CARNARRY.

THE ITINERARY OF ST. PATRICK THROUGH N.E. LIMERICK.

(By JAMES GRENE BARRY, D.L., M.R.S.A.I., Vice-Pres.)

Some further remarks may not be out of place in connection with the scholarly paper from the pen of Mr. P. J. Lynch in the July Journal, in which he produces a strong array of facts in support of the Rev. J. Begley's identification of the hill of Carnarry with the Carn-Feradhaigh of the Tripartite life. Some five and thirty years ago the late Bishop Graves, a well known Celtic scholar and antiquary, informed me that the compound word Carn or Cahirnarry referred to some person of note, and he was very decided that the latter part of the word *narry* was a proper name, but as he had not investigated the matter, did not know who this Narry was. Mr. Lynch has now identified the person from whom the hill derives its name.

The late Rev. Albert Barry, C.SS.R., who wrote several essays on St. Patrick and his successors of the Celtic Church, and who had made a close study of St. Patrick's life and itinerary in Munster, told me several years ago that he believed the places mentioned in the Tripartite life in connection with Donaghmore were to be found in the hills south of Limerick, and he often asked me to investigate the matter. The late Mr. James Frost, a man of keen perception and intimacy with the past, more than once spoke to me on this subject, and was himself convinced that the hills to the south of Limerick were the places mentioned in St. Patrick's life.

I take the opportunity now offered to place on record the result of my own personal investigations.

According to Sir James Ware, in his history of the Irish Bishops, St. Patrick arrived in Cashel in A.D. 448, where he met the Missionary Bishops who had preceded him in Munster, who, having learned the great success of his mission in other parts of Ireland, "and that he had derived his authority from the same source that they did," acknowledged his primacy. Ailbe was made Archbishop of Emly.

Patrick followed the great highway from Cashel towards Thomond and visited Cullen, Grean and Kilteely, avoiding Emly, where the tribes had already been converted to Christianity by Ailbe. We next find him at the east side of Lough Gur, where there is a well and church dedicated to him, and the district is still called Patrickswell, and are not his footsteps impressed on the rock adjoining the well, and again on another stone to the south of the lake. Geologists may explain away these marks, but they have helped their purpose, and have been pointed out from generation to generation as the footprints of our apostle.

The pagans of this district worshipped a famous idol known as *Crom Dubh*, who was the God of the fruits of the earth. His feast was celebrated with great ceremony for three days, which would now correspond with the first Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in August. The pillar or staff of this idol is still to be seen on the north side of the great circle on the west of the lake, and is called *Ronadh Crom Dubh.*

Surely Patrick would not have passed by without attempting to destroy this idol, as we knew it was his custom in other parts where he preached. The feast of Crom Dubh was changed into a Christian festival, and was called *Donhnach Crom Dubh*, which in my time the people of the district call Black Stoop Sunday. Crom meaning a man who stooped with a burden on his back. Crom was said to be the first person who brought wheat on his back into this island. This feast is still known as Garland Sunday in other parts of Ireland.

The Chief of the district west of the lake lived at Cahir Guillamore, where there exist very extensive remains.

Whether Patrick visited this place is unknown; but we next find him in the Parish of Fedamore (1), having crossed the ford over the

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(1) In one of O'Donovan's O.S. letters he derives Fedamore from *Fidh Damor* Damor's wood. It is probable that *Cahirguillamore* is *Cahirgille-Damor*, the Cahir of Damor's servant, *i.e.* Headman. The present Anglicised form being got by the omission of the D, thus softening the sound. The village of Doon, in this county, derives its name from the Dun of the Swineherd of the Chief of the district. *Glenogra* means the rath of the little Glen, *Glenog-Rath*, through which the Camog river flows.

The ancient surface roads followed the tracks which connected fort with fort and notable places such as Lough Gur. Many of these surface roads disappeared when better county roads were made under the Turnpike and other Acts during the latter part of the 18th and first part of the 19th century. Some of these surface roads are still in use, and some have been incorporated with the present roads. Those which have disappeared are now difficult to trace, but the line of this road, from Fedamore to Carnarry, can still be followed. It was the road in use from Fedamore and district to Limerick up to a hundred years ago.

