

WISE WOMEN OF MUNGRET:

Local lore has kept alive the story of the intellectual "women" of Mungret right down through the centuries.

According to tradition a controversy arose between the students of Mungret and those of another monastery, some say those of Lorrha in Co. Tipperary, as to which of them were the more learned. To decide the matter it was agreed that an equal number of the best scholars from each of the two schools should meet on an appointed day at Mungret and hold a public disputation. As the day drew near the Mungret panel may have had doubts about their chances of success, and so they had recourse to stratagem. A number of them dressed as women and as the hour approached, set out for a neighbouring stream. They took up a position beside a ford that the visitors had to cross on their way to the monastery, and began washing clothes in the stream. Before long the visitors arrived and being strangers inquired the way to Mungret. They were answered in Latin and Greek. Naturally the strangers were surprised to find washerwomen so versed in the classics, and asked how this came about.

"Oh that's nothing, mere crumbs from the monks' table," came the reply. "If you wish we will have a discussion with you on theology and philosophy". This shook the morale of the visiting team. After all if the womenfolk were willing to take them on, in such subjects, what chance had they against the scholars? To avoid what looked like certain defeat they decided to forego the contest. They set out for home leaving the day to the "Wise Women of Mungret".

THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S:

The earliest records say that the bells were the gift of John Budston in the year 1401. In connection with the bells there is a legend to the effect that a beautiful chime of bells had been cast by an Italian, but that on being completed they were stolen from him. He travelled the world in search of them, and it is narrated that one evening at sunset, when coming up the Shannon on a boat, he heard the chimes of the bells of St. Mary's and recognised them as his own, but the joy of finding where they were overcame him, and he dropped dead. Another legend says they were thrown into the Abbey River, and can still be heard ringing on Christmas Eve.

Some of the bells at present in the cathedral were presented by William Yorke, who built the Exchange.

LEGEND OF THE MONKEY ON THE ARMORIAL BEARINGS OF THE GERALDINES—TOMAS AN APA.

Sir John Fitzgerald and his son Maurice were killed in the Battle of Callan, 1261. Maurice however, left a son Thomas, who was called "Tomás an Apa". He received this name from the legend that a pet monkey of the family carried the child to the top of the family castle in Tralee when the household was thrown into disorder after the disaster at Callan. After some time it brought the child down and safely deposited it in the cradle. From that time the monkey has held an honourable place in the armorial bearings of the family.