

Killaloe: The royal capital of mediaeval Ireland

KILLALOE — a charming, historic town, and the gateway to scenic Lough Derg — still continues to be a favourite resort for large numbers of Limerick citizens.

Many of those who we call senior citizens recall pleasurable excursions from Limerick city to Killaloe via the old Limerick-Killaloe railway — now sadly defunct.

History

With its mediaeval Saint Flannan's Cathedral, and historic sites like Kincora — where High King Brian Boru had his palace-fortress — and Bealboru (at Ballyvalley), Killaloe still has strong intimations of a once royal capital for those with a good historical sense.

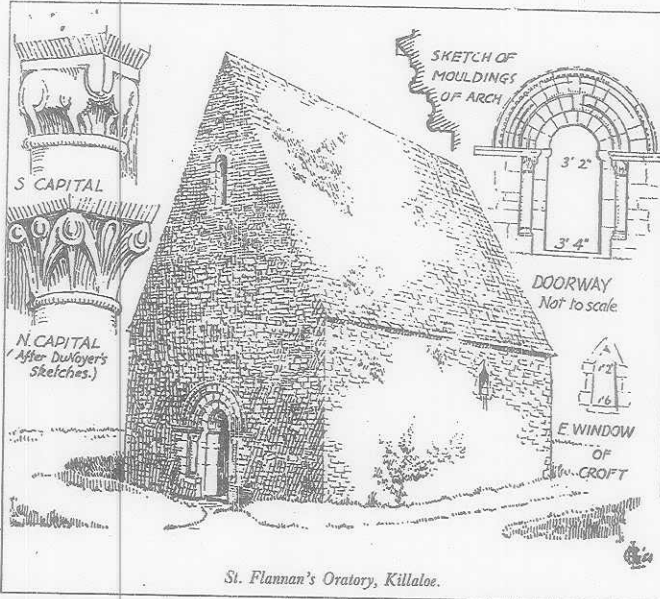
High King Brian Boru's palace-fortress of Kincora was situated where Killaloe's Catholic Parish Church stands today. Go up and stand there, next time you're in Killaloe.

Strategically, it's the highest and most commanding point in Killaloe. There's a clear view up past the narrow channel at Bealboru (Ballyvalley), and up Lough Derg and across to the Tipperary mountains and down the Shannon Valley towards Limerick city.

High King Brian's sentries would have instantly spotted any incursions by the Vikings of Leinster (or their Leinster Irish allies) across the Tipperary mountains, or down Lough Derg, or moves by the Vikings of Limerick city, on the down-Shannon side.

If High King Brian Boru had not been killed by the Viking Brúadar at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014 — when he decisively ended Viking power in Ireland — the Dalcassian line of High Kings would have continued, and, as undisputed rulers of Ireland, would have established Killaloe as our royal capital.

With the recent publication of "Historic Killaloe — A Guide to its Antiquities," by Sean Kierse, an expert Clare historian, visitors from Limerick to this ancient town will be able to enjoy its rich, exciting history and folklore, and conveniently get access to local historic



St. Flannan's Oratory, Killaloe.

Saint Flannan's oratory (in the grounds of Killaloe's cathedral) is a fine, well-preserved example of the nave of a 12th century Hiberno-Romanesque church. Detailed drawings of its west door and door capitals decorations are seen as insets in the picture. It's one of the several handsome illustrations in Sean Kierse's Killaloe guidebook.

sites.

Sean Kierse (quoting MacLaig, High King Brian's Court Poet) pictures the royal palace-fortress of Kincora vividly for us all, though no trace of it remains today.

"It had an enclosure of stone, within which stood a number of circular houses of timber and wicker work, painted in gaudy colours, and also a well and pool. Two famous salmon, held in superstitious respect by the Dal gCais, lived in this pool," Sean Kierse tells us.

Sean Kierse adds that High King Brian entertained his royal visitors in The Great Hall of Kincora. Here is part of the brilliant scene:

"The boards shone with numerous gold mounted cups and the shields of the kings hung on the walls. The attendants and minstrels, who occupied the lower end of the hall, wore richly embroidered coats . . ."

