

"no district in Ireland seems better adapted for the establishment of iron-works" as nodules of ironstone had been discovered in the rivulets and limestone was abundant. The land in the eastern portion is of good quality ... and produces excellent crops under a good system of cultivation; the meadows and pastures are extremely rich; great numbers of sheep are fed on them annually, and the mountain districts afford good pasturage for numerous herds of cattle; there are not more than 300 acres of waste land ..."

THE CON COLBERT COMMUNITY HALL, in Athea, is named in honour of one of the executed leaders of the Easter Rebellion who, although born at Monalena, Castlemahon, was reared in Galeview House, Athea, from the age of three. In the War of Independence another local man, Paddy Dalton, was one of three men killed in an encounter in the valley of Knockanure, Gort na Glanna, County Kerry. The other two were Paddy Walshe and Jerry Lyons. A fourth member of this unlucky quartet, Con Deed, escaped on that fateful day, 12 May 1921.

CON COLBERT was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a pioneer of *Fianna Éireann* and a captain of F Company, Fourth Dublin Battalion. He was opposed to John Redmond's attempt to place the Irish Volunteers at the disposal of the Irish Parliamentary Party, who would have sacrificed them as "cannon fodder" in World War I. During Easter Week he served under Eamonn Ceannt and commanded the garrison at Watkin's Brewery, Ardee Street, and Jameson's Distillery, Bow Street. He also took part in the fighting at Marrowbone Lane. On 8 May 1916 he was executed for his role in the Rising.

ATHEA BRIDGE was originally a wooden structure over the Gale, or Galey River. A man fell through a hole in the bridge while taking part in a faction fight, and was impaled on one of its wooden piles. During the Great Hunger a woman starved to death underneath one of its arches. In 1860 the old bridge was replaced with the present structure.

THE SHANNON FAMILY give their name to Ballyguilteneane, *Baile Giltenane* or Giltenane's townland. Giltenane is a variant of *Mac Giolla Seánáin* or *Mac Giolla tSeánáin*, the Son of the Servant of St. Senan — Senan being the saint associated with Scattery Island in the Shannon Estuary. Variants of this surname can be found in Cavan, Meath and Tyrone where it has often been Anglicised as Nugent or Leonard, and in Clare where it has been Anglicised as Shannon.

ARDAGH derives its name from Ard-ach, the High Field. In 1837 it contained 65 houses, some of which were in a ruinous condi-

tion, and the ruins of an old parish church which had been destroyed in the Insurrection of 1641 and never repaired. In 1867 about 250 Fenians managed to break into the ground floor of the barracks but failed to capture it. In 1986 there were 324 inhabitants here, 171 males and 153 females.

ST. PATRICK may have visited Ardagh when he toured through the southern half of Ireland. Tradition relates that the saint visited Knockpatrick and journeyed to Ardagh where he decided not to cross the Sliabh Luachra mountains, and turned back eastwards instead. St. Molua was commemorated in a well to the southwest of the church ruin which was still resorted to in 1840, for the cure of various illnesses on 3 August. The neighbouring townlands of Kilrodaun, Killard and Killréish were probably named after long-vanished churches, but all traces of these buildings had disappeared 150 years ago.

