

The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

~~~~~  
FORTY-SEVENTH YEARLY SESSION.  
~~~~~

PROGRAMME AND ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

FOR

KING'S COUNTY EXCURSION,

MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 1896;

Including Descriptions

OF

DURROW, RAHAN, LYNALLY, AND KILLEIGH.

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR STOKES, D.D.,

MEMBER OF COUNCIL.

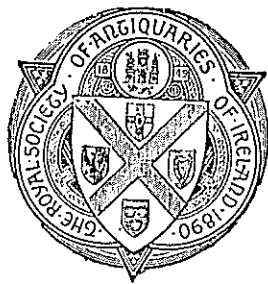
~~~~~  
DUBLIN:

HODGES, FIGGIS, & CO. (LIMITED), 104, GRAFTON-STREET.

1896.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

*Price Sixpence.*



## Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

### EXCURSION TO KING'S COUNTY,

MONDAY, AUGUST 3rd, 1896.

#### PROGRAMME.

The Members of the party will arrive at Tullamore from the different stations on the Great Southern and Western line of Railway. Dublin train leaves Kingsbridge at 9.15 a.m., arriving at Tullamore at 11.3 a.m. Carriages will be provided, and the party will leave Tullamore at 11.10 a.m., and drive to Durrow Abbey, about four miles distant, where the celebrated Cross and other interesting Antiquities will be seen. The Rev. STERLING DE COURCY WILLIAMS, M.A., will have charge of the party, and has kindly undertaken that they shall be provided with luncheon at Durrow Abbey, which has been kindly lent by HECTOR G. TOLER, Esq., D.L. Afterwards the party will proceed to Temple Kieran, where the old Cross and Tombstones will be examined; thence to Rahan, where the Church and other interesting Antiquities will be seen; and, should time permit, Lynally and Ballycowan Castle also. Through the kindness of Mrs. TARLETON, *Hon. Local Secretary, King's County*, the party will have tea at Killeigh Abbey, which will be visited on the way to Geashill Railway Station, to catch the train for Dublin, which leaves at 8 p.m.

( 2 )

Members and Associates intending to join (the latter to be recommended by a Member, and to pay an Entrance Fee of 2s. 6d.) are to send their names to the Hon. Secretary, 7, St. Stephen's-green, Dublin, *on or before Monday, 27th July*, enclosing Postal Order for 2s. 6d., the cost of carriage drive and Illustrated Guide, and 2s. 6d. extra for Associates, when Voucher for car and luncheon will be sent; also Railway Voucher, entitling to a return ticket on Great Southern and Western Railway at a reduced rate. Luncheon will be provided free for Members and Associates enrolled for the Excursion as above, and provided with Vouchers.

As the accommodation for cars and luncheon restricts the party to **50**, the list will be closed on the day named, and according to priority of application.

(By Order),

ROBERT COCHRANE,  
*Hon. Gen. Sec.*

*24th June, 1896.*

---

## DESCRIPTIVE SKETCH OF PLACES TO BE VISITED.

### KING'S COUNTY.

#### DURROW, RAHAN, LYNALLY, AND KILLEIGH.

By THE REV. CANON STOKES, D.D., MEMBER OF COUNCIL.

THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES will visit Tullamore and its neighbourhood as the scene of its August Excursion. That town is unlike the majority of Irish towns in this fact that it possesses no ancient history—there is not a notice of Tullamore on the Down Survey Maps, A.D. 1655—and yet it is surrounded by a regular ring of spots hallowed by the most venerable memories. Let us gather them into a connected list. Round about Tullamore there lie Croghan Hill and Philipstown, the ancient Dengen, as it was called, or island fortress of the O'Connors of Offaly, on the north-east; Rahue or Rathhugh, on the north, the seat of St. Aedh, or St. Hugh, one of the most venerated contemporaries of St. Columba, and of St. Molaise, of Devenish, in Lough Erne. Then, towards the west, partly in Westmeath and partly in King's County, we have the celebrated Durrow, the special foundation of St. Columba, which must be carefully distinguished from another Durrow in the Queen's County. A few miles S.W. appears Rahan, the monastery of St. Carthach, *alias* St. Mochuda, afterwards Bishop of Lismore, another saint and teacher of the sixth century. Towards the south, we