Camoge river at Glenogra. The track or road passes between the fort of *Rath na Greine*, and another which guard the ford here, in a direct line over the hill of Fedamore, then along the ridge between two other forts to the east and on the west side of Schule hill, on the boundary between the diocese of Limerick and Emly, over *Knock-a-cead-tine* and the sloping hills of Ballynagarde, along the east base of Knockea hill, and over the high ground through Ballyogarta, joining the *Boher Mhor* at Scart, and thus on to Carnarry.

What authority is there for all this ? Simply tradition.

Having resided for some fifty years in the adjoining parish to Fedamore in the Diocese of Emly, and when the old people still spoke their native tongue, and retained the traditions of the past, I never heard that St. Patrick passed through the parishes of Rochestown, Caherelly, Ludden, or Inch St. Lawrence, but there was always a tradition that St. Patrick passed through the parish of Fedamore on his way to Donaghmore. Some of his wishes or blessings were still repeated, such as the following :—St. Patrick's wish (or blessing) to Fedamore was "the first of health and the last of rain," or "the head of the health and the tail of the rain." Fedamore lies on a high gravelly ridge facing south, and is a remarkably healthy place, but the land is very dry and "thirsty." The most direct road from Patrickswell to Carnarry would be over the *Boher Liagan*, and through the parish of Caherelly, but according to tradition, Ailbe not only founded the church here, but resided in the Caher, and gave his name to the townland and parish (Elly is still retained as a Christian name in the district), and as the people had already been converted by him, Patrick naturally avoided the parish.

The hill of Knockea (2) is situated about two miles south of

(2) The townland of Knockea and Edwardstown were evolved by the Ordnance Surveyors in 1839 from the ancient townland of Lismullane, and they appeared for the first time in the O.S. map of 1841. Unfortunately, many old landmarks and townlands in this district were obliterated by the Survey. On a plateau of nearly two acres in extent on the top of Knockea hill there are very extensive remains of forts and fortifications. The Liss is situated in a hollow in the centre. It has two ramparts and a deep fosse, and the inner circle is fifty yards in diameter. The other ancient foundations cover the E. and S. sides, and on the highest point to the W. are the remains of a *Cairn*. The view from the summit is far-reaching. I know of no hill in N.E. Limerick with such extensive remains of ancient fortifications.

Within comparatively recent years large quantities of bog oak have been dug from what remains of Lismullane bog (about 3 acres), and the antlers of the great Elk have also been found there. It is, therefore, certain that this district was wooded, and that the bog was a quag or treacherous morass in pre-historic times.

Cahernarry, and adjoins Fedamore parish. It is marked in the Down Survey Maps as *Lismullane* (from the fort on top of the hill). According to O'Reilly's Dictionary, *Mullach* and *Mullane* mean a hill or summit. *Mull* and *Maol* mean bare or bald, and a hill such as this would be designated Mullach by Irish speaking people as it is very rugged and bare on the N. and E. sides.

The name Knockea is quite modern, being stereotyped at the time of the Ordnance Survey, the rest of Lismullane townland being named by them Edwardstown. In the Down Survey map the bog of Lismullane is marked in the hollow under the road to the east, at the base of the hill. In the Tripartite life of St. Patrick, the following story, which I take from Rev. J. Begley's "Diocese of Limerick," is related :—"When Saint Patrick entered the territory of Hy Fidhgente, he was welcomed by the ruling chieftain, Lonan, and entertained at a banquet on the hill of Knockea, over against Carn Feradhaigh, on the south. While the feast was preparing a band of strollers came to the Saint, and asked him for some food. He immediately sent them to Lonan and Deacon Mantan, who were looking after the preparation of the repast. Patrick feared, if they were refused, they might spread unfavourable reports among the people concerning him, which might interfere with the success of his mission. Lonan and Mantan refused to supply the suppliants with food

Just at the time a youth was ascending the hill with his mother, the latter carrying on her back a cooked lamb for the King's supper. Patrick asked the youth for the lamb, which he cheerfully gave, though the mother demurred, fearing the wrath of the King. He then distributed the meat among the strollers. When they had partaken of it, the earth opened and swallowed them, and they were seen no more."