The festive food and drink was splendid and lavish: "beef, mutton, fresh pork, game and fish, with oat-cakes, cheese, curds, onions, cresses, mead and fermented bilberry juice. The cooking was done in the centre of the hall, with the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof."

Lore

The virtues of Sean Kierse's guide book for visitors to Killaloe is that, as well as giving helpful and informative lore on well-known local sites, it gives helpful directions to offbeat sites and information about them.

These offbeat sites include: Tobermurragh, Murrough's Well, near the Pier Head, at the upper end of the Canal Cut. According to local tradition, Murrough, Brian Boru's eldest son (commander of the Irish

Army at Clontarf) was baptised at this well.

You will be easily able to locate Greenanlaghna (on the fairy hill of Craglea, out on the Scariff road), a sunning place for the ladies of cora.

At Bealboru in August 1690, General Patrick Sarsfield and his 500 picked dragoons forded the narrow lake channel and safely reached the opposite Tipperary shore, where Galloping Hogan, the famous Raparee chief and his band, greeted them and acted as their guides through the Tipperary highlands and on to Ballymeety to demolish King Williams guns and ammunition convoy.

Killaloe (on the County Clare shore), and Ballina (County Tipperary shore), are linked by a bridge, which makes them like an Irish equivalent of Buda and Pest (Budapest, the Hungarian capital) on the river Danube. Sean Kierse deals most informatively with sites on the Ballina shore.

They include: Templeachally (about one kilometre on the Birdhill side of Ballina), the ruins of a 12th century Romanesque church.

In the centre of this ruined church is the grave of Rev. Fr. Patrick McKeogh, P.P., of Ballina, who died in 1780, aged 48. During the 1798 Rising, the local United Irishmen (Wolfe Tone's followers), hid their pikes in Fr. McKeogh's grave. The McKeogh family still continue in Ballina as a highly respected and energetic local business family.

Across a stream from Templeachally are the ruins of an old fortified building called Cloghaneena. It's Gaelic name, Cloch an Fhiona meant "The Stone of the Wine." According to local folklore, this was where High King Brian Boru had his wine store.

The Vikings of Limerick — after their defeat by Brian Boru — were allowed to continue as his peaceful, commercial subjects.

Warned by court about no insurance

"OH DON'T do that", a 65-year-old Clonlara man pleaded when Justice M. Reilly threatened him with jail if he drove his uninsured car home from Limerick Court where he was appearing on a charge of driving without insurance.

William Torpey, Clonlara, admitted that he had no insurance, but pointed out that the only way he had of coming to court was by driving in himself.

Asked by the Justice where the car was, he replied "outside", and when Justice Reilly asked him if he was going to drive it home to Clonlara he asked: "Will you just let me do that?"

"No", said Justice Reilly,

emphatically.

Mr. Steve Coughlan, solicitor for the defendant, said that he had a dispute with his insurance company following an accident, and he was at present trying to get insurance.

Justice Reilly: "If he doesn't stop driving without insurance I'll have to send him to prison."

Garda Denis O'Callaghan, who had brought the summons against the defendant, offered to drive him home, when the Justice announced that he was adjourning the summons for two weeks.

Commenting Garda O'Callaghan, Justice Reilly said: "The gardai are always helpful when they can be of assistance and in this particular case Garda O'Callaghan has been most helpful".

NIALL ST. JOHN

1967 — 1988

Celebrating 21 years in Professional Photography

Qualifications include London City & Guilds Certificate in General Photography — Kevin Street College of Technology Certificate in Professional Photography and Licentiate member of the Masters Photographers Association.

WEDDINGS, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND P.R. SPECIALISTS

NIALL ST. JOHN PHOTOGRAPHY

97 Greenfields, Rosbrien, Limerick.

Telephone: (061) 303806

Member of I.P.P.A. & M.P.A.



Stephen Fitzgerald (left), Tadgh O'Connor (centre) and Garry McSweeney, supporters from "The Parish", in full concentration at Saturday's match between Shannon and Old Crescent at Thomond Park.

ARE YOU PREGNANT?

ARE YOU ALONE?

ARE YOU WORRIED?

Confidential Service committed to the care and service of the single pregnant girl and her baby or women with an un-planned pregnancy.

CURA 318207