have Lynally, the famous monastery of St. Colman; and then towards the S.E., Killeigh (pronounced Killy), the foundation of St. Sencheall, who died of a pestilence of jaundice in 548. A circle drawn round Tullamore, with a radius of ten miles, would include all these places of ancient fame and record. As for Tullamore itself, it necessarily contains no really ancient monuments, as the town owes its existence to the family of Moore of Croghan Castle, to whom the site was granted by Queen Elizabeth. Sir John Moore, of Croghan Castle, which stood at the foot of Croghan Hill, was son-in-law to Primate Adam Loftus, and in 1599 got a grant of lands previously belonging to the Molloyes, chiefs of Ballycowan. The great-grandson of Sir John Moore was created Lord Tullamore in 1715, being one of the first peers made by George I. when he ascended the throne. Among the original grants made to Sir John Moore, as recorded in Archdall's "Lodge,"

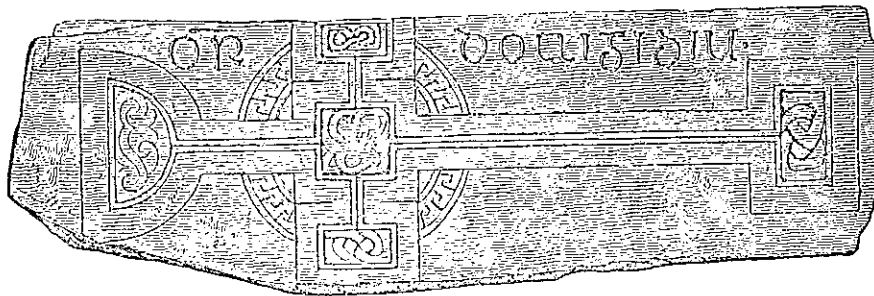
was that of the town, castle, and lands of Tullamore, or Towllaghmore, as it was then called, or the Great Hill; hence the name of the town. The Moore family, about 1710, fixed their seat at Redwood, which belonged, till 1690, to a Mr. John Forth and a Mr. Edward Crofton, and that continued to be the name of the demesne, now called Charleville, till Lodge's time, about 1750. Soon after that time the family of Moore expired in the male line, and the property passed in the female line to the Bury family of the county Limerick. The name of Redwood was then changed to Charleville. A new residence made under that name was built early in the present century by the well-known Mr. Johnston, who was also the architect of the Church of St. Catherine, in Tullamore, and the family was again ennobled under the same title. The present town of Tullamore dates from a great fire which happened about 1785, and arose out of the starting of an immense balloon which fell upon the thatched cabins of which the town was then wholly composed, and completely destroying them, showing how it was that the ancient Celtic monasteries, which were composed of the same materials, were so often and so easily burned. Under the auspices of the Charleville family, Tullamore soon arose like a phoenix out of its ashes, and by the year 1802, when Coote's Survey of the King's County was published, had made great strides in trade. The completely modern character of Tullamore is shown from this fact, that in Lodge's "Peerage," edited by Archdall, and published in 1754, the seat of the Tullamore family is described as Redwood, five miles from Philipstown, and thirty-seven from Dublin, while Tullamore is not mentioned at all, though at the same time it is evident that a village, at least, must have existed on the site of the present Tullamore as early as the reign of James I., since Sir John Moore, of Croghan, then got a patent for holding a fair at Tullamore. The parish of Tullamore is called Kilbride. It was originally dependent, in ecclesiastical matters, upon Durrow Abbey, the monks of which appear to have served the chapel of Kilbride, the remains of which still exist about two miles from the town by the side of the canal. The site of Tullamore is interesting, because it marks the point where the ancient kingdoms of Meath and Leinster touched one another. The boundary line ran between Tullamore and Philipstown. The former was in Meath kingdom, the latter in the kingdom of Leinster. The boundaries of Ballycowan barony on the east mark the limits of Meath and Leinster, as they still mark the boundaries of Meath and Kildare dioceses. It is interesting, indeed, to remark that the boundaries of Meath kingdom are still accurately retained in those of the present diocese of Meath. The district anciently called Fercall embraces all the places we shall this day visit. It was part of the great central forest of Ireland, was subject to the family of Molloy, or O'Molloy, of Ballycowan, as chieftains, and marked the southern limits of the Meath kingdom. Let us now proceed to describe the points to be visited.

