

Limerick and its Neighbourhood

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The City of Limerick

The chief city of north Munster derived its Irish name from a tribe, the Tuath Luimnigh, and they from the name Luimneach, the estuary of the Shannon, which appears in the early description of the view from Knockainey Hill, put into the mouth of Cuchullin, in the “Mesca Ulad.” St Mainchin (an early bishop, some say the disciple of St Patrick, but there were several saints of the name) built a church upon the river island where the later city stood. Then all is silent, though we are told in the *Táin Bó Flidhais* (possibly in the 9th or 10th century) of “Ros da Nochoilledh, or Luimneach,” as the southern bound of the influence of the ruling race of Gamanraighe in N.W Mayo. Other vague and unauthentic stories are told, not of the town but of the district. [1] Cormac mac Airt fought a battle there in A.D. 221, and others at Grian and elsewhere in the county. The Annals of Multifernham call Limerick “Ross de Naillleagh” (which compares with the *Táin Bó Flidhais*), while the lost Psalter of Cashel alleged that Luimneach was the western mearing of two partitions of Ireland in A.M. 2870 and 3973. Much speculation existed, even in early times, as to the origin of the name. The Books of Lecan and Ballymote tell of a prehistoric meeting of the men of Munster and Connacht under their very mythically named Kings “Spear and Sword,” for warlike sports; the champions threw off their “grey-green cloaks” (*Luimne*) on the bank and the tide swept them away. “Cloakful is the river now” said someone, whence *Luimneach Liathghlas*; others in later days rendered it *Lorn an each* “bared by horses.” The Tripartite Life of St. Patrick tells of his visit about A.D. 434 to Saingeal fort, or Singland, where he baptized the Dalcassian King, Carthann the fair, and his infant son Eochaidh Bailldearg. The Annals of Inisfallen mention a battle of Luimneach in A.D. 567. As we noted, the date and identity of its ecclesiastical founder Mainchin is unknown. St Cuimin Fada, of Clonfert, died near it, A.D. 661, his body was carried up “the Luimneach” in a boat, and a verse of his dirge by Colman his tutor is preserved. None of the records mention any fort, still less a town, here. Hlimrek the town, like its sisters at Dublin, Waterford, and Wexford, was founded early in the 9th century by the Norsemen. One writer, Mr Pryce Maunsell, considers that the word is Norse Laemrich, rich land (loam), but this fails to account for the earlier *Luimneach* or for the recorded Norse forms. Probably (like *Dyflin* from *Dubhlinne*) it was a Norse version of Luimneach. “Yvorus” (Imhar) was its legendary founder. It was commenced about A.D. 812 on Inis Uibhthonn (some think “Odin’s Island” but surely that would be Odensey) now the King’s Island, near St Mainchin’s church. The Irish call it “Luimneach of the ships” and it became a formidable centre of foreign power. The detailed history must be sought elsewhere; the succession of its rulers was—Barith and Omphile; Imhar, 853; Sitric Lord of Luimneach, slain, A.D. 895; Colla son of Barith, A.D. 908, 923; Tomar son of Elge, King, A.D. 922; Colla son of Imhar, A.D. 931; Harold, King, slain, A.D. 939; Imhar, A.D. 940; Olfín, A.D. 942; Amlaibh, Magnus, or Murus its governor, slain at Sulchoid, A.D. 968; Maccus, died A.D. 972. Imhar seems also to have fought at Sulchoid or Sulloghod (near the Limerick Junction), where Mathgamhain, King of Munster, and his brother Brian overthrew the Danes, drove them back to Limerick, and burned and sacked the town and fort. It never rose to its old importance, but subsisted as a dependency of the Dalcassian kings, paying

