



WEST LIMERICK PARISH BY PARISH

By Gerard Curtin

PART EIGHT - THE PLACE-NAMES OF CROAGH-KILFINNY

The landscape has a secret and silent memory, a narrative of presence where nothing is ever lost or forgotten. Place-names are shadows of the past on the landscape, which is becoming increasingly unfamiliar to the people. This week we shall look at the place-names of Croagh-Kilfinny, unique among the parishes of west Limerick in that it has two separate geographical parts.

Five townlands Lisnamuck, Ballincurra, Ballinvira, Ballynagool and part of Currahchase form a separate division to the north of the main body of Croagh-Kilfinny parish, sandwiched between Cappagh, Kilcornan and Adare parishes. There are thirty-four townlands in Croagh parish, names that are derived from thirty place-names.

The oldest place-name in this parish is Kilfinny in the year 1207. Croagh is listed in 1239 and Lisnamuck in 1250. All three are recorded in the Black Book of Limerick. Only one name is added to the place-name record in the fourteenth century with Kilteran putting in an appearance in 1313. In the fifteenth century Ballyfoleen is noted in 1418 in the Black Book of Limerick. Ten further place-names are first listed between 1584 and 1591, the majority falling under the cover of Peyton's Survey of 1586. These are Ballincurra, Ballinvira, Ballynagool, Clogh, Amogan, Adamswood, Ballymacave, Oldcourt, Bally-

nakill and Ballylin. Ballycannon is first recorded in the Calendar of Patent Rolls in 1605. Killea, Raheen, Fihidy, Ballynaguila and Milltown are recorded in the same document in 1617. Currahchase, Knockdromin, Ballyea and Ballymackeamore fall under the remit of the Civil Survey of 1655, with Commons first noted four years later in the Books of Survey and Distribution. In the eighteenth century the year 1753 sees New Park and Ardnapeaghaun gaining recognition as place-names. Two names belong to the Ordnance Survey of 1840, Gortreagh and Gortfadda.

Eleven names are recorded that contain baile, which means place. These are a testimony to the early settlement of this area of good quality lands. These place-names are Ballincurra, *Baile an Churraigh*, the place of the wet land; Ballinvira, *Baile an Mheidhrigh*, the place of An Meidhrigh (a person's name); Ballynagool, *Baile na gól*, perhaps the corner place; Ballycannon, *Baile*

Ul Chanann, the place of Canann; Ballymacave, *Baile Mhic Adhaimh*, the place of Mac Adhaimh; Ballylin, *Baile Ul Fhloinn*, the place of Ul Fhloinn; Ballyea, *Baile Ul Eachach*, the place of Ul Eachach; Ballyfoleen, *Baile Phoillín*, the place of Poillín; Ballynakill, *Baile na Cille*, the place of the church; Milltown, *Baile an Mhuilinn*, the place of the mill and Ballymackeamore, *Baile Mhic Aodha Mór*, the place of Mac Aodha, big.

Ringforts are recorded in Lisnamuck, *Lios na Muice*, the enclosure of the pig and Raheen, *An Ráithín*, the small rath. Early churches can be found in the naming of Kilfinny, *Cill na Fionn*, the church of the wood; Killea, *Cill Liath*, grey church and Kilteran, *Cill tSeandáin*, the church of Seanáin. Land units are recorded in Gortreagh, *An Gort Rua*, the streaked field; Gortfadda, *An Gort Fada*, the long field; Fihidy, *Na Fichidí* the twenties (land acreage) and Commons, *An Coimin*. Cultural activity is also recorded in

Clogh, *An Chloch*, the stone structure, Currahchase, *An Chorr*, the weir and Oldcourt, *An tSeancháirt*, the old court. New Park can be translated as *An Phaire Nua*, the new field and Ballynaguila, *Bealach na Gaibhle*, the way of the fork, recording an ancient trackway.

The most striking feature of the land here is its flatness, without many recognizable features. Only four place-names relate to the lie and look of the land, the lowest number in any parish on our journey. These are Knockdromin, *Cnoc Dromann*, hill of the ridge, Amogan, *Ath Mhongáin*, the ford of Mongan, Adamswood, *Coill Adam*, the wood of Adam and Ardnapeaghaun, *Arda na hPréachan*, the high place of the crows. One name remains for which I have been unable to find a meaning Croagh. Can anyone throw any light on its translation?