## I.—DURROW.

Durrow, St. Columba's famous and favourite Irish monastery, is about four miles from Tullamore. Before the times of St. Columba, the site was called Ros Grencha, and Drum-Cain, or Dorsum Amœnum, Pleasant ridge, as St. Columba himself tells us: *ep. Reeves*, "Adamnan," pp. 269, 271, 275. St. Columba with his keen love of natural beauty called it Dair-Mag, *i.e.* Plain of the Oaks, or Campus Roboris, as Adamnan and Bede latinise the name. Durrow, Derry, and Kildare, are three famous churches, which still retain the Celtic name for the oak in their present English forms. St. Columba received the site as a gift from the local prince of Teflia, Hugh, or Aedh, son of Brendan, after his conversion to Christianity ("Annals of Clonmacnoisc," p. 95, Dublin, 1896). Here St. Columba founded his famous monastery about A.D. 553. It was, doubtless, originally built of the oaks which grew so abundantly on the spot. Both Dr. Reeves, in his "Adamnan," pp. 215-217, and Petrie, in his "Round Towers," think that the words of Adamnan, in his "Life of Columba," iii. 15, imply that a round tower was also built in Durrow during St. Columba's lifetime. But if this was the case, no trace of it now exists. The fate of Durrow was, as Dr. Reeves and the "Annals of Clonmacnoisc" show, much the same as the other Celtic monasteries. The Durrow monks were of a warlike turn, and as the result, it was often attacked and burned even by the neighbouring tribes, but was as often restored. At the same time if the monks of Durrow could fight, they could also study; and their learning is abundantly shown in the celebrated Epistle of Cummian, an alumnus of Durrow, to the abbot Segienus of Iona, vindicating the Roman calculation as to Easter in opposition to the Columban view. This Epistle filling 12 pp. of Ussher's "Sylloge Epistolarum Hibernicarum," is an extraordinary monument of the wide research which prevailed at Durrow about A.D. 630 (see Ussher's works, iv. pp. 432-444). We first hear of a stone church at Durrow in the year 1019, when it was taken by assault by a neighbouring chieftain. At the time of the Norman invasion, Hugh de Lacy seized Durrow, and proceeded to erect a castle there. About that period the Celtic monks were changed by the Anglo-Normans into Augustinian monks, just as happened at Christ Church, Dublin, and elsewhere.

The last Abbot of Durrow of whom the Four Masters speak was Dermot O'Rafferty, who died in 1190. In 1223, the ruler of Durrow was called the Prior (see "Annals of Clonmacnoisc," p. 233), and was endowed with a rentcharge by a local Anglo-Norman magnate, Symon Clifford, who built a castle at Rahau. The conduct of Hugh de Lacy in interfering with ancient burial rights in Durrow Abbey, aroused such resentment among the Celtic population that he was murdered on the spot by two members of well-known septs—a Fox and an O'Breen, July 25th, 1186 ("Ireland and Anglo-Norman Church," pp. 168, 169). The castle which De Lacy erected was probably of earth and timber, and stood on the spot now occupied by a large moat or mound near

the present residence. A stone castle was erected near the same spot in 1213 by the English under John de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, at the same time as he erected the castles of Clonmacnoise, Athlone, and Randown (*cf.* "Annals of Clonmacnoise," by Father Murphy, p. 227, and "Ireland and Anglo-Norman Church," pp. 242-247). The monastery seems to have been much neglected during the years A.D. 1200-1500, as the "Annals of Clonmacnoise" (p. 96) tell us that the celebrated "Book of Durrow" was then entrusted, about A.D. 1400, to an ignorant man who used it as a charm for curing sick cows, pouring water upon it which he administered to the animals. Under Henry VIII. the abbey was suppressed, and in 1560 handed over to Nicholas Herbert who was endowed with the lands and tithes, though the "Annals of Lough Cé" speak of it as existing till 1582, when they tell of a homicide committed by one of the O'Connors within its sacred walls. The castle, built by the Bishop of Norwich, continued to be inhabited, as we find the Earl of Ormond writing from it in 1599. This castle seems to have fallen into ruin during the seventeenth century.