them a heavy tribute of wine. It was the first of Irish towns to get in touch with America ; for, about A.D. 1000, “ Hrafn the Hlimrek merchant” was a friend and informant of Ari, who made voyages from Iceland to “ Wineland” on the east coast of the present United States. Muircheartach Ua Briain, King of Munster, seems to have resided in it, and his successors, down (it would seem) to Donnchadh Cairbreach, who was buried in the Dominican monastery, in 1242, retained some connection with it though the Normans, under Reymond le Gros, stormed it in 1175. Reymond was called off on other business so he “ swore in” King Domhnall to act as governor and marched out of it. Domhnall’s perjury was evidently not long premeditated, for hardly were the Normans clear of the town before he burned it to the ground. It was only some years after the fierce old monarch’s death, in 1194, that the English established a colony ; Prince John built its bridge and castle, and granted it a charter before 1199. From that time it has subsisted as a corporation, though for the thirteenth century, the “ received lists” of Mayors and Bailiffs is most untrustworthy, contradicting the few authentic records : sometimes being mere lists of names of witnesses to early deeds (c. 1210) in the Black Book of Limerick, recited in their exact order in those documents. The Ostmen were moved out of the town into the “ cantred of the Ostmen,” and some of their families, notably the Harolds, Thursteyns, Thordelfs, Thurstans, Sweyns,, and others long held land near it; the Harolds still subsist. It had walls in 1175, and repairs to them took place in 1237, the cost being paid by a wine tax and other imposts. Though of small “ historic importance,” it is of interest to note in 1295 the price of provisions in it : 10 acres of oats 2½ marks, 1 acre of beans 40 pence, 6 acres of oats 20 shillings, cows 5 shillings each, a sheep goat or hog 6 pence, a lamb 3 pence, and a kid 2 pence. Horses sold at 5 marks, and mares 10 shillings, oxen at 3 shillings, foals at 2 shillings, a he-goat was worth 8 pence. The city was closely connected with Bristol, several of whose citizens removed to Limerick ; Thomas Balbeyn had residences in both towns and left his castle of Thom-core to the citizens of Limerick. The city received many charters, that of John, before 1199 ; Edward I, 1291 and 1303 ; Henry IV, 1400 ; Henry V, 1413 ; Henry VI, 1423, 1429 ; Henry VII, 1489 ; Edward VI, 1551 ; Elizabeth, 1577, 1582, and James I, 1609. Its outer history is usually uneventful; it was threatened by the Bruces, in 1315, and sacked by the Mac Namaras, 1369, after their defeat of the Geraldines at Monasteranenagh ; they even appointed a governor, who was slain by the citizens. The city was wealthy and extremely prosperous in the 15th century, and we shall see some interesting monuments of its opulent citizens during that period. Its prosperity lasted for many years after Elizabeth’s succession, but the terrible Desmond war, the religious troubles and general unrest brought it down to an unprosperous condition. It however showed great vitality, recovering rapidly on every relaxation of adverse destiny. The transplantation of its citizens, after the Cromwellian Siege, 1651, left numbers of its “ houses great and fair, without inhabitant,” but again it rapidly recovered and drove a thriving wool trade with Holland ; some of the Dutch merchants were benefactors, the Cathedral bells still bear the name of one William York, while several Dutch families, the Van der Luers (Vandelure), Vanhogartens, Verekers, and others, settled from 1620 to 1670. The two great sieges of 1690 and 1691 affected the personnel of the citizens rather than the prosperity of the port. It was at times reputed to be the second city of Ireland, though in later years the conditions of modern trade shifted away from it and railways deprived it of its position of emporium for Munster and Connacht.

The city consists of three sections (besides suburbs) ; the English town on the island, the Irish town adjoining it, and Newtown Pery. The first is the ancient city of the Danes and the Norman colony. After the destruction of the Briens’ palace at Kincora, the King’s of Munster made it their headquarters, building a fort, in which it is said the present Cathedral of Limerick stands. It was to this fort that the soldiers of Muircheartach Ua Briain, nominal High King of Ireland, when he “ came against the fortress of the King of the North,” brought

the cap stones of the Grianan of Aileach as a trophy, and some have looked for them (of course without success) in the walls of the massive old church.

The Castle

There seems little reason to doubt the tradition that this and the bridge were founded by Prince John, though an early source for the statement has not been traced. Whether any part is as old as his reign may be contested ; if any, the ring tower next the bridge might lay claim. The fine gate towers are possibly of the reign of Edward I. The castle was fortified against Thomond only, the part next the city was apparently badly walled till the early 17th century, when the seething discontent of the citizens forced the government to remodel the inner part and to add a bastion. There is a view (in the Hardiman collection of maps) showing the building before the alteration. It was grievously dilapidated and some of the towers were undermined by the river. The shot holes (made by Ginckell's cannon in 1691 and plugged with brick) are very noticeable on the " Bridge" or " Thomond Tower." To give here the salient points of its history for more than 700 years is not possible, though there is a vast mass of material relating to the building—Stanhurst states that King John built an " egregium castellum" and a bridge ; the " bawn" of Limerick is first mentioned in 1200 by the Annals of Loch Cé. Richard de Burgo, held it for the King in 1226, when all the other castles were disloyal. It had been greatly neglected and, two years before, the commissioners for valuing the Royal property found that in Limerick Castle the King's goods were scarcely worth 18 pence " as broken dishes." In 1227 it was repaired, and again in 1272. It had a chapel, and hostages were kept in it ; a new chamber was built and two watchmen were kept " to watch from the top of the towers towards Thomond, and archers at the head of the bridge." A wall was built in 1297, possibly along the river front. In 1318 a quaint matter is recorded ; the constable carelessly let 16 prisoners escape, of whom John Wogan recaptured 18 and slew 2 ! In 1310 and 1322 grants of murage were made for repairing the fortifications, the last year being soon after the terrifying extinction of the Norman colony at Dysert in 1318 and the burning of Bunratty. It was again in bad repair in 1326, and £20 and £80 were expended on it. A sensational event occurred in 1332 ; the hostages broke out, slew the constable and held the castle, which had to be stormed by the mayor and citizens. In 1369 the city surrendered to the Mac Namaras, who appointed a governor ; but the castle probably held out till the citizens slew the Irish governor Sioda Mac Namara and cleared the city of the Irish. In 1417 it reappears, the fees for its support being " annihilated," so the city repaired it with dues from the Lax weir, the great salmon weir, near Parteen, founded by the Danes. In 1427 the corporation and citizens petitioned that the castle might be confided to them as it had often been nearly lost by carelessness, or treachery ; the Government took the offer on condition that the city paid for its repairs. In 1476, James, Earl of Desmond, who was successfully imposing dues on the free English, and (one would think) a dangerous wolf to be put over that fold of wealthy merchants, was governor. In 1542 it was supported by two gardens and the pasture on the King's Island, 10s. from the " Ile" (eel) weir, at Corbally, and dues on salt, wheat, herrings and oysters, brought into the port. Its history is rarely eventful. Sir Geffrey Galwey, the mayor, was fined £400 in 1600 for recusancy, which sum was expended on the castle ; in 1611 the undercut towers were repaired, and, in 1624 and 1626, provision for a small garrison, a governor, porter, " cannoneer" and 20 men, was made. The English colony retired into it in 1641 ; it was besieged by the Confederates and surrendered on terms 21 June, 1642. When the city was taken by Ireton, ten years later, the castle was extensively repaired, the works continuing till 1654. There was an alleged plot of an old Cromwellian officer, Capt. Thomas Walcott, to take it by a mine from St Nicholas' graveyard and to call in the Dutch in 1672. Lastly it was surrendered to Ginckell, after the siege of 1691, and it has since been continuously used as a garrison barrack. The structure retains the three corner towers (two abut-