In the strata of sub-townland or corporate place-names Hollywood House and Tobereendoney dwell, *Tober Righ an Domhaigh*, Sundays Holy Well, are in Ballinvira, Grove House and Smithfield House in Croagh townland. Lisheensgranoge fort, *Liosín na Grainneóige*, little fort of the hedgehog is in Ballincurra. Dreichidnaman Bridge, *Droichead na Móin*, the bridge of the bog (perhaps) is on the boundary of Croagh and Coolballyshane. Tower was an old name for the centre of Kilfinny townland. Lissaborteale fort, *Lios an Mhuirteil*, enclosure of the mortar is in Amogan Beg. Aghduff Bridge, *Ath Dubh*, black ford is between Ballymacave and Amogan More. Rockview House is in Clogh West. Lastly the Finshenagh stream, *Finseanach*, abounding in ash trees, forms the boundary between Fihidy, Milltown and Kiltinan on one side and Ballylin, Ballyea, Ardnapeaghaun and Adamswood on the other. Next time out on July 4th we shall visit Ballingary and its place-names.

OBSERVER COMMENT

MONUMENTS TO VANITY

Older readers may recall a scene in the movie *The Bridge Over The River Kwai* in which the senior British officer in a Japanese POW camp, somewhere in Thailand during WW2, reflects on his life.

The character, played by Alec Guinness, knows that he is closer to the end than to the beginning, but he does not want to quit without leaving some memorial behind him. Hence he seizes on the opportunity of building a bridge over a jungle river that may last for hundreds of years after his death, despite the fact that the bridge will be of considerable assistance to the enemy's war effort.

In ordinary life, few people get the opportunity to leave conspicuous memorials behind them. If consideration of such a topic was to be forced upon the average individual, the most likely outcome would be the expression of a desire to be remembered with affection and respect by family, friends, neighbours and workmates.

The rich and the powerful are, by definition, different. If they survive long enough, they reach a stage in life when, like the Alec Guinness character in *The Bridge Over The River Kwai*, they know that their days of influence, power and life itself are numbered, and their thoughts turn to what they are going to leave behind them.

Our present Taoiseach Bertie Ahern seems to have arrived at such a point in his life, despite the fact that he is only in his early middle age. In many ways he is a modest and unassuming individual, yet looked at from a different angle, Bertie, the sports loving and pint drinking Joe Average seems to have succumbed to the temptations that conquered the Pharaohs and Caesars of the ancient world.

Instead of a giant pyramid or a coliseum, Bertie seems determined to leave Stadium Ireland, the Bertie Bowl, behind him at a yet-to-be determined cost. The latest word is that following rumblings of dissatisfaction within the Progressive Democrats, consultants have been appointed to examine the project, but they are unlikely to halt the juggernaut. Most people would agree that providing sporting facilities of international and Olympic standard would be money well spent. But there is considerable disquiet about the wisdom of the scale of the Bertie Bowl, and many feel the money involved could be more usefully spent at local and regional level.

Olympic and international honours have always been just the icing on the cake. The real strength of sports and athletics in Ireland has always rested at local level, the scene described a century ago by Canon Sheehan in "Knocknagow", when the returned Yank rolled up his sleeves and went into battle on the hurling field for the 'honour of the little village'.

In an age when so many of the ancient sporting virtues have been lost, and so many foreign practices introduced, the growth of Ladies Football has been one of the brightest lights within the G.A.A. The annual final attracts an average audience of some 15,000 and yet this year's All Ireland has to be played outside Croke Park.

The reason is that, despite a no-rent charge, the G.A.A. maintain it would cost them £35,000 to open up Croke Park for the day. Bearing in mind the amount of taxpayers' money promised to the Croke Park redevelopment by Bertie Ahern, and all his other promises, it seems we are arriving at a situation where we will have a multiplicity of expensive white elephants beyond the reach of players and spectators.

The prolonged idleness of Semple Stadium in Thurles this summer also bears testimony to the fact that the time has come to redirect public spending on sports away from headline-grabbing projects by latter-day Pharaohs, and to spend it instead on more modest projects at local and regional level.



The Roche family pictured at the First Holy Communion in Templeglantine.