About 1770, Mr. Stepney, to whom the property had descended from the Herberts, erected, with the stones of the old castle, the present mansion-house, which Lord Norbury, the ancestor of the present proprietor, further enlarged and improved early in this century. There is a curious story illustrating the continuity of Irish life. De Lacy was murdered because he disregarded Celtic ideas and customs. In 1770, Mr. Stepney interfered in the same way with the burial rights in St. Columba's cemetery, and was obliged to desist. In 1836, Lord Norbury wished to impose some restrictions on ancient burial customs in the cemetery, and on free access to the well of St. Columba. The Lord Norbury of that date was murdered in January, 1839. Ancient customs and Celtic memories are dangerous grounds in Ireland (*cf.* O'Connor's "Letter on Durrow," in Westmeath Ordnance Survey Letters in Royal Irish Academy). And now as to what is to be seen of the ancient Abbey:—

1. There is the church which is doubtless the same substantially as the ancient building. A stone church was erected about A.D. 1000, as we have seen. This was doubtless improved after

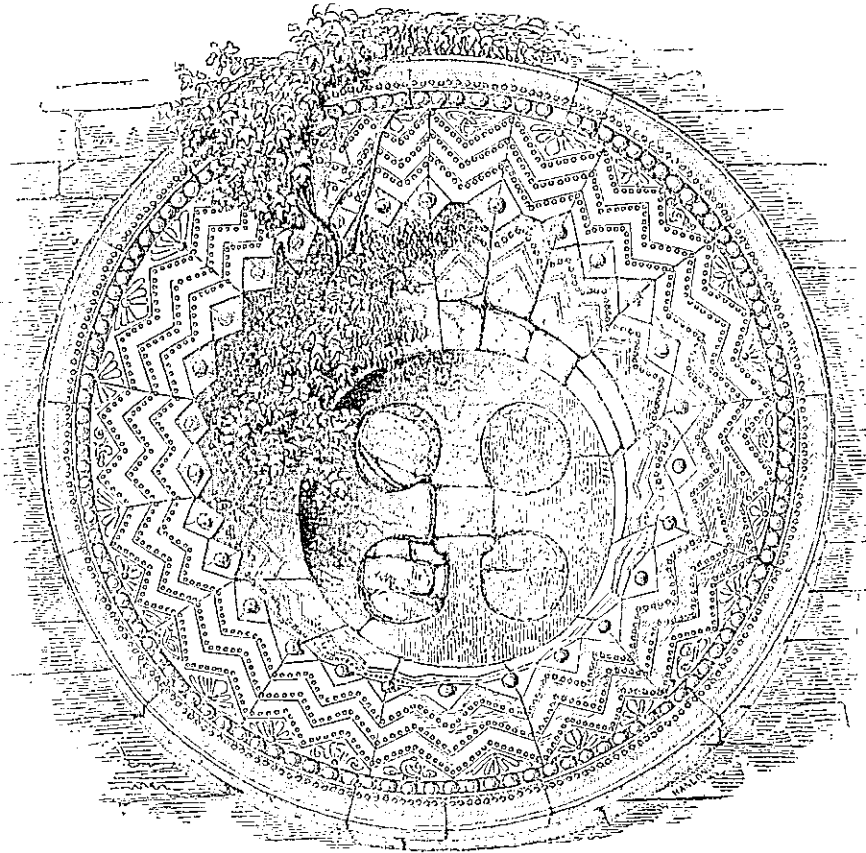
1172 A.D. At the suppression, A.D. 1540, it was turned into a parish church. According to an inquisition in the Record Office, dated 28th December, 1568, the site of Durrowe Columbcille contained half an acre on which were the unroofed stone walls of the church of the late monastery, one hall, and other edifices. According to Archbishop Ussher's report in 1621, the church and chancel were still in ruins, like most of the Meath churches. It was doubtless restored in Strafford's time, before 1641. Bishop Dopping, in his report of 1693, tells us the church and chancel had been lately in repair, but were then no longer so. It was, however, patched up for use during the last century, and again about the year 1802, the walls of the old ruinous church being again utilised. (O'Connor, "On Durrow parish in Ordnance Survey Letters for Westmeath," A.D. 1837.)

- \* 2. There is the cross which, according to O'Donovan, is like those of Kells and of Moone, together with a stone which seems the base of another similar one. The existing cross is 8 or 9 feet high, and is richly carved. Miss Stokes describes it, and two inscriptions found at Durrow, in her "Christian Inscriptions," p. 56. The outer arch stones of an ancient window, built into the wall, is the only other architectural relic of ancient Durrow now existing.
3. The Monastic Well called the Well of St. Columba.
4. The Book of Durrow in Trinity College Library, which Dr. Reeves thinks an eighth-century ms. It contains an inscription stating that it was written by Columba in twelve days. Its silver cover, now lost, but in existence in the seventeenth century, had an inscription in Irish signifying that it was made in the year 916. (Reeves' "Adamnan," p. 327; Ussher, in his "Antiquities of the British Churches," tells us he collated this ms. with the Vulgate: *cf.* "Annals of Clonmacnoise," pp. 95, 96.) According to a note, written by O'Clery in the fly-leaf of the ms. of the "Martyrology of Donegal," the Book of Durrow was still retained in Durrow itself till about the year 1630 (*cf.* "Introd. to Mart. Don.," by Todd and Reeves, p. xl. Anyone who wishes easily to inspect this ancient ms. should consult Dr. Gilbert's "Facsimiles," or Dr. Abbott's "Examples of Celtic Ornament" (Dublin: Hodges & Figgis). Jones, Bishop of Meath in 1661, presented the Book of Durrow to T. C. D.
5. Of the monastery itself no buildings survive. The early Celtic monasteries and their cells were all composed of small huts made of earth and wattles. They easily yielded to decay, and left nothing behind but mounds to show where hundreds and even thousands once dwelt, as can be seen at Clonmacnoise, Inch-Cleraun, and elsewhere.