ting on the river). On the side next the street along the north face, is the noble old gateway, with two great round flanking towers and lofty arches. Some of the town wall remains at and beyond the churchyard of St Munchin's at the opposite side of the street along the river bank.

Thomond Bridge

It is usually assumed that the "egregium castellum" and the bridge were erected about 1210, and that the bridge of that date was wooden. The old stone bridge was a picturesque level structure of 14 irregular arches, with bold cutwaters at each pier. The arches were turned over wicker, which rather favours the view that it was built in the 14th or 15th century, when this method was very usual. The vaults in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, and the window splays of Shanid Castle and other early Norman buildings were turned over planking, not wicker. The best and fullest account is given by Mr James Grene Barry in the first pages of the journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society. The old bridge was 150 yards long and had a fortified gate-house next the city and a castellated gateway and drawbridge at the seventh arch, the "Thomond Gate." Many will recall that sad episode in the last siege, Sep. 22nd, 1691, when 600 of the defenders were drowned or slaughtered. The English had taken the outworks and driven back the garrison; a French Major, in command, lost his head and ordered the drawbridge to be raised before the fugitives could enter, thus causing the disaster and on the next day the parley for the surrender of the city. A quantity of King James' brass money was found in the river bed at the site of the drawbridge, when the old bridge was removed and the new one built in 1840. The present structure cost £10,000. At the farther bank stands the so-called "Treaty Stone," an object of undeserved sentiment and interest. The treaty of Limerick was signed in a house on the Clare side of the river, on a table which was long preserved. No tradition attached to the "stone," which was used as a "mounting block" and lay near its present position beside the roadway. [2]

KILLALOE

Leaving Limerick, one gets a striking view of the old river-girt English town, and a pleasing view of the hills and Shannon, which is crossed at Athlunkard Bridge ("ford of the fortress"). Once the Blackwater (appointed as the boundary of Killaloe diocese by the Synod of Rathbreasail in 1112) has been passed, a lone shady road is reached, the reputed haunt of the *Puca* so late as 1911, and of a ghostly horse-head floating beside those riding or driving in the dark. After passing through Clonlara, the road turns over a steep canal bridge, with the Castles of Coolistiege and Ballynua, or Newtown, to either side, and, in the north wall of the bridge, a curious female figure in low relief with the added date 1769. It was probably one of those grotesque luck-bringing carvings called Sheela-na-gigs. Legend says that a "lady ghost" haunted the bridge till driven away by cutting her counterfeit presentment on the slab. [3]

The thickly ivied Castle of Elmhill, or St John's, in the low ground to the right of the road was reputed to be haunted by a ghostly black bull, with fiery eyes, and a farmer living even in the "nineties" told us that he had seen it at high noon sally forth, wind its tail round a small hay cock and draw it into the ruin. The whole district is a mine of folk-lore, much of which has been published. [4]

The well of St Senan is a modern structure in a neat grove. It is loaded with china and other offerings, and is the resort of hundreds of pilgrims and visitors on August 15th each year. The saint's own day, on March 8th, the day of the patron of Iniscatha, is but little observed. Nearer to the river bank is the graveyard with a late 15th century church. Near its N.W. gable is a venerable fallen hawthorn covered with rags and beads; and in the rock

before it is a bullán or basin, also an object of pilgrimage. No history is preserved of the origin or founder of Kiltinanlea church. It is dedicated to “ Senan the Hoary,” reputed to be a brother of the famous St Senan of Iniscatha, but some fancy him a personification of the foam-sheeted river beside the ruin. The present church is of the same period as the three castles above-named, and like them, was very probably a Mac Namara foundation. It has a neatly moulded pointed south door, and a curious little double-oped holy water stoup in its jamb, a trefoil headed south light on the point of collapse, and the east window, a tall ogee-headed lancet. A short walk through the demesne leads along the river bank to the “ Turret Rock,” commanding a fine view of the Salmon Leap, and rapids. It is the “ Rock of Astanen” in Elizabethan documents, Dun Eása Danainne in Irish annals. No trace remains of the fort, nor, for that matter, of the Mac Namaras’ Castle, which was still standing on the rock in 1655 ; it was destroyed for material to make the terraces and the ruined turret by Sir Hugh Dillon Massy, the 2nd Baronet of Doonass, about the beginning of the last century. The great rounded mountain, seen up the river, over Castleconnell, is the Keeper, or Kimalta, the chief of the Silvermine and Slievephelim range. The survivors of an avenue of fine old chestnut trees, some 23 feet in girth, reach from the turret towards Doonass House.