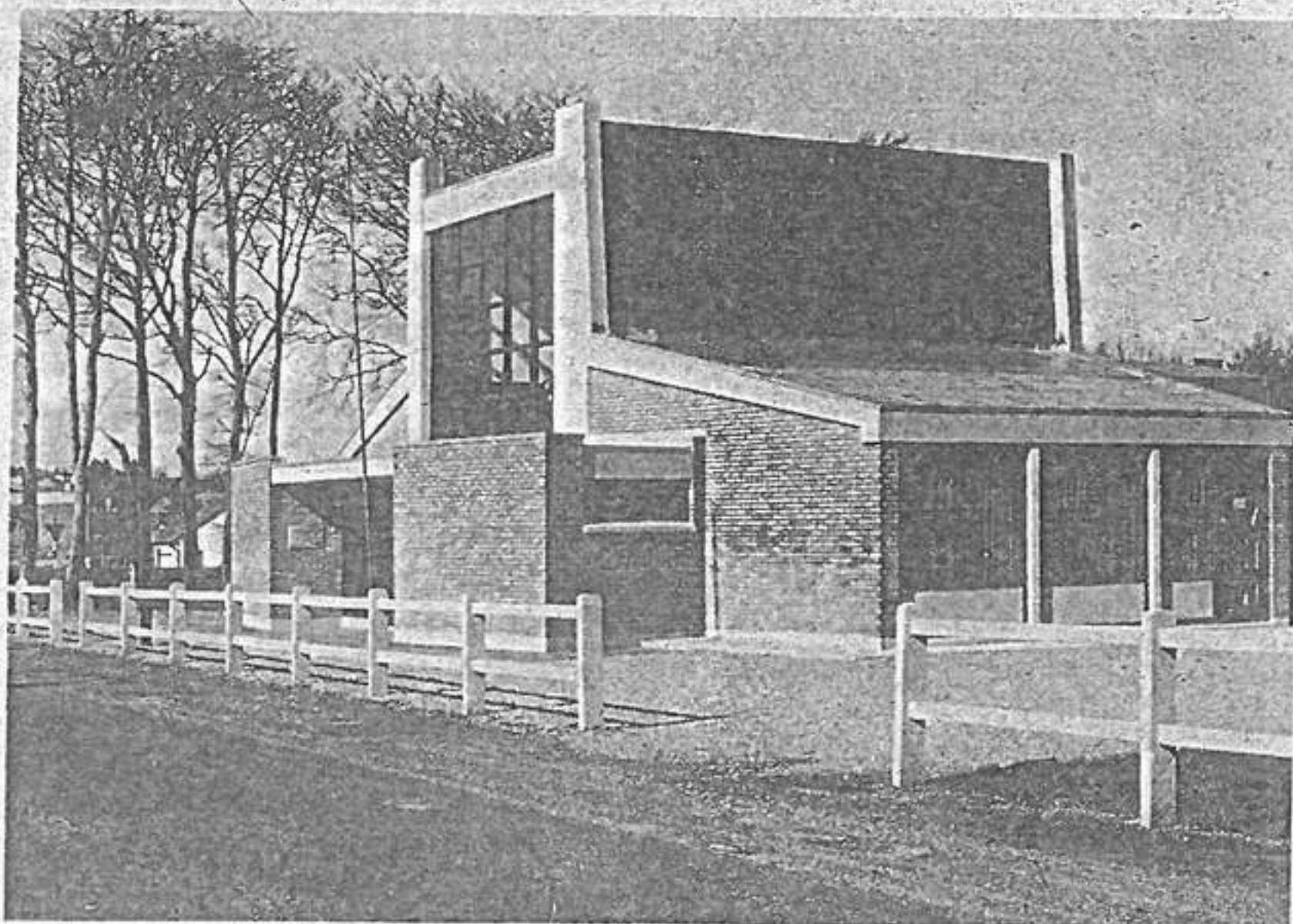
REERASTA RING FORT, in the townland of Reerasta South, is a large, damaged fort at the western end of the village. This ring fort, with its high bank and deep ditch to the north and south, was also called locally the Rath of Reerasta, the Fort of Arrears, and may trace its name back to the days when Ardagh first became a Bishop's manor. In 1868 Reerasta ring-fort was part of the local Church of Ireland archdeacon's property which was apparently leased to the nuns of St. Mary's Convent who had, in turn, sub-let it to the Widow Quinn. This fort is also known as the Ardagh Ring Fort, and is one of many such monuments in this region.

THE ARDAGH CHALICE was discovered in September 1868 by a member of the Quinn family when he was digging out a crop of

potatoes planted within Reerasta Fort. He first struck some metallic substance which turned out to be the long pin of a penannular brooch, and decided to dig a little deeper in the hope of uncovering something else. At a depth of three feet he discovered four more brooches, a wooden cross, a bronze cup which he had broken with a careless spade-thrust and a chalice now known as the Ardagh Chalice. He presented the wooden cross to his local parish priest and sold the rest of his find to Dr. Hanlon of Rathkeale for £50. Dr. Hanlon purchased these objects on behalf of the nuns of St. Mary's Convent who notified Dr. George Butler, (coadjutor Bishop of Limerick from 1861 to 1864, and later Bishop from 1864 to 1886), of the find.

LORD DUNRAVEN was consulted by the Bishop of Limerick and the unearthed cache was sent to the Royal Irish Academy for examination. The various items were cleaned and repaired. Edmond Johnson, warden of the Goldsmith's Company, wrote a detailed account of the workmanship and materials of the seven-inch-high two-handled cup known as the Ardagh Chalice. This chalice dates from the eighth century; is made of gold, silver, and bronze, with a rich decoration of enamel, amber, glass and crystal; and can be seen today, in the National Museum, Dublin. One of the brooches is also on display.