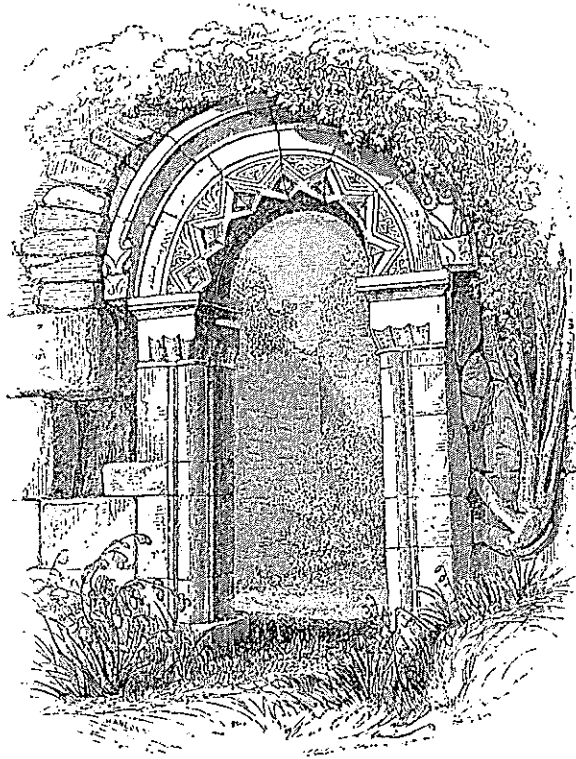
## II.—RAHAN.

After Durrow the next point at which we arrive is Rahan which, if not equal to Durrow in historical importance, surpasses it in the extent and beauty of its architectural remains. A few words must suffice for the history of Rahan, Rathain, Rathenge, or Rahin, as it is variously written. It is derived from the old Irish word *raith* = fern; and signifies a ferny spot (see Joyce, ii. 330). Rahan is first mentioned in Tirechan's notes about



St. Patrick in the "Book of Armagh," where St. Patrick is said to have indicated the site of Rahan Church from the top of the moat of Granard, in Longford, though how the Saint could have seen so far, and through so many hills as intervene, I cannot explain. It is evident, however, that by the time when Tirechan wrote, between 650 and 700 A.D., Rahan was a flourishing monastic settlement (see Dr. Wh. Stokes' "Life of

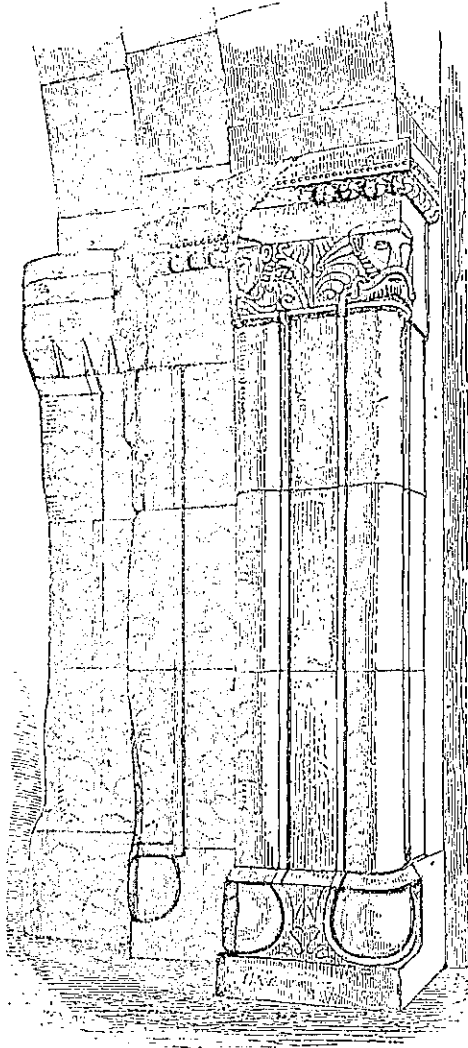
St. Patrick," p. 311). The monastery of Rahan was founded about the same time as that of Durrow. It was founded by St. Carthach or St. Mochuda about the year 580. A king of Cornwall, named Constantine, abandoned his throne in 588, and became a monk there, whence it would seem the name Constantine became a favourite one with the family of Molloy, who were princes of Fercall, the district immediately around Rahan. Under St. Carthach, Rahan marvellously prospered, so that 867 monks were said to have been gathered under his rule at one time, and his followers formed one of the four great orders



into which the Irish monasteries were divided, viz. : 1, the order of Columba ; 2, of Comgall ; 3, of Carthach ; 4, of Ailbeus of Ewly : *cf.* Ussher' "*Antiquities Works*," vol. vi., p. 483. The monastery of Durrow, however, became jealous of the success of Rahan, and so in 636 roused King Blathmac to expel Carthach, who took refuge at Lismore, where he founded the see, but died the next year. We then hear nothing of Rahan for 100 years, when O'Swayne appears as Coarb of St. Carthach in 740. Petrie assigns the present church of Rahan to his time, though Lord

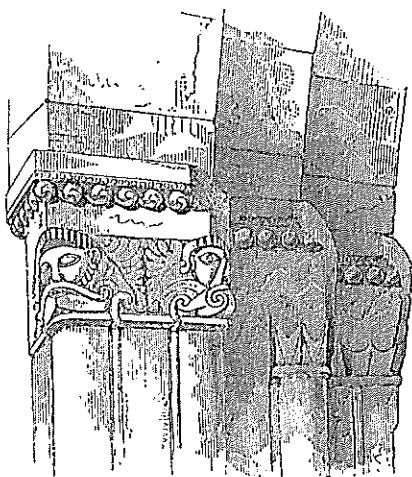
Dunraven and Miss Stokes will have it that it is a Romanesque Church of the eleventh or twelfth century. At the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion, it is probable that the Augustinian rule was introduced, as a castle of Rahan was there built by Simon Clifford, and an endowment

conferred upon the prior of the convent of Durrow; and Norman settlers never troubled Celtic institutions or orders with any endowments. O'Donovan thinks that some old vaults which he traced near the church were a portion of this castle. Rahan practically disappears from our view between 1200 and 1600. In Ussher's "Visitation Return of 1622," it is spoken of as a chapelry attached to Ardnurcher, with a ruined chapel. In Bishop Dopping's "Meath Return," the church of Rahan is described as well repaired before 1641. In his visitation of August, 1696, he found the roof covered with shingles, which he ordered to be removed to Lynally Church, where the same shingles continued till Bishop O'Beirne's time, 1820, when we find them mentioned by him in a Parliamentary return; they were doubtless a relic of the great central forest of Ireland which covered this district till later than 1600.