O Brien’s Bridge stands on the site of the older bridge (1509), Droichead Puirt Croise, which, with its strong castles in the middle of the river, was entirely demolished in 1536. The present bridge is of two periods, owing to diversity of action by the grand juries of Counties Clare and Limerick. Just above the bridge is seen Inishlosky, with a couple of fragments of a venerable little church. The only features are the northern half and the side of a beautifully built plain Romanesque window of red and yellow sandstone with the springing stones of the circular arch : the light is 5 inches wide, with a neat recess and chamber, the walls 2 feet 8 inches thick. Only the foundations of the sides, and about half the ivied west gable remain, with a few illegible tombstones and a vault from which a recent flood washed the coffins and bones.

Beal Borumha

Northward from Killaloe the road, keeping to the river bank, passes the beautiful woods of Ballyvalley on the left ; to the right, on the great drift spur, in a grove amidst the fields is the fort of Beal Borumha. Popular legend says that the great spur was an artificial embankment made by King Brian to dam up the Shannon and drown out the Connacht men. The fact of the fort’s having been made by King Brian never passed out of mind ; it is mentioned by Bridgeman in his account of Clare for the Philosophical Society of Dublin in 1683, by De Latocnaye in 1797, and by most other writers. The name probably originated in the fact that the cattle tribute of Eastern Thomond was brought across the ford to the Kings of the Craglea line of the Dal gCais. There were two other palaces, one up on the flank of Craglea, the other probably on the site of the town of Killaloe, named respectively Grianan Lachtna and Cenn Coradh. It may be well to treat the history of this group together, keeping the account of the churches for a later section. At the end of the upper ford a Stone Age settlement seems to have existed, as implements have been found on several occasions. Safe in the river valley, flanked on both sides by mountains, it was an ideal place of settlement ; the lake and river were rich in fish and fowl, the rich pastures on the shore most desirable for cattle, and the hills and forests abounding in game lay behind. The ford was evidently much used in the bronze age, several weapons of that period having been found when it was dredged away. Craglea was the seat of a famous supernatural being, Aibhinn “ the pleasant,” possibly an early war goddess venerated (or adopted) by the Dalcassians as their tutelary banshee. [5] Her name is now corrupted into Aibhill ; one old Irish version of the *Dies Irae* substitutes her for the Sibyl in strange companionship with King David. From Craglea the banshee Aibhinn

used to sweep out to the battlefield with her weird train, “ satyrs, sprites, maniacs of the glen, witches, goblins, owls and destroying demons of the air and firmament and the demoniac phantom host.” From it she flew to Dublin to appear to King Brian the night before his death ; but for his fatalistic belief in this vision he might have escaped to linger out a miserable old age instead of dying with his best and bravest in the moment of victory. [6] There is a great projecting crag, 20 feet high, on the western slope, still reputed to be her residence, while on the eastern slope a spring, pure, bright and unchanged by all the centuries, wells out from a rock fissure among ferns and flows down the slope. Below there is the Grianan of Lachtna, an early Royal fort. It is reached by a torrent bed, on a shoulder of a hill, with a magnificent view. The Grianan consists of a nearly levelled ring wall with a stone-faced outer ring, and a fosse tufted with bracken and fox-glove. We first hear definitely of the place in about 840. Lachtna, son of Corc, “ a fair-haired man from Cragliath,” had his fort there and met the titular High King, Fedhlimidh, King of Cashel, at the now vanished pillar stone of *Liag na n-easain* and made terms of friendship with him. [7] This shows that Lachtna had a fort on the S. side of Craglea, where the Grianan stands, and that the “ received” statement that it was only founded over a century later by his namesake, Lachtna, implies at most a restoration. In 877 Boroimhe is incidentally mentioned, perhaps the ford not the liss. In 941 Muirheartach “ of the leather coats” spent a night at the barren Cell da lua, a night in the strong Cenn Coradh,” which suggests that Kincora then was a residence. One of Prince Brian’s earliest achievements was on the flank of this hill. He seems to have been attacked by a Danish force, under a leader, Biorn, who fell, with many of his soldiers, but at heavy cost to the Dalcassian army. Mathgamhain, brother of Brian, is the first King of the Dal Cais called “ King of Boruma,” but the title more especially belongs to King Brian, and his well-known epithet is undoubtedly from the place and not from the late story that he reimposed the Leinster cattle tribute. The Thomond Borama or cattle tribute he, like his predecessors and successors, received. Down to even 1585 the “ borome” tribute was paid to his successors, the Earl of Thomond, under the ancient name, and continued in fact to the present century, as under certain trusteeships its representative money composition had to be redeemed in recent sales. [8] Part of the tribute is recorded in the Book of Rights for Corcomroe. Kincora is entirely levelled ; Donovan’s statement that part existed in 1834 arose from the common confusion between it and Boruma fort. It was a stone ring wall, with large wooden houses in and about it, and with a well and salmon pond near it. We have an early account, possibly (as it purports to be) by Brian’s bard, Mac Liag ; Brian’s throne, in Beal Borurnha, was on a raised dais to the right of the entrance (*i.e.*, to the west), and the position of the tables and seats of the sub-ordinate princes are fully described. There were numerous gold cups (Brian’s was preserved at least till 1152) ; the pages wore rich embroidered coats, and hung up and furbished their master’s shields and weapons behind the chairs. The food comprised beef, mutton, fresh pork, game and fish, oatcakes, cheese and curds, honey, cresses and onions, fruit and nuts in the season, the drink being wine, ale, mead and bilberry juice. The meat was cooked in the centre of the hall, the smoke escaping by a *louvre* in the roof. Music, recitation and chess were among the pastimes.

