

Glin

Glencorbry Kilfergus

GLIN derives its name from *Gleann Corbraigh*, the Glen of the Corbry, a vassal people whose territory was usurped by John Fitz John. John had established his authority over many parts of West Limerick by 1262, and by 1299 he controlled half a *tuath* of Glencorbry which corresponded to the present parish of Kilfergus or Glin.

GLIN CASTLE, the original stronghold, was known as *Cloch Ghleanna*, the Rock of Glin. The first castle on this site was built by John Fitz John over a rocky base in the bed of the Glencorbry River. This later consisted of a tower or keep at one angle of a rectangular bawn, with turrets at each corner, and a detached banquet hall. This was the seat of the Knights of Glin from about 1260 until some time after 1642, when they abandoned it to build an unfortified house near the site of the present Georgian structure of the same name. While I was looking for the entrance to this ruined tower, I met Denis Mulcahy who told me that the only way to gain access was through a hole in the eastern wall, which was about nine feet above ground level. This led onto the remaining portion of the spiral staircase. On the north-eastern corner of the north wall is a plaque commemorating the garrison who fell defending the castle in 1600. The castle may have been erected to protect a ford over the river.

THE GLENCORBRY RIVER is also known as the Glencorbry Stream or the Glin River. It rises on the Kerry border and almost describes a complete circle before pouring into the Shannon at Glin. This river is only a tiny stream until it crosses the Athea road between the townlands of Ballyguiltenane and Kinard, but by the time it reaches Killeany Wood it has become the Glin River proper. Beyond the wood it flows through a rocky gorge before pouring over *Poll an Eas*, the Hole of the Waterfall. The river passes under the bridge of the Ballyhahill road before it flows past Ballybeg and Killacolla Barker, a tract of land which never reverted to the Knight of Glin's ownership because of a clause in the will of a previous owner, William Barker, an English Undertaker who

hated the Knights. Before the river reaches Glin it travels past the ruins of Kilfergus church and the valley from which *Gleann Corbraighe* took its name.

THE VILLAGE OF GLIN was listed amongst the principal towns of the county in 1598. From the thirteenth century onwards it had developed around Glin Castle, and the Elizabethan English acknowledged its strategic value by using it as a base from which they could launch their attacks on the Geraldines. Despite the castle being encircled by water, in 1600, the garrison destroyed a number of thatched houses in Mill Street to improve their own defences before Sir George Carew approached the town. The town was owned by the Knights of Glin until 1654, when most of the Knight's lands passed to William Barker, a London alderman, described as "a crass, unmannerly, but an artful and indefatigable man". Barker lost all but 55 acres of his Glin lands to Sir Edward FitzHarris who was the husband of the Knight of Glin's only daughter and heir, Ellin or Olive, in 1661. Barker retained possession of the "Castle of Glin with the bawne, all the outhouses, yards, orchards, gardens and the lands ... lying most contiguously to the castle". In 1662 William Barker received a grant for a market and two fairs. In 1782 Glin was described as a market-town with a harbour and "every convenience to render it a most desirable seat wherein to establish any branch of the woollen, linen or cotton manufacturers". In 1837 Samuel Lewis wrote that this town "owes much of its improvement to its present proprietor, is beautifully situated on the southern bank of the River Shannon ... and contains about 280 houses, several of which are well built and of handsome appearance. Among the more recent improvements is a handsome terrace, built by John Hamilton ... a new line of road from Askeaton to Tarbert ... and a road through the mountains to Abbeyfeale, a distance of 12 miles, which was opened in 1836. In the summer the town is much resorted to for the benefit of pure air and the advantages of sea-bathing, and is admirably situated for carrying on a very extensive trade, the river affording great facilities for intercourse and secure anchorage for vessels of any burden ... This place is the great depot of the salmon fishery of the Shannon and its tributary rivers, of which large quantities are annually shipped for England; oysters of very superior flavour and other fish are also taken in abundance. The manufacture of linen and cotton checks is carried on to some extent, and there is a considerable trade in corn and butter, which are shipped to Cork and Limerick". The market was held on Saturdays, and fairs took place on 8 June, the first Wednesday in September, and 3 December, for cattle and pigs. There was a constabulary force stationed here and a substantial bridewell which contained six cells, two day-rooms and two spacious airing-yards. Lewis also wrote that there "are numerous ancient forts in the various parts of the parish, five of which are within the demesne of the Castle Glin; and at Flean, in the mountains, are the remains of a very ancient church". The big houses of the area, in those days, were Glin Castle, Westwood, Shannon View, Shannon Lawn, Fort Shannon, Ballydonohoe, Eastwood, Cahara Lodge, Villa, Glin Lodge, Clare View, Gardenville and Cahara House.