THE ANTIQUITIES COMMITTEE of the Royal Irish Academy tried to purchase the Ardagh Chalice and other items from the Catholic Bishop of Limerick in 1871. He refused to sell. On 3 June 1872 the Ardagh Church of Ireland archdeacon wrote to the Academy saying that the cache was found on his property but that he would forego all



Con Colbert Memorial Hall.

rights to it and present it to the Academy if the widow Quinn was "liberally compensated". In January 1873 Dublin Castle stated that treasure trove procedures would be initiated and demanded an accurate description of the items. In 1874 Dr. George Butler returned the objects to the museum on the understanding that the government would purchase them for £500 and deposit them on loan in the museum. The dispute concerning ownership continued. In November 1874 Mrs. Quinn laid claim to the goods. She renewed her claim in 1875. In 1877 the Treasury demanded a second assay of the objects in order to avoid "a long and angry lawsuit touching the right ownership of the articles". The matter was resolved in 1878 when the

Treasury asked the Academy to make an *ex gratia* payment of £100 to Dr. Butler who retained £50 to cover his own expenses and gave £50 to Mrs. Quinn.

THE ARDAGH CROSS which was presented to the local parish priest was "about eight inches in length and well carved, having on the reverse side the figures 727 which are intended for 1727", according to Archdeacon Begley. He wrote that the "cross could not have been buried earlier than this date with the other articles. They were ecclesiastical vessels, and may have been heirlooms that came down in the parish from one priest to another".

FR. CHRISTOPHER BERMINGHAM is usually credited with having hidden the Ardagh Chalice, cross and brooches in 1736 when Oliver Stephenson, the local landlord, swore information against him and accused him of assault and using scandalous words against him. Fr. Bermingham, who had been parish priest of Ardagh for some years prior to 1736, had interceded when Stephenson tried to seduce a newly-wed bride as the couple were leaving the place where they had been married. Even though the Penal Laws were being eased somewhat, at that time, Fr. Bermingham was forced to flee from here. He found a temporary refuge in Limerick City until he fell foul of another Protestant worthy, Thomas Odell, in 1739. Odell had Fr. Bermingham arrested to prevent his appoint-



The beautifully embellished Ardagh Chalice, probably the finest piece of eighth-century metalwork existing.

ment as parish priest of Ballingarry, as he wanted this particular appointment for a Catholic friend. Soon afterwards Thomas Odell repented of his conduct and had Fr. Bermingham released. Fr. Bermingham remained on as parish priest of Ballingarry until he died in 1848, apparently while holidaying in Bath.

CAHERMOYLE HOUSE was built in 1870 or 1871 for William Smith O'Brien's son, Edward, to a design by J.J. McCarthy. It replaces an earlier house of the same name, on the same site, which was the home of William Smith O'Brien.

WILLIAM SMITH O'BRIEN (1803-1864) was the second of Sir Edward O'Brien of Dromoland's five sons. He was educated in Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. Although the son of a Protestant landowning family he espoused the cause of Catholic Emancipation and, in 1828, was elected a member of Parliament for Ennis, County Clare. In 1843 he joined O'Connell's Repeal Association and became that movement's leader during O'Connell's imprisonment in 1844. William Smith O'Brien was sentenced to death for his role in the 1848 Rebellion. Family influence had this sentence commuted to penal servitude for life, and so this particular Young Irelander was transported to Hobart in Van Dieman's Land. Transportation to Tasmania ceased in 1853. In May 1854 William received a pardon on condition he

stayed away from the British Isles. He lived in Brussels until May 1856 when he received an unconditional pardon which allowed him to return to Ireland. Caleb Powell selected him for Grand Jury Service in 1858 although he was, technically, a landless man, and therefore did not qualify as a Grand Juror. Before the '48 rebellion William had transferred all of his property to trustees to secure it from confiscation by the state, a device to protect his heirs. Powell's posthumous memoirs mention William Smith O'Brien as "a vain, silly, mischievously inclin'd man and exceedingly egotistical and headstrong". William died while visiting his sister at Bangor in North Wales. His last words were, "Well, the night is so long and dreary, I think I will wait up a little longer". He was buried at Rathronan. William was the father of Charlotte Grace O'Brien of Foynes, and his third son, Lucius Henry O'Brien (1842-1913) was elected Dean and Rector of St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, in 1905.

SIR EDWARD O'BRIEN (1773-1837) was an opponent of the Act of Union and had married the heiress of Cahermoyle, the descendant of a Cromwellian grantee, Smith.

THE BIVALLATE RING FORT, near Dunganville Bridge, is located at the edge of a gorge cut by the Daar River. It contains souterrains and a wet fosse, and is in an excellent state of preservation.

THE BALLYLIN HILLTOP FORT may date from the late bronze age and it is characterised by the presence of two widely spaced ramparts. This is an extremely large hilltop fort in the townland of Ballylin the outer wall of which encloses over fifty acres of ground. This fort is 797 feet above sea level and is believed to be the largest of fifty, or so, such monuments in Ireland. Despite being called forts there is now some doubt as to whether these served a ritual purpose rather than a military one.

ELM HILL is a two-storey eighteenth-century house erected over a basement. This was