

THE PARISH OF BRUFF.

SITUATION. This Parish is bounded on the north by the Parish of Tullabracky; on the west by Mannisteranenagh and Drummin Parishes; on the south by Uregar Parish and on the east by the Parish of Knockainy.

NAME. The name of this Parish is in Irish Brugh na Déise which signifies the Brugh, Burgum or Chief Seat of the Territory of Deisy (Déise Beag) which is the ancient name of the territory in which it is situated. It is now corruptly called in the neighbourhood Brubh na Déise and by some even Bruf na Léise but this is a base corruption. We, the natives of the Co. of Kilkenny, always call it in Irish Brogh na Déise.

100

The feature originally called Brogh is a fort of earth which is situated in the Townland of Bruff in a grove thickly planted with elms, which also extend over the fort itself on the south west bank of the River called the Morning Star and in the immediate vicinity of the Town of Bruff to the west. This fort is called in Irish by the people Lisín a Bhrogha and Lisín Aerach a' Bhrogha, i.e., the Airy (Little) Fort of the Brugh (Bruff). It consists of a double mound, the lower portion of which is about one hundred and forty four paces in circumference at the base and the upper portion ninety five feet in diameter at the top. There is a horizontal space of eight feet and in some parts (here the bank of the upper moat is injured) much wider, between the two moats, which are nearly of the same height. The entire height is about twelve feet; in some parts not so much. The entrance to this fort (or moat) is on the eastern side. John Toomy has celebrated this fort in his song beginning:-

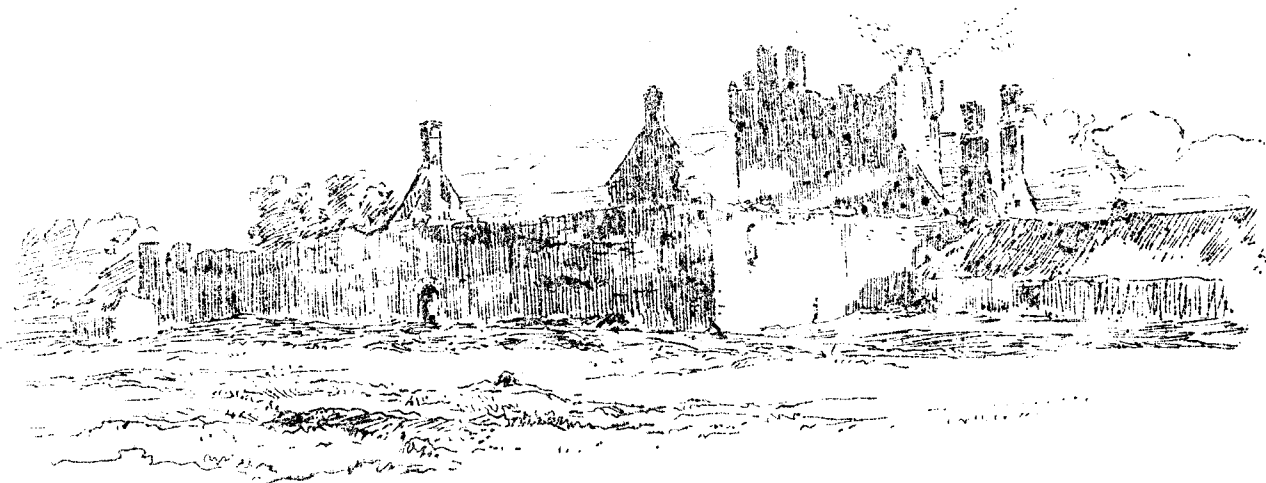
101

Lá meidhreach trá bídheas-sa liom féin
Air bhinn Lisín Aerach an Bhrogha.

The modern Church of Bruff occupies the site of an older one, which was in use until about fifty (sixty) years since. Of this Church Fitzgerald, in his History of Limerick, Vol.I, p.320, speaks thus: "The old Church, which was going into decay, was thrown down about fifty years ago by Lady Lucy Hartstonge, wife to Sir Henry Hartstonge, Bart."

The ruins of the old Castle of Bruff, formerly the residence of Sir Henry Hartstonge, and after him of his widow, Lady Hartstonge, are situated on the north bank of the River (Morning Star) immediately to the west of the bridge and near the Church of Bruff. It measures thirty five feet from north to south outside and eighteen and a half feet from east to west. The doorway, which is quadrangular, is placed on the eastern side and is at present (the threshold is raised with

102



Ballygrenan Castle
near Bruff Co. Limerick

stone work) but four feet ten inches high, two feet two inches in width at the top and at the bottom two feet three and a half inches. Over the ground floor there is a stone arch which springs from the ground. The highest part of the walls now remaining is not more than about twenty four feet in height; the greater portion of them is little higher than the first arch. The only place I could measure the thickness of the walls is at the doorway and where the arch springs; here the thickness is three feet. The features on the upper part of the walls are all destroyed. The first or ground floor of this Castle is now inhabited by a poor family in the Town of Bruff. To the north east of the Castle there is a quadrangular building called the Court, which measures twenty seven and a half feet in length on the outside but its breadth could not be easily determined. It is now thatched with straw and its features closed up with stone work. 103

In the Townland of Newtown about a quarter of a mile north of Bruff, there is a small grave yard still in use, called Teampuillín, but no trace of the foundation of a Church is here observable.

The antiquities of this Parish were examined and described by Mr. O'Keeffe.

J.O'D.