

# Two early descriptions of Limerick

**I**n 1732 John Loveday (1711-89) of Caversham in England recorded a visit to Limerick in his diary, which was published in only 75 copies at the end of the 19th century. Cornelius Kelly in his book *The Grand Tour of Limerick* published an edited version of the Kilmallock entry, but did not include the Limerick city visit, which appears below. Loveday refers to Gerard Boate's (1604-50) description of Limerick and the Shannon estuary, which is also included here as the second description.

Loveday (pp. 42-3),

"Saturday 17th [June].....

.....We descended to Limerick, Our Road to y<sup>e</sup> City from Kilmallock on a Causey; y<sup>e</sup> Cathedral Tower is a great addition to y<sup>e</sup> Prospect of Limerick; y<sup>e</sup> other Churches cannot be seen.

Sunday 18th

Limerick is encompass'd by y<sup>e</sup> Shannon, y<sup>e</sup> chief River of Ireland, w<sup>ch</sup> divides it's Stream & embraces it. The City is divided into 2 parts, y<sup>e</sup> English & y<sup>e</sup> Irish Town. The Walls seem to be of different Ages, on part of 'em a very fine and exceeding wide Walk; Great Vessels, says Boate may come up to y<sup>e</sup>

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very Walls. Limerick chiefly consists of one Street, of no great Width & is for y<sup>e</sup> most part Stone-building. S<sup>t</sup> Munchin's & S<sup>t</sup> John's, y<sup>e</sup> only churches besides y<sup>e</sup> Cathedra; in y<sup>e</sup> Chancel of y<sup>e</sup> former, w<sup>ch</sup> was heretofore y<sup>e</sup> Cathedral founded by St. Munchin y<sup>e</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Bp. of Limerick, is a Monum<sup>t</sup> for Bp. Smith's Lady & c just S. of y<sup>e</sup> Altar; y<sup>e</sup> Bp. was bury'd here since, but as yet there is no Epitaph for Him. Smith built an house hard by, w<sup>ch</sup> Bp. Burscough, his immediate Successor, rents of His Executors; for y<sup>e</sup> Palace has these many years been leas'd out, & is now y<sup>e</sup> Sign of y<sup>e</sup> 3 Tuns. S<sup>t</sup> Marys, y<sup>e</sup> Cath: is a large anc. Pile, it's Pillars large & inelegant, as usual here. In y<sup>e</sup> Choir are Galleries & Pews, y<sup>e</sup> Pulpit standing at y<sup>e</sup> upper end bef: y<sup>e</sup> Altar. N. of y<sup>e</sup> Altar is a very large stately Monum<sup>t</sup> erected for an Earl of Thomond & his Lady, His effigies defaced. Opposite to it on y<sup>e</sup> S. is ye recumbent Effigies on a raised Tomb (w<sup>ch</sup> is of much late Date & has an Inscription on it) of Bp. Cornelius O'Dea, who resign'd his Bprick in 1426 & dy'd in 1434. It is Alabaster, & y<sup>e</sup> people are

continually cutting of it for y<sup>e</sup> Bloody Flux. The Hymns only were chanted here both M. & E. A Parish sit in y<sup>e</sup> Choir, whose Church stood where y<sup>e</sup> Hospital is now: y<sup>e</sup> Dean will not suffer Them to contribute anything tow<sup>ds</sup> y<sup>e</sup> repair of y<sup>e</sup> Cath: Mr Bendon y<sup>e</sup> present Dean; his Revenue near 400 £ P. Ann, Y<sup>e</sup> Bp's 1800 £ P. Ann. In y<sup>e</sup> Vestry, w<sup>ch</sup> is also us'd for a Chapter-house is a Latin Inscription in old Irish Capitals, inserted in y<sup>e</sup> Wall; & t here are other gravestones. No Monum<sup>t</sup>. for any Bp. but y<sup>e</sup> abovementioned, tho' Ware informs us y<sup>e</sup> more were bury'd here. The Bp. of Limerick has also y<sup>e</sup> Title of Ardfert & Aghado. The Vicars Choral have no Houses, but Others have built upon y<sup>e</sup> Ground & pay 'em ground-rent. There is no Library here now. The Barracks are at y<sup>e</sup> ruin'd Castle.

The following day Loveday moved on to Caherconlish.

