

SOME LOCAL TRADITIONS OF LOUGH GUR

THE Amenity and Tourism Survey of Lough Gur, made by Nathaniel Lichfield and Associates and published earlier this year by the Limerick County Council, continues to hold wide interest and to excite no little controversy. This very historic district is, in consequence, attracting a growing number of tourists, and among quite recent visitors was a large group of students from the Netherlands. There is a growing interest, too, in Lough Gur by serious students of archaeology, and, in view of this we continue in the following article some interesting references which were made by the well-known antiquarian, J. F. Lynch, in the course of a letter to the "Limerick Chronicle" over half a century ago. The first instalment appeared in the "Chronicle" on Saturday last, July 15.

"In the Book of Rights names of several of the forts at Lough Gur are given," Lynch says, "and in the Irish records we are informed that Brian Boru presented Lough Gur to his son-in-law, Cian, King of Desmond. Later, an O'Brien, King of Limerick, who founded Manister at the Fair Green of Cairbre, endowed that Abbey with lands at Lough Gur."

He continues: "I found from local tradition that a great fair or assembly in August was held at the West side of Lough Gur and that horse races were at the same time held at this place, which is called Oenach Senchlochair 'the assembly fair or fair green of old Clochar'."

FORTS

Referring to the usage of the term "stone circle," Lynch says that at Lough Gur the Irish term which the old people applied to the chief monument in Grange was *lios* or "fort." Many of the old Irish forts were used for religious as well as secular purposes, and thus we may explain the presence of the pillar stones named Rannach Chruim Dhuibh and Cloch a bhile, for whatever we think of the local traditions concerning them we must acknowledge that such stones could have no connection with an ordinary fort, even though built in the immediate vicinity of one of the royal cemeteries of pagan Ireland.

Dr. O'Donovan, in the Book of Rights, says that the royal fort named Cathair Chinn Chon "The Fort of the Hound's Head" is a Cyclopean stone fort near Rockbarton. There are extensive remains of such stone forts in this immediate neighbourhood, and in ancient times it must have been a place of importance. There is no fort in the

demense of Rockbarton, and the name Cathair Chinn Chon was unknown to the old people of Lough Gur.

However, a stone fort near the entrance to Caherguillamore and close to a large pillar stone was pointed out to Lynch by some old men. This they said was the fort from which Caherguillamore was named, but very likely the old name is Cathair Chinn Chon.

Another of the Lough Gur forts is named Dun Fhir Aenchoiga "the fort of the one (or wonderful) sword." This fort, by means of local traditions was located by Lynch on the hill of Balle na gCaitheach, near a grave mound and pillar stone, and close to the cromlech on top of the hill.

Dun Gair, the fort of Gar, now Gur, another of the royal forts, was, according to local tradition, on the top of Carrickmore, one of the hills of Knockadoon.

PREHISTORIC ROAD

Cathair Meathais "the fort of fatness" is also a royal fort, probably the stone fort on Knockroe at the N.E. side of Lough Gur. According to Lynch, it was from this hill that the prehistoric road, locally called Gleann na Muice duibhe "the glen of the black pig" passed to Saingel, now Singland, near Limerick.

The recovery of the name of this important road and much information concerning the pillar stones and legends are credited by Lynch to the late Mr. Grene Barry.

They both came to the conclusion that some pillar stones on Knockroe belonged to the Gleann na Muice Duibhe, which enters Knockadoon by a ford

near Brouchler's Castle.

An ancient road marked by a line of pillar stones extends from Knockroe to the ford of Clognanroun on the Commoge. On Knockroe, beside the fort and cairn, "is a field near the house of John Hynes, full of small graves, in which many weapons and other articles were found when a few of the graves were investigated."

There is also on one of these hills of Knockroe a prehistoric seat named Ruadh Suidhe or "red seat," on which a sentry was supposed to be. The hill is called Knocksentry.

CASTLE

Lieutenant John de Salis made a thorough examination of Garode Island, and discovered the foundation stones of a very strong and large castle. This was the castle mentioned in Pacola Hibernia from which the Irish garrison of the Sugaun Earl fired on the troops of Sir John Carew as they were passing along the road leading over Knockinnil.

This castle is frequently mentioned in the Lough Gur tales concerning the enchanted Earl of Desmond. The island is artificial, and there was a passage from it to Knockadoon, the hill of Dun Gair. From time immemorial there were residences on this island, for tons upon tons of bones, the refuse of the food of the inhabitants, were found in the lake close to the island.

WELL

A little to the south of this island the old people located the well from which, they said, the water of Lough Gur issued. There is a reference to this tale in Lenihan's History of Limerick. The female guardian of the well is locally called Tolcebhrean, but the term Clr Gor has an introduction by Vallencey.

General Vallencey, referred to last week, was one of the early investigators of Lough Gur, and spent a week there examining the various monuments. His guide was the father of Edward Fitzgerald, who died many years ago. Edward Fitzgerald helped the famous Crofton Croker in his investigations in 1830.

Some curious tales concerning the Housekeeper's Seat on Knockadoon were published in the "Chronicle" and were obtained by Lynch from a John Punch. The tales were handed down to Punch by his grandfather, who was for a long time in the employment of the Bailey

family, members of which were agents to the Counts de Salis at Lough Gur for a very long period.

Lynch, who published a series of local tales of the Lough Gur district in the "Revue Celtique," believed that the old men of Lough Gur did preserve certain valuable archaeological facts and curious old folk tales. He valued every local detail, for he believed that the stone monuments at Lough Gur would one day acquire a supreme importance for Irish archaeologists.

City G.A.A. Fixtures

CONFIRMED AT BOARD MEETING, MONDAY, JULY 17

Monday, July 24:
M.F. League: C.B.S. Field—
Claughaun v. C.B.S., 7.45; Tim
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