THE KNIGHTS OF GLIN were a minor branch of the once powerful Fitzgeralds. There is some doubt as to how the title originated but two explanations are generally accepted, although it is also quite possible that a title like this may have been the result of an Anglo-Norman "becoming as Irish as the Irish themselves". **JOHN FITZ THOMAS FITZGERALD**, Lord of Connello, the grandson of Maurice Fitzgerald of Windor, the ancestor of all the Geraldines, had four, or five, illegitimate sons and the royal authority to confer knighthoods. He knighted three of his sons. Gibbon was created White Knight; Maurice was made the Knight of Kerry, or the Green Knight; and John Fitz John became the First Knight of the Valley, the Black Knight, or the Knight of Glin.

KING EDWARD III 1327-1377 has also been credited with the creation of these three titles, and is believed to have conferred



Aerial view of Glin.

knighthood on the three Fitzgerald half-brothers after the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333, or later on in 1335.

THE TITLE, Knight of Glin, was first documented in 1425 when Andrew Daundon conveyed lands in Drumloghan, Kenry, to Philip, Knight of Glen. Up to the end of the seventeenth century, the Knight was often referred to as the Knight of the Valley in official documents. The Knights of Glin are familiar figures in the history, legends, poetry, song and folklore of West Limerick.

JOHN FITZ JOHN FITZGERALD, the First Knight of Glin, was the son of John FitzThomas Fitzgerald and the wife of an Irish chieftain, O Coileáin of *Claoughlas*. By 1307 he controlled an area sixteen miles long by nine miles wide, which was later subdivided into the baronies of Upper Connello, Lower Connello, Shanid and Glenquin. In the Irish genealogies he is listed as Seán Mór na Sursaigne, Big John of the Girdle. He was succeeded by his son Thomas FitzJohn Fitzgerald.

