always written Corabud or Corabudd. It signifies "the chariot." When Fergus Mac Roigh came to Munster, he forded the Camogue near the present bridge of Mainistir, and the crossing place is hence named "Ford of the Chariot of Fergus." He then visited Asal who sat "in the door of his dun by the ridge." This dun is a goodly sized fort with a low ring-wall, on the farm of Mrs. Haselbeck and adjoins Corabul. The same Charriot may very well have given rise to the name of the townland as to the name of the ford (JRSAI. Article Aenach Clochair).

"Cillín an Imris—"The little Church of contention." This was in Corabul, but nothing is now known of its site.

"Crosaire Cúl na Cupógé—"The crossroad of the corner of the dock leaves." Name now lost but was in use to mark a starting point of road repairs when that work was done by contract labour fifty years ago or so. Near this Cross, on the road to Tory Hill, the "Rock of Martin Soldier" appears through the road surface. Martin is an unknown warrior.

"Sean Mhuileann—"The old mill." The site of this mill is still pointed out on the banks of the Sruhane on Mr. Heffernan's farm. "Corabud has a mill seat and eel weir" (CS).

"Clochán Dubh (OM)—"The black stepping stones or crossing place." A ford on the Camogue near its junction with the Maigue. Tradition says that this ford was noted for robbers and killings but does not specify. The ford was bridged in 1840 when the new road to Bruff was made.

"Cluain Treasa—"The cross meadow," or "Claidhe Treasa—"The fence across." I confess to being unequal to this name.

"An Crochaire—"The hangman." A small angle about an acre in extent on the "forty-seven" field in Dysert. It is the south-east and highest part of the field.

"Cromadh (AFM)—Written as Crome and Crom (CS), as Cronmoth (PL). Up to 1649 Croom lay entirely on the western bank of the Maigue. It lies on the east side of the river now, with the exception of the churches and a few houses. From a study of the Civil Survey it appears that the present site of the townlands was at the time, 1640 to 1650, included in the townlands of Tooreen and Carrowkeel. Part of the village is yet in Tooreen but Carrowkeel has disappeared. Local tradition says that an
overhanging ruinous castle stood in the mid-eighteenth century at the
Cross of Croom and looked such a menace that Croker of Croom Castle
made a new road through the village to avoid the ruins on his journeyings.
"Carrowkeel has two stumps of castles" (CS).

(a) The Lockrus

*An Leac-Ros*—"The stoney promontory." An upthrust of rock on
Croom Castle lands immediately west of the Catholic Church beside the
road. A spirit walked here of nights until it became compulsory to have
lights on vehicles.

Coologue

*Cúlóg*—"Little corner." A farm and townland on Tory Hill.

Dollas

? *Doladh*—Dallow and Dallowes (CS) Dolyth in Proxy list of 1418
(BBL). Cromadh in the Proxy List here mentioned is written Crommoth.
By analogy Dolyth might be *Doladh*, which means a tax or an oppression.
I am at a complete loss, except for useless conjecture, for the proper form
and meaning of this name.

(b) Dollas Hill

(I) *Cnocán Uí Mhordha* (OM); (II) *Cnoc a’ Mhuirne* (T)—This second
version of the Hill name is local tradition, the spelling might be *Bhoirne*.
I incline to the latter because the Hill itself is a foothill of Borenane which
we shall see later is the correct form of Morenane. On the hilltop is a
church site—Dollyth—of the Proxy list above. There were burials about
the base of the hill.

(b) The Faibhen

*An Fuichín*—"The little playground." The small level place on which
games were played." This is a field on Mr. Condron’s farm. A miry trench
—the original fosse doubtless—about a fort in this field was being cleared
by workmen some 80 years ago when they uncovered in a niche between
stones in the base of the fort wall a fold of parchment. It was covered
with writing. It had got wet in the miry trench and they set it to dry on a
stone nearby. A sown with her brood pursuing their lawful avocations found
the manuscript which the men had momentarily forgotten, and utterly
destroyed it.

(c) The Shanacra-

*Sean Cheárdcha*—"The old forge"—a corner or another field on Mr.
Condroon’s farm.

Donaman

*Dún na mBeann*—"The fort or castle of the gables."

Dysert

*Disert Aongusa*—"The retiring place of Aongus." A round tower in a
good state of preservation and a small church ruin mark the foundation
of Angus Céile Dé, "the Spouse of God."

Garraneavreen

*Gearrán an Bhóirín*—"The grove of the little road." Name now lost. It
was part of Carrigeen and hence of the Church lands of Dysert.

Gurrane &

*Gearrán na Manach*—"The monks’ shrubbery," the monks in question
being those of Manister.

Gurrane &

*Gurrane Bikele*

(a) Lisnagrook

*Lios na Gornach*—"The fort of the round hillocks."

(b) Lisnafunan

*Lios na Spionán*—"The fort of the gooseberries."

Gortroe

*Gort Rua*—"The red garden," the red being of wheat.

Gortglas

*Gort Glas*—"The grey-green field."
The High Gardens—"The gardens of Croom." The former is the name of-to-day, the latter that of the Plantation time. The gardens were a sort of communal field in which the people had plots adjoining and separated only by a "bone" or low ridge. These plots or lots still exist, though changed in size and position, but are now fenced apart.

Honeybound

Páirc Bhui—"The yellow field." The English name has no standing, official or traditional, but seems to have secured for itself an assured permanency in the place. It is less than a century in use.

Loch na gCoire—"The lake of the cauldrons." On a bright day one can see the springs at the north end of the lake boiling briskly like seething cauldrons, hence the name. Or is that the correct name?

Poll Úna—"The pool in which Una was drowned." A pool of great depth and extraordinarily transparent water, beside but distinct from the lake.