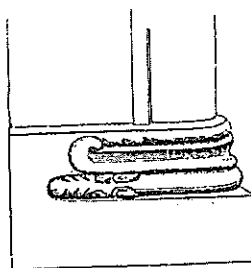


And now what is to be seen at Rahan? There are no remains of the ancient Celtic monastic buildings. As we have said of Durrow, so at Rahan, the cells of the monks were composed, like those of the Egyptian solitaries, of the most perishable materials. O'Donovan and Petrie

thought, however, that there were probably seven churches, the remains of three of which can still be seen. One church is still perfect. Petrie, in his "Round Towers," pp. 242-46, thus describes the present building:—"The chancel alone is ancient, and has suffered the loss of the east window. The chancel arch remains, and an ornamented circular window which



lighted a chamber between the chancel and the roof, where the priest resided, as at St. Columba's house at Kells; at St. Kevin's kitchen, at the stone roofed chapel of Ardrass, in Kildare and elsewhere. The chancel is stone-roofed, as probably the entire church was originally. The ornamentation of the chancel arch is very peculiar. It consists of three rectangular piers at each side, rounded at their angles into semi-columns which support three semicircular arches entirely unornamented, except by a plain architrave on the external one. The capitals on which the greatest richness of ornament is found are those on the innermost of the piers on each side. These ornaments though similar in design are dissimilar in detail, and their bases differ in like manner. The height of piers in this archway, from the floor to the spring of the arches, is 6 feet 5 inches, and to the vertex of the innermost arch, 10 feet 2 inches. As to the round window, it is not only the most curious of its kind in the British Isles, but also the most ancient. Its ornaments are in very low relief, or, as I might say, *inciso* or in hollow. It measures about 7 feet 6 inches external diameter, and is 22 feet from the ground. The masonry throughout the whole building is of a very superior character, the stones, which are polygonal, being fitted to each other with the greatest neatness. The material used is the celebrated limestone of the district." Petrie also describes the ruins of two smaller churches, at Rahan. One is a plain oblong 39 feet by 23, with polygonal masonry of the earliest Christian type. It has a very beautiful doorway 6 feet 7 inches high to the vertex of the arch, and 2 feet 6 inches broad, remarkable for the sharpness and beauty of its ornamentation. Lord Dunraven and Miss Stokes, ii. 65,



give further details, and plates of the Rahan Churches and doorways. They give the dimensions of the used chancel as 14 feet 8 inches long by 10 feet 6 inches broad. They state that on each side of this chancel there is a round arched doorway, of good ashlar masonry. These doors are about 5 feet high and 2 feet broad. It is said that these doors led into cells, which are now destroyed.