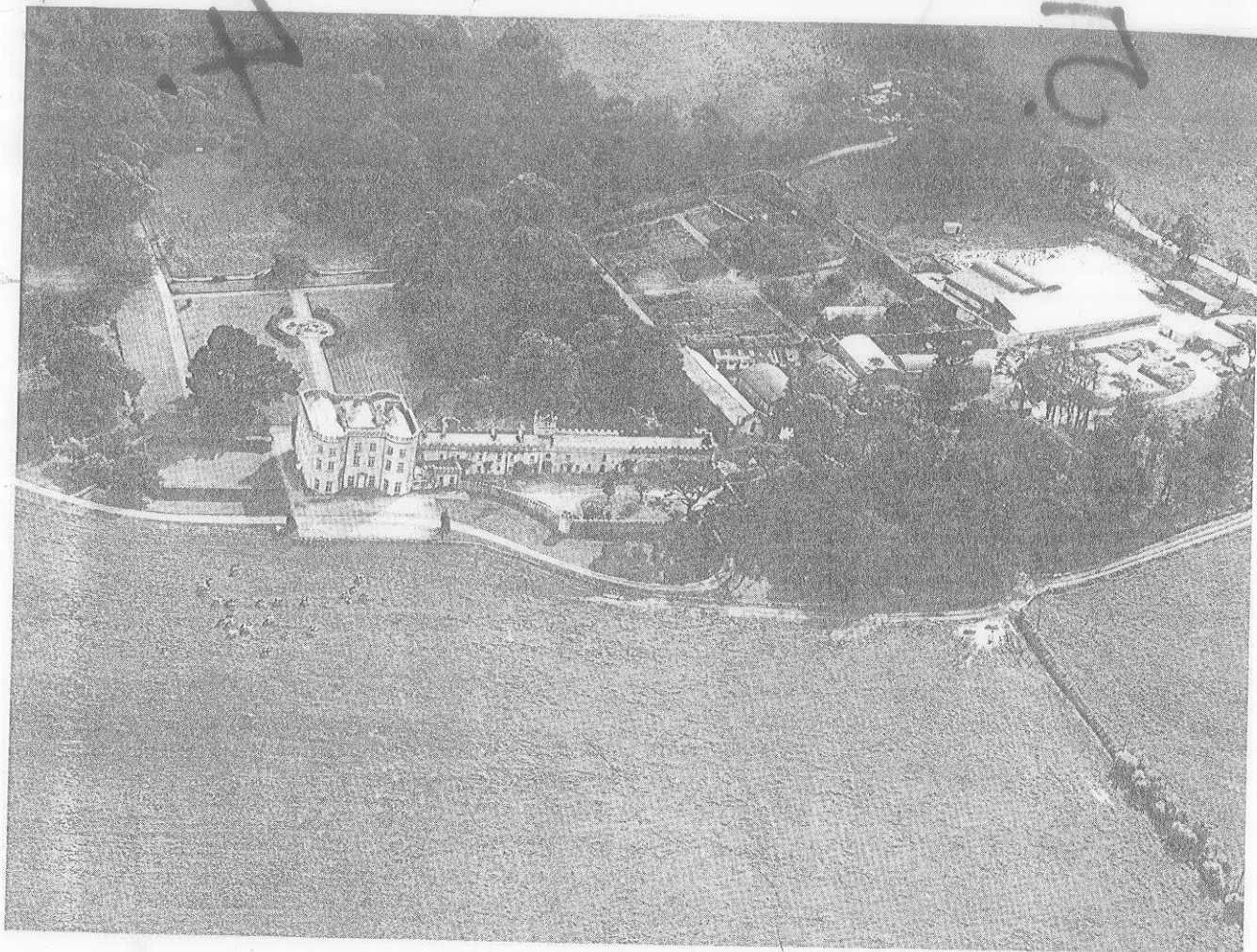
COLLINS O Coileáin, O Cuileáin, O'Collaine, O'Collan, or Collen is derived from the descendants of *Coileáin*, the Whelp.

This family were Lords of *Ui Conaill Gabhra* (later the baronies of Upper and Lower Connello) until they were expelled in 1178. Most of the clan moved to West Cork but some of them remained in south-west Limerick, as Lords of *Claoughlas*, until they were dispossessed by the Fitzgeralds towards the end of the thirteenth century.

THE KNIGHTS OF GLIN are so interlinked with the history of West Limerick that it is virtually impossible to separate the two. Thomas FitzJohn Fitzgerald escaped execution for treason in 1567, but his son and heir was hanged, drawn and quartered at Limerick Docks. Edmund FitzThomas Fitzgerald retained possession of the castle and manor of Glin, together with his lands at Cappagh and Castletown, even though they had been granted to Sir William Drury in 1578. Despite a brief skirmish with some English planters in 1579, Edmund did not become involved in the second Desmond Rebellion, and in June 1588 his castle, manor, and 6,800 acres of land were restored to him. He failed in his attempts to recover the Lordship of Kenry and the Manor of Cappagh. In 1595 he lost an additional 1100 acres to English settlers and some

of the old English families who used government pressure to expand their holdings. Despite his losses, the Knight was considered amongst the chief men of the county in 1598, when he sided with the Sugán Earl of Desmond to drive the English out of Munster. When Sir George Carew laid siege to Glin Castle in 1600, he threatened to kill the Knight's six-year-old son who had been held as a hostage to ensure Edmund's loyalty. The Knight's aide replied; "*Gread leat. Tá an ridire go meidhreach fós agus a bhean go bríomhar. Tá an pit oscailte fós agus an bod bríomhar. Is fuiriste leanbh eile do gheiniúint*". This reply stated, somewhat graphically, that the Knight and his lady were both willing and able to have more children if their son was killed.