Lios Coiltreach—"The wooded fort."

Lios Graoin, "Green's fort."

Probably Lios Graoin, "Green's fort."

Machaire Riabhach—"The speckled or striped plain."

Abhna na Móigh—"The river of the plain."

Some pools on the Maigue are: — Linn Mhór and Linn Bheag, all in Banogue Parish; Poll Cúim, near Croom Village, and sometimes, wrongly I think, called Poll Croom, and in Caherass is Poll Cinn Sibhair, "the pool of the head of the yew tree." At certain times and in certain lights the shadow of a yew tree, without any tree to make the shadow, lies across the pool! More than one tale is told in explanation of the name. See "Pagan Ireland" by Eleanor Hull. All these pools are noted haunts of salmon.

Plowlands

Clós Meirgin—The equivalent in position but not in name of this townland. Plowlands has no official sanction.

Rathbrannagh

Ráth Breathanaigh—"Walsh's fort."

Saye, Capella (PL)—"The Chapel of Saye." Saye is the Irish word saoi, a seer or a sage. The site of this Chapel is now marked by the ruin of a private chapel erected by Lord Carbery in the grounds of his house in Caherass early in the last century. The original mediaeval chapel was an affiliation of Dysert Aongus. About a mile farther down on the river-bank, at Castleroberts, is a well, Thuberatatay, Tober an tSaoi, "the Well of the Sage."

Skagh

(1) Sceach or probably (2) Sceachach—(1), "a thorn bush," (2) "a place full of thornbushes." The Civil Survey calls it Sceach ó Meirgeog, which means "the bush-abounding place of the people called ó Meirgeog. This personal name is equated with Muireog, meaning "the little Muire" (B.V.M.) or the devotee of Muire. In the same way Meirgin above is merely a form of Muirgin, or "beloved of Muire."

(a) Boherasider

Bóthar na Saighdiúiri—"The Soldiers' Road."

(b) Paucasider

Páirc na Saighdiúiri—"The Soldiers' Field."

Balusoder Baile Saighdiúiri was one of the lands of the Abbey nearby (BBL).
Sruthán an tSearraigh—"The stream of the foal or colt," that is probably in which the animal was drowned. Through the mistaken idea that the qualifying part of the name because of its pronunciation—tara—meant "of tar," a builder who erected his house on the bank of this brook called his residence "Tarbrook House."

Tobar—"A well," the field from which the village water supply is obtained (OM).

Tobar Muirghle—"The well of Muriel," land in Skagh immediately about the entrance to St. Nessan's Hospital. A well within the Hospital garden is said to be a holy well. It supplied drinking water to the Hospital until comparatively recently. Name gone.

Tuirín—A plain, a cattle enclosure.

Cnoc Tóiri—"The Hill of the Tories or robbers," but much more ancient is the name Cnoc Drom Asail, "the Hill of the Ridge of Asail." The latter was a Firbolg, Asal Mac Umóir, and gave name to the great highway that led west from Tara, Sti Asail. Fearghus Mac Righ visited Asail in his dun at the Ridge (Westropp). The plain from the hill to Loch Gur was Múgh Asail, "the plain of Asail" (AFM).

The following townlands in Banogue parish adjoin the parish of Croom and are, accordingly, included here:

Baile Mac Ruairí—"The townland of the Sons of Rory."

Dubh Churrach—"The black swamp." This name is spelled Dowghurrach in the Civil Survey and may be misleading, but in the Parish Register of Croom, 1770-1784, it is spelled Dubhurrach, leaving hardly any room for doubt as to its Irish form.

Cnoc Baile Mhic Fheorais—"The hill of the residence of Mac Feoras" (CS). Georish, or Mac Feoras, the son of Feoras, is the Irish equivalent of Birmingham.

Bóirneán—"The rocky place." This place is invariably referred to in the Civil Survey as Borenane and Borenanes, and that form ought, I think, be accepted as the original and correct one. Father Noonan uses the word Morenane a little over a century later than the making of the Civil Survey.

Pollach—"A place full of pools."

Poll na ndoimhne—"The pool of the great depths." Legend says it was originally a holy well, which a plowman allowed his horses to pollute. The brink of the well gave way under the horses’ feet and they slipped in. The plowman in his efforts to save the horses and plow from being lost, held on to the plow handles and was dragged in and drowned.

Gleann (CS)—"The glen." The bevan in the English form is the Dutch name well known in Limerick and was tacked on to the old Irish name, by a gentleman named Bevan, who resided there some eighty years ago.

Tullovín

Tulach Finn—"Fionn's Hill," and Tulach Mhín (BBL).
In the village of Croom, not a solitary feature has kept its name in the original Irish form. Thus we have “Ladywell” for presumably Tobair Muire; “The well meadow” for Chlain Tobair; Main Street replaces Bothar Luimníoge of Sean O’Tuama’s days. High Street and Bridge Street may be, but probably are not, translations from the Irish, and the site of Mór Gheata Mongairit and Lom na hEach (SOT) are purely conjectural, though the site of the inn is well known. Indeed, one may be doubtful if Geata Mongairit and Lom na hEach ever had any existence except in the imagination of the author of the “warrant” in which they occur; they were high-sounding designations given merely to preserve and add to the importance of the poet and the document; they deceived nobody and were not intended to do so. They gave a touch of verisimilitude to the claims to authority and helped to carry on the lofty make-believe.

Authorities: AFM. The Four Masters; BBL. The Black Book of Limerick; PL Proxy List in the Black Book; CS Civil Survey of Limerick; OM Ordnance Map; PR Parish Register of Croom; ODH O’Heirin’s Topographical Poem; SOT Fili na Maighe. T. Local Tradition.