Beal Borurnha (now “ Ballyboroo”) consists of a high ring mound 50 to 70 feet thick below, and 9 feet on top, rising 22 to 25 feet over the fosse, and 10 to 14 feet over the garth, which is oval, 102 feet inside N. and S., 87 feet E. and W. The fosse is 650 feet round the entrance to the north. There are pleasing views from it up the lake to Craglea, and the great purple brown mass of Thountinna (where Fintan is fabled to have slept so soundly that he was not drowned by the Deluge) and down to the low Cathedral tower and the weirs and bridge of Killaloe.

The history of Kincora is one of destruction and restoration, little more. In it took place the fatal game of chess from which Maelmordha, King of Leinster, after his quarrel with

Prince Murchad, in 1014, fled in wrath to organise his Danish supporters for the battle of Clontarf. It was destroyed by the Connacht men in 1016 and 1062, when the well was stopped and the "sacred" salmon cooked and eaten in insult. It probably shared the destructions of Killaloe by fire in 1081 and 1084 by the same foe, and their plundering raid, 1091. King Murchad rebuilt it in 1098, when he dismantled the Grianan of Aileach, but his chief residence was then at Limerick. Kincora was destroyed by lightning in 1107, and after the death of its restorer, in 1119, Torlough Conor, King of Connacht, destroyed it, throwing the stones and timber into the Shannon and dismantling Borumha; it was probably never rebuilt, but the name appears in 1150. [9] There is no true tradition of its site.

The Churches

The ecclesiastical foundation of Killaloe, as the name (Cell Dalua) implies, owes its origin to a Dalcassian Prince, Lugaidh (Lua, Molua, or Dalua), who died before A.D. 605; he was brother of Toir-dhealbhach, a descendant of Eochaidh Baildearg, baptized by St Patrick. His nephew, St Flannan, was an energetic missionary up the coast into Scotland, where the venerable boat-shaped oratory and cells, on the Flannan Isles, are attributed to him. [10] Like his uncle, he was a bishop, and probably the small very primitive church on Friar's Island was founded by Molua while he founded a church (or churches) where the Cathedral and stone-roofed oratory still stand. Flannan is said to have been consecrated by a Pope, John (more likely John VI, at the close of the 7th century than John IV, in A.D. 639); he died on Aug. 4th, the year being unrecorded. The Cathedral was extensively rebuilt by Murchad, titular High King of Ireland, about 1080, and many fragments of the richly decorated early church and the fine Romanesque archway are built into the walls of its successor. The Gothic building is one of the numerous foundations attesting the piety (or perhaps the remorse) of the unscrupulous Domhnall mór Ua Briain, the last King of Munster. In the church were buried King Murchad in 1119, and Conchobhar "na Cathrach," King of Thomond, a benefactor of Ratisbon Abbey, who died in 1142, but no certain monument remains, though an early Irish cross-scribed tombstone (now in the recess of the Romanesque door) is shown as the tomb of the former prince, or even as that of King Brian, who, in point of fact, was buried at Armagh.

The stone-roofed oratory, called "St Flannan's tomb," and "Brian Boru's vault," is a fine specimen of its class, and resembles St Columb's House at Kells and St Kevin's at Glendalough. It is fully described in Lord Dunraven's work and other accessible books, and consists of a church, to which a chancel was subsequently added; but this was later destroyed. The moulded east door, with its billets and quaint capitals and the side windows, suggestive of those in the best class of round towers, are interesting; above the barrel vault is an overcroft in the steep stone roof lit by windows to either end. The oratory measures 28 feet 8 inches by 17 feet inside, the walls are under 4 feet thick. Various carved stones of the Romanesque church lie in it.

The Cathedral is a cruciform building, dating about the same time as Corcomroe Abbey, about 1185, in the second period of King Domhnall mór's foundations. It is a plain impressive old building with tall narrow Gothic lancets and built of yellow and purple sandstone, mellowed by time, and sheeted with variegated ivy. The dimensions are briefly the chancel, 65 feet by 30 feet, the belfry, 30 feet square, the nave, 61 feet by 30 feet, the south transept 32 feet 7 inches by 22 feet 7 inches, and the north 23 feet 8 inches by 19 feet 3 inches. The chancel has four Gothic lancets to either side, and rows of quaint, interesting corbels, a few modern (copies of the older ones), support the roof timbers. The east window is very curious, and probably (as so often) symbolizes the Trinity, having 3 lights in one arch; the central light is round-headed, with a pointed light on each side under a; heavy splay-arch of late Romanesque detail, but pointed, with clustered columns and shafts running up to the curves

of the arch with worse design than effect. In the corbels, the curious group of 6 little men in kilts, kissing each other, was perhaps a much needed hint to the warlike occupants of that part of Clare, if not to later times, that brotherly love was necessary in Christians. A neat little carving of a horse is also noticeable. The north transept has a large spiral stair up to the tower, and has been divided into two floors as a vestry. The upper part of the low massive old tower has been twice rebuilt, once by Bishop Knox (1794 to 1803), again about 20 years since. The other transept calls for little notice save for an elaborate window. A curious font of yellow sandstone in the chancel, with a rather late and crude design of foliage, should be noticed; it seems to have been left unfinished.