Boate (1726; vol. 1 p. 11)

The next great haven on the west side of Ireland, to the south of Galloway, is that of Limerick, which haven divideth the province of Connaught from Munster, being of a huge length, no less than fifty miles: for so far it is from the mouth of the haven until the city of Limerick, to whose walls great vessels may go up, without meeting with anything else in all that way save a many little isles, but not any foul places, rocks, or sands. This harbour is nothing else but a great lough (half way its length growing somewhat narrow, but immediately enlarging It self into a great breadth) whereinto the river Shannon, (upon whose bank Limerick is situated) dischargeth it self a little way below the said city; although the English & the Irish both call it the Shannon all the way until the sea, as it were not a lough into which the river falleth, but the river It self thus enlarged.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

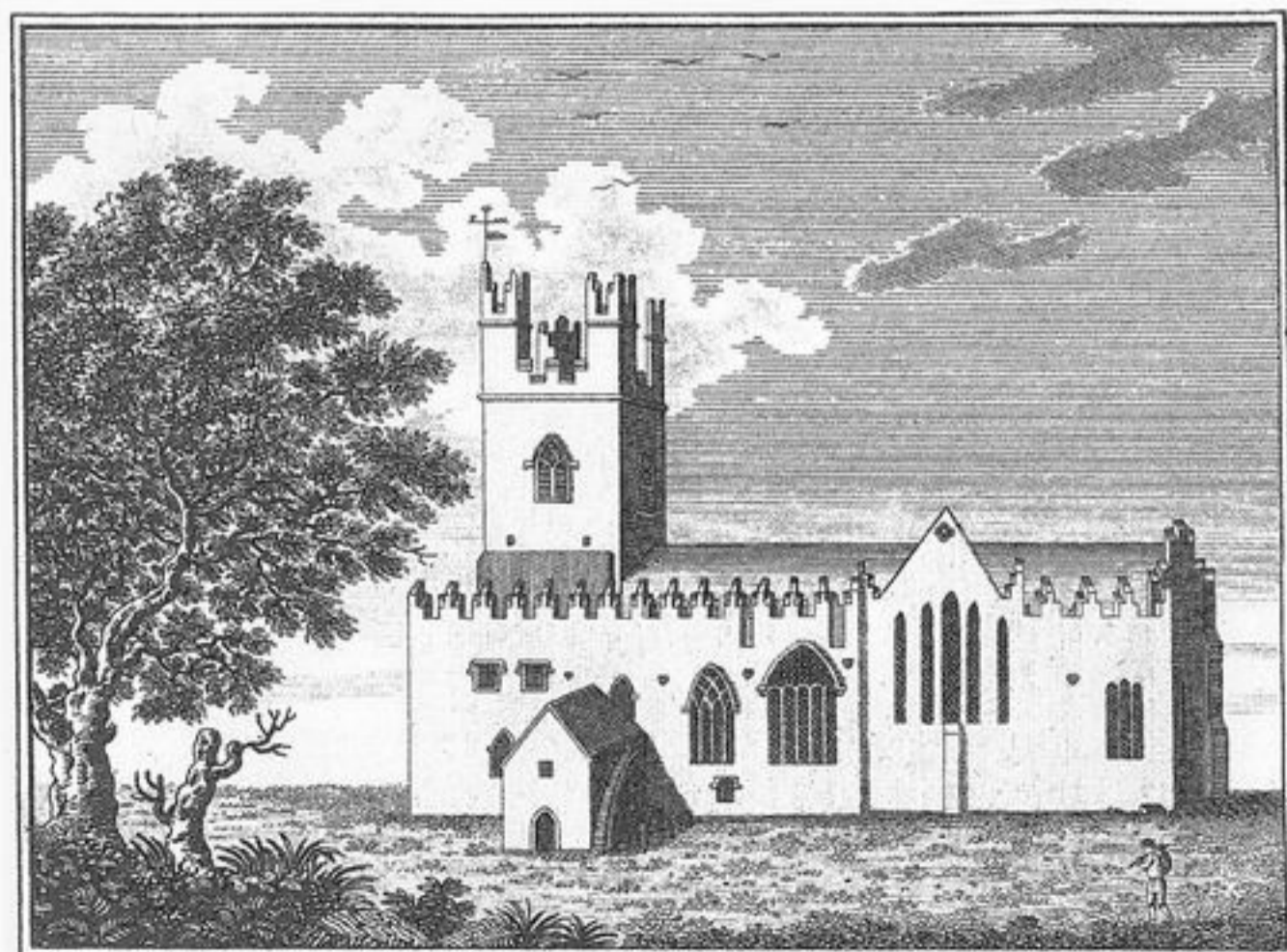
I would like to thank Brian Ó Dálaigh for bringing Loveday's work to my attention.

## REFERENCES

Gerard Boate. *Natural History of Ireland* (Dublin, 1726; reprinted Lampeter 2006).

Cornelius Kelly *The Grand Tour of Limerick*. (Allihies, 2004).

John Loveday *Diary of a tour in 1732 through parts of England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1890).



*The* CATHEDRAL CHURCH of LIMERICK. Engraving sculp<sup>t</sup>

Published according to Act of Parliament, by Alex<sup>r</sup>. Hogg, N<sup>o</sup>. 16, Paternoster Row.

Print of St. Mary's Cathedral by Alex Hogg, circa 1780  
Limerick Museum