As this district was densly wooded and the hollow at the base of the hill was a bog or quagmire (the surface water of the adjoining high grounds flowing into it), the strollers having partaken of their meal on the verge of the wood evidently missed the track in the dusk, and were swallowed up in the quagmire. This is the natural explanation of the words "and the earth opened and swallowed them." Here then we have clear evidence of the original name of the hill *Mullane Cea*, or *Mullach Cea*, as the name Cea has been fortunately preserved in the affix to the Knock, a word common to all hills.

The identification of this hill, where Patrick visited Lonan, is thus as complete as could be expected, making allowance for the lapse of more than fourteen hundred years.

The most casual observer passing along the Bruff road, under Carnarry, must be struck by the unusual position of the parish burial ground, perched on a rocky eminence. It is on the slope of the hill, a regular quarry with little surface to cover the dead. I know of no similar graveyard in this county, and there are abundant more suitable sites in the locality. Some event must, therefore, have occurred here to be commemorated by the founding of a church. May I suggest that Patrick visited the chief who had his Cahir on this plateau, which commands the road and the valley underneath, and that the church was subsequently erected here to commemorate this event.

Adjoining this hill is a townland now called Coolyenan, and at the other side of the Groody river is Killonan. Mr. T. J. Westropp, in his valuable essay on "Ancient Limerick Churches," says :—

Killonan.—" Lonan, son of Erc, of the Ui Fidgeinte, who was at Mullach Cea, south of Carn Feradaig, a disciple of St. Patrick, dwelt to the east of Singland."

In the Down Survey part of Coolyenan (probably a corruption of Lonan-lyenan) is marked Kilpatrick. The site of this church cannot now be recognised. Here we have abundant evidence of Patrick's connection with this district. The road from Carnarry to Donaghmore went down the hill by the well-preserved fort of *Lis-an-isky* and straight to Donaghmore. The latter part of the road is now quite obliterated, and this occurred within my memory.

From Domnachmore (Donaghmore), where he, no doubt, resided, and where he founded a church, St. Patrick went along the high ground between *Rathuard* and *Crossagalla* (or *Fearann Monach*) by the north brow of the Munster Fair Green to Singland. Singland, Rhebogue, Park and Corbally are on a peninsula, bounded on the north by the Shannon, and the flooded district now known as the Rhebogue meadows (then an inlet of the Shannon) reaching round the south and west as far as Clino, the waters of the Groody river (then a considerable stream judging from its old channel) mingling here, and thus forming a sea of waters, which would be navigable for boats during the greater part of the year.

The men of North Munster could come across from the Thomond side and land at Singland, or on the sloping brow of the land between Ballysimon and Clino, within a mile of Donaghmore.

Terryglass or *Tirglass* is a very accurate description of such a district, Glas meaning an expanse or sea of water, or where rivers meet and the waters mingle. It is true that this name is not applied to the lands here, and does not occur among the townland names of this district, but, in my opinion, the words "and he baptised them at Terryglass, where he was when they arrived," used by the writer of the Tripartite, are merely descriptive and not a place name at all.

According to the writer of the Tripartite life, "Cairthen, son of Blod, the senior of the clan Turlough," was baptised by Patrick at *Sengal.* He also cured Cairthen's son here. The word Gal from a very early date meant a stranger—a foreigner—a Gaul, and was applied by the annalists to the Norsemen, and subsequently meant an Englishman. *Sen* like *Sean* meant "old—ancient—a senior." This compound word would therefore mean the old stranger or foreigner—the senior Gaul. It does not follow that this was the name of the place in Patrick's time, but it was the name it was known by when the Tripartite was written.

I would suggest that the name was given to the district by the first Christians, and its meaning was understood by the succeeding generations as referring to Patrick's visit. It may be said, why is he not directly commemorated by name? Because his name was already attached to the well and the church founded in his honour.

We can easily follow the gradual transition of the original *Sengal* into the Anglicised form Singland. *Sengal—Singal—Singaland*, and by the omission of *a*, Singland. The affix *land*, added by the English speaking people, shows that the original word Sengal referred to the original land or place, *i.e.* the land or place of the old stranger or Gaul, St. Patrick. Does it not seem strange that, despite our Gaelic revival, the unmeaning English term Sing-land is still attached to this hallowed place, instead of the name with a meaning given it by the Gaels whom Patrick rescued from Paganism, and to whom he brought the knowledge and the blessings of the Christian Faith.

J. G. B.