The object of most interest in the nave is the very rich, though greatly damaged, Romanesque door of the older church with the ancient tombstone already mentioned and the neat Gothic west door. The designs of the first are of considerable beauty and delicacy, but the whole is overcrowded with bead work, as is usual about 1100. The history of the building from the 12th to the 16th century is a blank. It was repaired in 1622 and 1676 ; the plate dates from 1624 ; a font was set up, 1701 ; the screen rebuilt, 1707 ; the south transept and nave repaired, 1708, and the south wall rebuilt. In 1725 the gate and stone piers were made ; 1728, the trees planted ; 1741, the chancel re-roofed ; 1782, the first organ erected ; 1820, repairs by Bishop Mant, 1837; the bell put up, J. Fogarty, Limerick ; “ No surrender, 1837” ; 1841, marble font erected ; 1852, chancel re-roofed, plaster taken off corbels and windows, &c. ; 1853, ancient oratory repaired ; 1885, chancel restored, a screen wall removed ; 1892, new glass screen put up lately, and upper part of tower rebuilt.

The monuments are late—Bishop John Roan, 1692, outside of the east end ; Simon Purdon of Tinneranna, in the chancel ; ornamental frame of a lost tablet and the curious coffer tomb of the Redfields in the S. E. side of the graveyard, “ ——Redfield to ye memory of his virtuous and loving wife Elizabeth Browne,” Oct., 1719, “ years married, 44, aged 57, one husband, bless, and children, eleven.” If this is true she was married early, at the age of 13. The panels show a man growing like a tree, the Resurrection, Angel (with trumpet and banner), a skeleton with a cherub’s head and a banner and the words “ Dread and terrour Death doth be, Death wears an angel’s face, And that masked angel will advance Thee to an angel’s place.” Among other quaint verses are “ My dearest friends of Christ above them will I go and see, And all my friends in Christ below shall post soon after me.”

The high cross in the Clarisford gardens was removed from Kilfenora by Bishop Mant in 1821 ; it shows the crucifixion and inter-laced ornament, and is probably of the first half of the 12th century ; several carved stones from the older Romanesque church lie near it. The tiny oratory of St Molua on Friar’s Island, opposite to Clarisford, is inaccessible. It resembles the large oratory in design, but is only 10 feet 6 inches by 6 feet 6 inches inside, the walls 3 feet to 3 feet 4 inches thick. The east window is round-headed, a chancel arch was cut in the west end, and a nave with a lintelled west door, with inclined jambs added, possibly in the 9th century, but it was wantonly levelled soon after 1793.

Castleconnell

Castleconnell is passed as we return down the east bank of the Shannon to Limerick. The castle, though picturesquely seated on a rock over the Shannon, just above the falls of Doonass, has no features of general interest. Traces of circular towers remain to the S. W. and N. W., with fragments of walls and well-built arches ; one fragment has been hurled into the field beyond the road when the castle was blown up. The court measures 160 feet by 100 feet. Local tradition says that it was built by the O Briens and destroyed by Cromwell. Briefly to tell its history, it was the fort of the Ui gConaing or Gunnings, to judge from its name, where

here (it being then called Caisleán Ua Conaing), in 1174, King Domnhall mór Ua Briain blinded two of his relations.

The *bawn* was burned in 1200 by the Connacht men, and King John granted it next year to William de Burgh ; “ If he fortify the castle and we desire to have it we will give him an exchange.” Records of its De Burgh Lords abound but tell little of the castle, which was destroyed in 1261 by Conchobhar (“ na Siudaine”) Ua Briain, King of Thomond. It was for a short time, 1275-1279, in possession of Theobald the Butler and Thomas de Clare, but De Burgh, the Earl of Ulster, recovered it before 1285, and “ harboured” Toirdhealbhach, King of Thomond, before his destructive raid down eastern Co. Limerick and up northern Tipperary, before 1287. Walter de Burgh enlarged and strengthened the castle before 1299, but it was wasted by King Robert Bruce and his brother, Edward, who camped near it in 1315. In 1564 William Bourke “ of Kislany-connell” was created Baron of Castleconnell.

The castle surrendered to the Cromwellians, 1651, but was not dismantled; in 1690 it was surrendered to King William; on his retreat from Limerick the Jacobites reoccupied it, but surrendered it to the Prince of Hesse, after 2 days blockade, Aug. 29th, 1691. Ginckell subsequently caused it and Carrigounnell, its sister castle, to be blown up.

The parish church, though on an old site, is modern and has no old monuments.

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Early History and Ethnology of Thomond

Once the Shannon is crossed from the city of Limerick by either of the main bridges, we find ourselves in the territory of Tuadh-mhumha or North Munster, now the county of Clare. The original North Munster, however, when it first emerges into the light of history, comprised no part of that county, and was situated altogether south of the Shannon.

