

THE PARISH OF CLOONAGH.

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SITUATION. This Parish is in the Barony of Lower Conello and is bounded on the north by the Parishes of Kilmcyland and Dunmoylin; on the east by those of Dundonnell and Rathkeale; on the south by Kilsannel, and on the west by Rathconan.

NAME. The name of this Parish is not of ecclesiastical origin but derived from that of the Townland on which the old Church was built, which Townland is called in Irish Cluain Each, i.e., the Insulated Meadow of the Horses, an appellation which it truly merits, though now it might be with more propriety called Cluáin Bo from the very great number of milch cows which it feeds.

The old Church stands on the Townland of Cluain Each about four and a half miles to the north of the Town of Newcastle. It consisted of nave and choir, but it is now in so ruinous a state as not to merit minute description. All its features are destroyed except the choir arch, which shews that the building is not very old though a part of the north wall of the nave seems to indicate 164 considerable antiquity. The west gable is destroyed down to the foundation, but the east and middle gables are in good preservation.

In the same Townland is situated a Holy Well called after St. Kieran of Clonmacnoise in honor of whom a "Pattern" was annually held here on the 9th of September.

In the Townland of Lisnacullia and about five Irish miles north of Newcastle and about two miles north west of Rathkeale, are the ruins of a very fine Castle called after the Townland, and sometimes Woodfort, which is a translation of its original Irish name of Lios na Coille.

This Castle is said to have been built by the Mac Sheehys, who were brought into this County as professional Gallowglasses by James Fitzgerald, seventh Earl of Desmond, in the year 1420. It is a very large rectangular building, three stories high with a square tower at the south east angle, to the top of which a spiral stair case leads. I could not measure this Castle on the outside in consequence of a house built up against it, but I examined and measured the extent of it on the inside. The first floor is destroyed, but the second, which is arched and seventeen feet above the level of the first is in good preservation. The room over this floor is thirty five feet in length and twenty feet nine inches in breadth and lighted by three windows, one in the north wall and two in the south one. Its walls are four feet eight inches thick as I have ascertained at the north window. There is another small room off this in the square tower already referred to; it measures thirteen feet in length and eight feet in breadth and is lighted by two windows, a large one in the east side which looks as if modernized, and another narrow shamrock headed one in the south side, which is four feet four inches high and six and a half inches wide and constructed of cut lime stone. The spiral stair is lighted at appropriate distances by narrow loopholes, one of which, opposite the landing place to the second floor, is three feet three inches in height and five inches in width, and beautifully constructed of cut freestone.

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You descend from the highest floor to the landing to the first (first over the ground) by twenty six stone steps which are each eight inches in height, but when you arrive at the landing place you find the floor destroyed, but you can turn into a small room in the square tower of the same dimensions with the one above it already described. This is lighted by a large window on the east side which is much disfigured, and by a beautiful narrow lancet headed window or loophole on the south side, which is four feet in height and six and a half inches in width.

To the south of this Castle stands a lesser building, two stories high, and to the west is a part of a wall which surrounded both buildings.

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In the Townland of Ballyegnybeg in this Parish there is another Castle of a rectangular form, the walls of which are about twenty five feet high. A spiral stair case leads to the top, which is in a good state of preservation.

The antiquities etc., of this Parish were examined and described by me.

J. O'Donovan.
