

A short history of Mungret

THE derivation of Mungret has been a matter of conjecture and has never been satisfactorily settled. O'Donovan suggests that it is derived from *Main*, a hill, and *garidh*, short, i.e. short hill.

We know that local names of places are usually descriptive of the place or locality, therefore, to ascertain the meaning of Mungret we must go back to the fifth century, when St. Nesson founded the monastery there, and realise the physical characteristics of the locality.

At that time, and for

centuries afterwards, the low-lying corcass lands from the mouth of the Maigue to Limerick were unreclaimed from the Shannon, and the tide ebbed and flowed over this wide expanse, known as "the lake of Limerick."

Wild

So wild was the district about Mungret, and around Limerick to the west, that it was known as *Fasagh Luimnagh*, or the wilderness of Limerick. Standing on the road near the only remains of the ancient monastery, one can realise the fact, that the waters of the Shannon came close to its walls, and that the low-lying lands immediately to the north and east were morasses, or bogs covered with sedge and long bog grasses.

These cut-away bogs, now moory pasture land, no doubt gave fuel to the monks for many a century. The site of the church and monastery is situated on a gentle slope, with the humped-backhills of Temple Mungret and Castle Mungret to the north and west, and the sloping hill of the Glebe to the south.

We have here the physical features of the locality in the fifth century. Ancient writers, and the *Four Masters*, call the district *Mungairit* or *Mungarat*, now softened into Mungret; pronounced *Mong-a-rit* by the natives. A sedgy morass is call in Irish, *Moing* or *Muing*, which term is also applied to the tall grasses grown in bogs. *Cruit*, a hump, and *Crit*, a back, are words usually applied to round and sloping hills. *Moinga-cruit*, the sedgy morass of the sloping hill.

The word in time would get the present sound of *Mungairit* by leaving out the "c" in the final syllable, or, perhaps, *Moin* a bog, may be the first part of the word; meaning then, the bog of the sloping hills.

Decay

When Donald O'Brien granted Mungret to Brictius, Bishop of Limerick in 1179, the monastery was in a state of decay owing to the constant attacks of the Danes of Limerick, who, it must be remembered, possessed the lands along the Shannon to the Maigue river.

The charter of Donald O'Brien devises the lands of Mungairit and *Ivinnach* (Manach), i.e., the lands of the monks, to the Bishop and his successors for ever "from the arch of Mungairit

to *Ivinnach*, and from the ford of *Cein* to the river Shannon."

These boundaries have never been identified. I venture to make the attempt to localise them. Some fifty years ago the foundations of the gateway, or arch, leading to the monastery could be discerned some 300 yards to the east of the graveyard. *Ivinnach* means either the district of the mill (Moulin), or that of the O'Maley's, a tribe which owned this district close to Limerick.

Boundary

The Ballyclough river bounding the townland of Dooradoyle, *recte Tooradail* (the tillage land of the tribe), bounded the Bishop's lands to the north-east. I would suggest that this was the boundary designated *Ivinnach*.

To the west a small stream separates Mungret parish from that of Killeedy, bounding the townland of Ballymacaisil. A sub-division of this townland adjoining Tervoe

is called *Caisilcanter*.

According to the *Four Masters*, Maoilcailil, Abbot of Mungret, died A.D., 909. From him, it is plain, this townland took its name — *Bally-maoil-caisil*, softened into Ballymacaisil. Probably he had these lands reclaimed from the wilderness. *Caisilcanter*, i.e., *Caisilcean-tir*, is the head or upper part of Caisil Island, as it is the extreme western point of the Monks' land.

The ancient road to Carrigo-Gunnell crosses what was the boundary stream. Here I think, was the ford of *Cein*, or *Cein*. From this point along the bounds of Tervoe to the Shannon is the meaning of the Bishop's land to the west. At the time of the Down survey the Bishop's lands comprised more than two-thirds of the parish of Mungret, some 4,000 acres.

It would be interesting to know how much of this princely patrimony remained intact at the date of the Disestablishment of the Church.

—J. G. Barry

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A poem about the game of

"Forty-Five"

(An excerpt from "Pendulum Swings")

"Play, we need a sixth",
"Cast knaves," the game
commenced,
And he revelled in thrills of
expectation
As the dealer's hand wound
clockwise round the table.
The high man was shadowed
And knuckles rapped off
wood

When a card was good
And he wallowed in the dialect
of vulgarity,
With interjections of vile
profanities
And numerous intermis-
sions for leaks and replen-
ishments.

The night wore on
As six sozzled gamblers
staunchly defied
The slippery threshold to
oblivion,

Cheating and arguing with
sardonic delight,
And tempers flaring
And clenching fists to fight
But always acquiescing at the
vital minute;

Extraordinary exhibition of
drunken brinkmanship
'Twas two games all, he
turned trumps

And an avacious grin en-
veloped his countenance,

Thumb stroking chin in con-
templation

As he perused the contents
of his hand,
Decision taken, he was
going for the jink.

The king was struck, he
robbed and struck,
He led the five to vibes of
consternation.

He pulled the knave and
then the four,
And rising to the floor in wild
elation

He hammered a king card off
the table
And grabbed his partner's
hand in triumph,

When a knuckle cracked the
ace of hearts
Off his reigning king of
diamonds.

Stunned in dismay he scruti-
nized the action replay
But memory's screen was
blurred,

Then fingers clicked
Triggering the irascible
within

And he surged across table,
"McCakey, I'll break your
bloody ace,
You conned that ace of
hearts!"

—Michael O Siachru