THE SIEGE OF GLIN CASTLE was a short but bloody affair. Turlough Roe MacMahon and Captain Flower led two abortive assaults before they succeeded in capturing the building with a third assault, on the morning of 9 July, 1600. The Knight escaped, and despite a £100 reward offered for his capture, he remained at large to join O'Donnell on the march to Kinsale, and share



Glin Castle and grounds.

survived both the War of Independence and the Civil War. At the age of seventeen he had joined the British Army; trained as a marksman; and deserted to fight for Ireland. During the war years he had several narrow escapes, and in peace-time had earned a reputation as a sportsman and athlete. He often swan across the Shannon, where his successful negotiation of the river was usually marked by a signal-fire to announce his safe arrival. His death was reported in 1930, supposedly, by drowning. He left Glin, married in Dublin; worked in England, and lived to a ripe old age.

CLOONLAHARD WOOD, three miles south of Glin, was the scene of a massacre on 12 March, 1580, when a man named Sheahan, or MacShane, led Pelham's troops to where 400 fugitives were hiding from the English forces. A few young people managed to escape but the rest were killed. In 1927 Archdeacon John Begley was shown a large mound which was "still pointed out as an enduring monument to this great crime".

THE FLEAN BEG CROMLECH is three miles south-east of Glin, in the townland of Tinnakilla. This is a prehistoric chamber

tomb. *Cloch Liosliagáin*, the Stone of the Fort of the Standing Stone, is a pillarstone about 300 yards south of the cromlech.

SOURCE REFERENCE NUMBERS

9 11 28 44 47 60
64 67 73 120 129 150
192 203 238 251 264 282

Herbertstown

Raleighstown - Ballynamona - Cromhill - Killeely

HERBERTSTOWN derives its name, Herbert's Town, or *Baile Hiobaird*, from the Herbert family who would have been amongst the earliest Anglo-Norman settlers in the region. Variants of the surname Herbert would include *Hoireabard*, *Hoireabárd*, *Hubberd*, *Herbard*, *Harbert*, *Harberd*, *Herebeorht*, *Hiobárd*, *Hobárd*, and *Hoibeárd*. The family settled in Kildare, Meath, and Limerick. They were freehold tenants of the Earls of Desmond, but the name seems to have almost disappeared after the eighteenth century, with the death of Maurice Herbert of Templeglantine. The village is located on the