### III.—LYNALLY.

The next point of interest is Lynally and Ballycowan Castle. Let us take Lynally first. The name is variously spelled, Lynally, Lin-ali, Land-Elo, Lan-Ela (Ussher), Lann-Eala (Reeves, "Antiquities," p. 97). Lynally is now fallen into complete insignificance, and yet, in the ancient Celtic Church, it held a position fully equal to that of Durrow and Rahan, so much so, that the bishops and abbots of Connor, in Antrim, were also styled of Lynally as well, the foundation of both communities being attributed to one and the same person. This fact has caused much trouble to many antiquaries, they not understanding, as Dr. Reeves remarks, that "in ancient times it was no uncommon occurrence for two or more communities, though far removed from one another, to be subject to a common superior, provided they observed the same rule, or owned a common founder" ("Antiquities of Down and Connor," p. 98). St. Colman, a kinsman of St. Columba, was the founder of Lynally. He had spent some time at Connor, and was therefore regarded as its second founder. His name was a very common one, as it was convertible with Columbanus, with the result that Ussher celebrates no less than twenty-seven different Colmans, while O'Clery gives more than one hundred saints of that name. Our Colman, of Lynally, was a contemporary and friend of St. Columba and St. Canice, through whose influence with the king of Meath, a site was given to St. Colman about 580, in the great forest of Fercall, then called Fidh-Elo, whence Colman called the monastery which he erected Land-Elo, distant, according to Ussher, four miles from Durrow, and there St. Colman died on September 26th, 610 (Ussher, "Antiquities Works," vol. vi., p. 530). His fame was so great in mediæval times that St. Patrick and St. Brigid are said to have prophesied of his birth and work when passing the site of Lynally (Bolland, "AA. SS. Sep.," vol. i., p. 664, and *cf.* Reeves' "Antiquities," p. 240), St. Colman was one of the second Order of Irish Saints who were much influenced by St. David of Wales, which may account for the Welsh prefix Lann in some forms, of the name Lynally (Ussher, vi. 478). St. Colman erected a monastery of the usual Celtic type, which continued for some centuries. In 737 A.D., the "Annals of Clonmacnoise" tell us that Saint Brayn of Lynally died, and afterwards reports the death of other abbots in 771, 865, and 949. Lynally then sinks into insignificance till

the sixteenth century, when it appears as a parish church or vicarage, forming a portion of the immense parish of Fercall. According to Ussher's report, the church was in ruins in 1622; Dopping, in his report on Meath, made in 1693, says that Lynally Church was in good repair before 1688, but was then no longer so (*cf.* Dopping's "Report on Meath Diocese," pp. 88 and 154). In 1696, he ordered the shingled roof of Raham to be removed to Lynally. The old ruin to which Bishop Dopping refers contains several monuments and tombstones of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, erected to the families of Molloy, Forth, Briscoe, and Crofton. There is also a monument dated 1684, erected by the Rev. Thomas Coffey, Vicar at that time. The Forths and Croftons then held Redwood, now part of Charleville. A little south of the ruins, there is a moat containing chambers of lime and stone. The new church of Lynally has been built on the site of a later church, erected in the early part of this century or the end of the last. The ruins of Ballycowan Castle are worth a visit. They are a short distance from the old ruined church. They show the transition from a fortified castle to a modern mansion. They are dated 1626. Sir Jasper Herbert built the castle on the site of a Mulloy Castle, which the Four Masters mention under A.D. 1557. He was a brother or cousin of the owner of Durrow, and a near descendant of Queen Elizabeth's settler. Yet he joined in the movement of 1641, and was included in the list of the confiscated owners. Sir Jasper Herbert, who had become a Roman Catholic, probably through his marriage, appears as such on the maps of the Down Survey of the barony of Ballycowan. In the same survey, Mr. John Briscoe appears as the owner of Shragh Castle, the ruins of which still exist.

---