According to Keating, the original Munster consisted of two parts, viz., West Munster or the province of Curoi mac Daire, and East Munster, the province of Eochaidh Abhradhruadh, the dividing line between them running north and south from Luimneach (Limerick) to Bealach Chonglais, near the city of Cork. The tribe called Darini were the dominant race in East Munster, which extended eastwards to Cumar na dtri nuisce (near Waterford) ; while in West Munster, between the dividing line and the Atlantic, the people named Deirgthine held sway and were the chief progenitors of the several clans known in later times as the descendants of Oilioll Olum, son of Mogh Nuadhat. Sometimes, however, Munster is said to have

been divided into North Munster, the province of Tighearnach Teidbhannach, and South Munster, the kingdom of Curoi. It really meant much the same, for the dividing line ran from north-west to south-east. At any rate, Dun gClaire, near Duntrileague, and Dun eochair Mhaighe, on the Maigne, were the chief royal seats in Curoi's half.

The Deirgthine were destined to play a great part in subsequent Irish history, but under other names, and seem to have been identical with, or included the Clanna Deaghaidh, and to have ultimately absorbed the Erainn or Erna. The Clanna Deaghaidh must be further identified with the Ui maic Deichead, "a subsept of the Ui Luchtai, who were the main sept of the Ciarraighe." [11] The Clanna Deaghaidh was a highly interesting tribe, and had wide ramifications, for the name in the early form, Maqi Decceda (genitive), appears with slight variations of spelling on five ogham stones in Ireland, and in two Latin inscriptions in Britain, as Maccodecheti in Devonshire, and Maccudeceti in Anglesea. The fame of the Clanna Deaghaidh as adepts in the cult of ogham was well known to early Irish writers, and a curious relic of this has reached us in the tale of the Death of Curoi a champion who was said to have overthrown in fair fight even Cuchulainn himself. His treacherous spouse, Blanaid, in order to turn him over an easy prey to her lover, Cuchulainn, cunningly coaxed Curoi to send away in all directions his subjects, the Clanna Deaghaidh, to collect the standing stones of Ireland for the pretended purpose of building a new cathair.

How the royal race of Oilioll became the dominant power in Munster, and more than once attained the high kingship of Tara, is a matter of great historical interest. A battle was fought, we are told, in A.D. 186 (F.M.), at a place called Ceanfeabhrat, south of Kilmallock, by the sons of Oilioll Olum, King of the Deirgthine of West Munster, assisted by the Muscraide, the Corcobhaiscinn, and the Dál Riada, against the Darini of East Munster, commanded by their King, Lughaidh mac Con, and his druid, Dadera, and the Earna led by Neimhidh, in which Lughaidh and his allies were routed, and himself expelled the province. The two Munsters, east and west, were there and then united, and the Deirgthine, or race of Oilioll, became firmly established henceforth in the kingship of all Munster.

It is impossible to tell with any certainty what exact racial affinities existed between the two chief divisions of the descendants of Oilioll, the Eoghanacht and Dal gCais, but it is probable they were closely allied in blood, if not actually identical. Both tribes were free and paid no tribute or service to any king but their own. The Dal gCais claimed an alternate right to the throne of Munster with the Eoghanacht, and even when their own king possessed only Tuadh-mhumha or North Munster, "the northern side of the palace of Caisil, from the extreme corner to the door, belonged to them" by ancient right and usage. [12] Their claim to the kingship of Munster, however, was seldom realised, for it appears that only three Kings of Thomond before Brian Boroimhe, viz., Cormac Cas, Conall eachluaith, and Mathghamhain, son of Cinneide, ever attained to Caisil, although Lorcan son of Lachtna, is said by O Dubhagain to have reigned over Munster for a year and a half after the death of Cormac mac Cuileannain, A.D. 708. This statement, however, is not credited by Keating. [13]

It is also difficult to define with exactitude the territory south of the Shannon which the Dal gCais occupied when first they became a separate state. That portion of the Co. Limerick east of Ui Chonaill Gabhra and Ui Chairbri Aebhdha, and the adjoining part of Co. Tipperary, that is to say, the ancient district of Cliu Mail mhic Ugaire, extending, it is said, "from Luchair to Caisil, [14] seems to have been the cradle of the race. Dun tri liag, "fort of three pillar stones," three miles north of Galbally, barony of Coshlea, is said to have been erected by Cormac Cas, and tradition has it that the eponymous ancestor of the Dal gCais lies buried under these pillar stones.

Taking the sagas and mediaeval pedigrees of the Munster clans as our guide, which express the tribal ethnology of a very remote period,—distorted no doubt and blurred by the ages, it is probable that the race of Oilioll Olum evolved from out the welter of so-called “pre-Milesian” or Ivernian peoples, who in prehistoric times occupied the south-west of Ireland. The pedigrees give the Earna, the Muscraidhe, the Corcabhaiscinn and Dál Riada, a common ancestor called Oilioll Earann. The Dairini had among their alleged progenitors, two Daires, a Deaghaidh and a Deirgthine ; and we find in the genealogy of Oilioll Olum, a Deirgthine, a Dearg, and a Duach dallta Deaghaidh., in whose time, it is said the Earna were expelled from Ulster and settled in Munster. All this clearly shows a sense of unity of race, or at least a strong affinity between the several tribes, one of which, the Earinn, Earna, or Everni, had the honour of giving its name to the whole island, because it was the first to come in contact with classical Europe, Taking all things into consideration, the Deirgthine, or race of Oilioll, first took shape in West Munster, and its evolution was ever eastward towards Leinster, and northward towards Connacht.