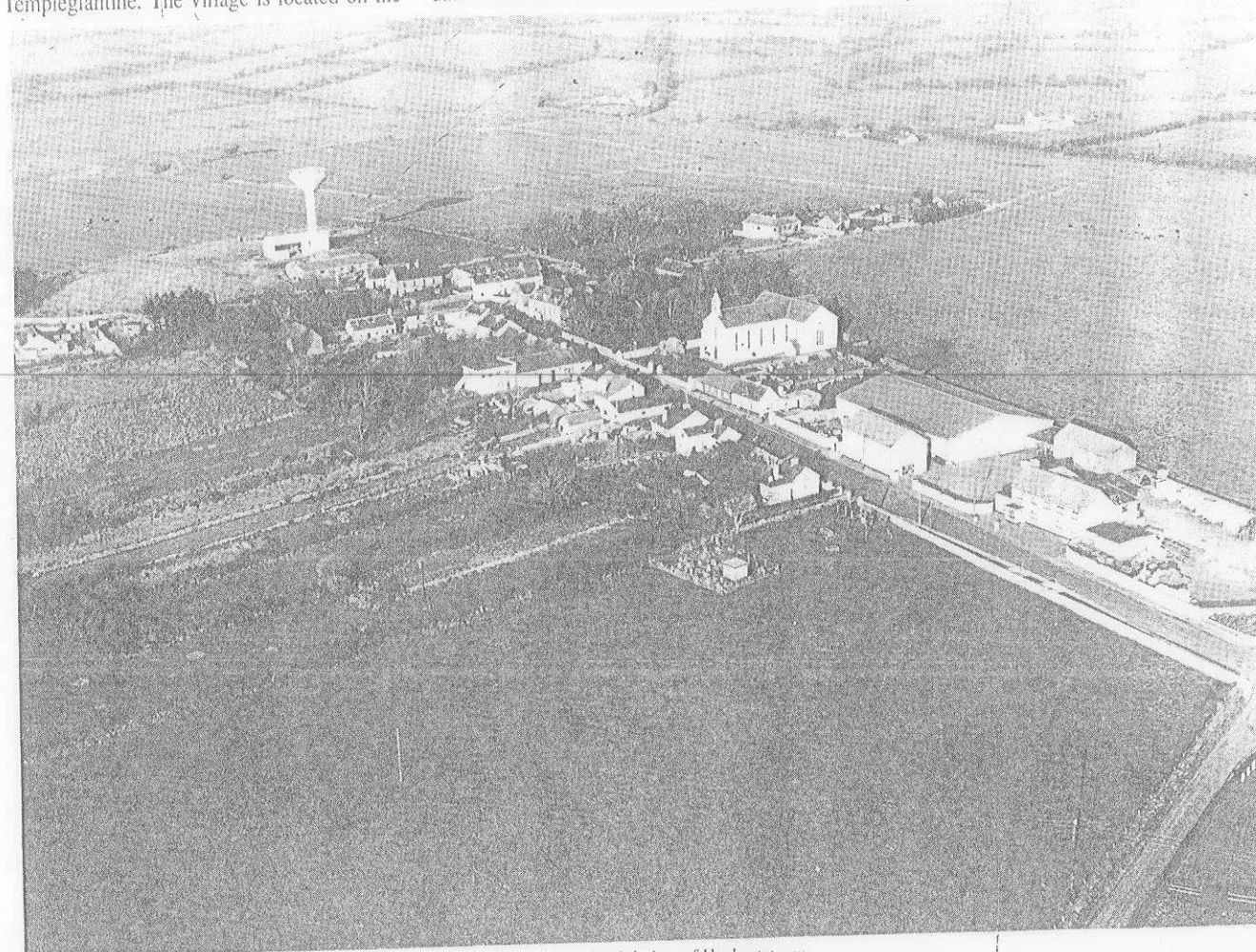
summit of a hill overlooking flat, low-lying marshy ground which is, in turn, encircled by a series of individual hills. In 1837 Herbertstown contained a constabulary police station, a Catholic church, erected for £800 in 1836, and formed part of the parish of Cahercorney. Pig fairs were then held four times a year, on 15 January, 17 March, 28 June, and 7 November.

CAHERCORNEY CHURCH was granted to Monasteranenagh Abbey in 1185 by a charter of Prince John. This was later confirmed by Turlough O'Brien in 1200, and little else was recorded about *Cahercornii* after that date. After the Dissolution, it remained in use

as a Protestant church, but is now ruined, without any architectural features which would indicate its age. In 1943 the oldest tombstone in the graveyard was a low slab bearing the date 1717. Cahercorney Church was the burial-place of the Croker family, who erected a tomb here in 1723.

REV. PATRICK FITZGERALD, co-author of *The History, Topography and Antiquities of the County and City of Limerick with a preliminary view of the History and Antiquities of Ireland* with J.J. McGregor, was vicar of Cahercorney and lived in the glebe house, at Ballingoola.

THE BALLINGOOLA PAPER-MILL was



Aerial view of Herbertstown.