Whatever views one may hold on this obscure subject, it is an undoubted historical fact that in or about A.D. 400, the Dál gCais, under their King, Lughaidh Meann, or Lughaidh Lamhdhearg (L. Redhand), crossed the Shannon and conquered the district now known as Thomond, which, from time immemorial was part of Connacht.

“ It was this Lughaidh Lamhdhearg
Who lopped off from the fair province of Connacht
From Carn Fhearadhaigh, it was a choice,
To Ath Luchad abounding in valour.”

Keating says that Lughaidh defeated the men of Connacht in “ seven battles,” and killed “ seven” of their kings, “ though he had no host except mercenaries and attendants,” and made sword-land of Thomond, which was named after him “The rough land of Lughaidh.” He is said to have conquered the whole county of Clare from Carn Fhearadhaigh, near Limerick, to Luchad, near Tubber, and from Ath Boroimhe, *i.e.*, the ford across the Shannon at Killaloe, to Leim an Chon, now Loop Head. He moreover colonised its eastern half with his own tribe, *viz.*, the baronies of Inchiquin, Upper and Lower Tulla, Lower Bunratty with the exception of Tradraidhe, and Upper Bunratty less a small district called Magh Adhair. On the rest of the peoples a heavy annual tribute was imposed—at least in theory—lasting in force to the time of Brian Boroimhe. It is probable that the Ui Cormaic and Tradraidhe, which were Eoghanacht tribes, paid no rent. We find them established in their respective districts as late as the reign of Feidhlimidh mac Crimthainn, King and Archbishop of Munster (ob., 847, A. U.), when an abbot of Ui Cormaic (now barony of Islands), appealed to that king, singing a poem accompanied with his eight-stringed lute, for help for his kinsmen the Ui Cormaic and Tradraidhe, who were “ from their friends far away,” against the Corcabhaiscinn, who had plundered his church.” These tribes of Eoghanacht stock, and the Corcabhaiscinn also probably helped Lughaid Meann in his conquest, and may have been the “ mercenaries” alluded to by Keating. Guaire Aidhne, son of Colman, King of Connacht, seems to have tried to recover the last part of his kingdom, but always unsuccessful in his military undertakings, he was routed in the battle of Carn Fhearadhaigh, near Limerick, in A.D. 622.

Later on, at a date not known, the Tradraidhe were supplanted by the Ui Neill buidhe, a Dal gCais sept, and the Ui Cormaic were driven by the Ui Caisin across the Fergus into the barony of Islands, where as O Hehirs (Ua hAichir) they are still numerous. A further infiltration of Dal gCais families, O Briens and Mac Mahons, about which history says nothing, took place into districts of the rent-paying tribes in the west of the county some time in the 13th century, principally as a result, we believe, of the Norman occupation of the Old

Thomond in Limerick and Tipperary. The last mention of an Donnell, Lord of Corca-bhaiscinn, by the Four Masters is in 1158. In 1359 a Mac Mahon, heir apparent to the lordship of that district, was slain by the O Briens. The last hAichir, Lord of Magh Adhair, was Donnchadh, whose death is recorded in 1099. His title was, we think, merely honorific, for it is probable the Ui Caisin had taken possession of Magh Adhair many years before. The last O Conor mentioned in the annals is Diarmaid, son of Rudraighe, elected Lord of the Corca Modhruadh, in 1482. The last O Lochlainn, Lord of Corcomodruadh, is Irial, who was slain in 1396. In the 13th century, O Briens were apparently a long time settled in parts of Corcamodruadh and Ui Breacain, and Mac Mahons in Corcabhaiscinn.

- [1] Like the story in the Dind Senchas and its variants.
- [2] As I have been told by the late Captain Ralph Westropp and others.
- [3] *Folk Lore*, vol. xxi, Plate xiv.
- [4] *Folk Lore*, vol. xxi, pp. 480, 481, xxii ; pp. 54, 339, 449, 459, Plate x, " S. Senan's tree."
- [5] See *Folk Lore*, vol. xxi, pp. 186, 187. See also *Revue archéologique*. NA. vol. xxiii, p. 1, for the war-goddess Catubodua in Gaul, and *Dublin University Magazine*, 1834, p. 463, and *Proc. R. I. Acad.* vol x p 425
- [6] *Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* (ed Todd) p 175
- [7] *Book of Munster*.
- [8] Exchequer Inquisition, July 27, 1585, Pub. Record Office, Dublin. " A compulsory rent called a borome ... of certain cows or thirteen pence per cow."
- [9] The name of the house called Kincora is very modern. The fort probably stood on the brow of the plateau in the village.
- [10] See *Vita S. Flannani* (compiled 1164 from earlier *Gesta*) Acta SS. ex Codice Salmaticensi, 1881. For the cells see *Journal*, vol. xxix., pp. 328, 329.
- [11] McNeill's " Ogham Inscriptions," *Proc. R. I. A.*, p. 339.
- [12] Keating, vol. iii, p. 191.
- [13] Vol. iii, pp. 196-200. O'Donovan, drawing from some other source, in pedigree of the Dal gCais (Bat. of Magh Raith) gives Aenghus Tireach Lughaidh Meann, and Aedh Caomh, in addition to Lorcan and the others above mentioned, as Kings of all Munster.
- [14] *Arch. Hib.*, vol. ii, 70.

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