#### IV.—KILLEIGH.

The next point of interest is Killeigh, which is some miles distant, and in ancient times was in a different kingdom (Leinster), as it is now in a different diocese (Kildare), forming, as it does, part of the extensive parish of Geashill. Killeigh, like all the other places in this excursion, was founded by a sixth-century saint, St. Sincheall, who died March 26th, 550, in a great pestilence which then ravaged Ireland. He is one of the few Celtic saints who appear in the Sarum Martyrology. There seem to have been two of the same name, and both attached to Killeigh, one, the elder, a bishop; the other, the younger, a presbyter. They are mentioned in the Litany of Aedgus, the Culdee, as living at Killeigh, with many other bishops, monks, and pilgrims subject to their rule (*cf.* Ward's "Life of St. Rumold," p. 205). The name of the place is worth notice. Dr. Joyce (vol. i., p. 315) tells us its origin: "Its name, as used by the Irish authorities, is *Cill-achaidh* (Killahy), *i.e.* the

church of the field, which has been softened down to the present form. There was, according to Colgan, another place of the same name in east Brefsney; and to distinguish them, Killeigh, in the King's County, is usually called by the Annalists, *Cill-Achaidh-Droma-Fada*, that is, Killeigh of Drumfada, from a long ridge or hill which rises immediately above the village. From this long ridge, which rises S.W. of the village, the whole of Offaly, from the hill of Croghan to the hill of Allen, near Kildare, and the Slieve Bloom Mountains, appears all one vast plain. This plain was, in the second century, the scene of the great battle of Moyleana, A.D. 125, between Conn of the Hundred Battles, and Owen More, king of Munster, aided by his brother-in-law, Fergus, king of Spain. Owen and Fergus were slain, and according to the "Annals of Clonmaenose," p. 59, are buried in two hillocks on this plain (*cf.* O'Curry's, "Battle of Magh Leana" and Keating's "History of Ireland," pp. 308-312, O'Mahony's edition). A glance will show that it was an ideal battle-field. Reverence for St. Sincheall did not prevent another great battle at Killeigh. We learn from the "Annals of Clonmaenose," that, in 1078, "the people of Tefsia came to the termon land of Killeigh, in Offaly, and preyed and spoiled it, and killed Gillemore O'Keorgie, King of Carbre, with many others." About a century after St. Sincheall's time a great conference on the disputed Paschal question was held at this place. There are no remains of the ancient Celtic abbey, except the nine wells of Killeigh. In 1393, O'Connor Faly erected a monastery of Franciscans at Killeigh. Hence the remains which are now to be seen.

Lord Walter Fitzgerald gives the following description of the ruins of this Franciscan abbey in the "Journal of the Association for Preserving the Memorials of the Dead" for 1895:—"Some portions of the abbey are still standing, a part of it being incorporated in the dwelling-house of Mr. Tarleton, and some vaulted portions used as turf-sheds. Any carved work in connexion with the old abbey is carefully preserved by Mrs. Tarleton." Lord Walter then describes the monuments of O'Connor Faly, with a Latin inscription, of Charles O'Dunne (the modern Doyne) of Ballybrittas, who was wounded at the battle of the Boyne, and died and was buried at Killeigh shortly afterwards; and of Maximilian O'Dempsey, the last Viscount Clonmalier (title created 1631) who was Lord Lieutenant of the Queen's County in 1688, and died at Killeigh, November, 1690. He was the last of a long line of chieftains, who can be traced back in the "Annals of Clonmaenose" to 1134. Archdall, in his "Monasticon Hibernicum," p. 806, gives two Inquisitions about Killeigh, one taken in 1568, and the other in 1582, which give a vast number of details about Killeigh, its lands, buildings, boundaries, field-names, &c., which our local members may be able to utilise. The last Franciscan guardian of Killeigh, in the reign of Henry VIII., was named Phelim O'Connor, one of the O'Connors of Offaly. Even in the Franciscan monasteries the rules of ancient Celtic monastic accession seem to have

been maintained, which ordered that, as far as possible, the rulers should be chosen from the family of the founders.

I have now given minute details about the leading points of our Excursion. But there is a number of other interesting places which visitors can explore if they will prolong their visit for a day or two. Let me just mention them. Rahue, some few miles north of Tullamore, is a spot whose history goes back to the same sixth century as those we have already described. St. Aedh, or St. Hugh, was its founder. He was an active missionary, in the sixth century, throughout Meath when the majority of its population was still pagan. He was a native of Westmeath, having been born at Killare, and seems to have been the patron saint of the Mac Geoghegan country and its great evangelizer. About 1630 his sacred staff is said to have been in the possession of one Peter Mac Geoghegan ("Mart. Doneg.," Introd., p. xli). Colgan tells a good deal about his activity in the islands of Lough Ree, and in the western portion of Westmeath, in the neighbourhood of Ballimore, Killare, and Drumraney, in his "Acta Sanctorum," vol. i., p. 421, whence we learn that his memory was celebrated on February 28th. The "Martyrology of Donegal," however, celebrates him on November 10th, and also connects him with Slieve League in Donegal, where, on the very highest point, there are the remains of his oratory still to be seen. There was a Convention of Ireland called at Rathhugh, in 857, to take measures to secure concord among Irishmen, as against the Danes (Keating, page 513). There are still two immense raths evidently marking the site of St. Hugh's monastery. A parish church took its place in the Middle Ages. We find, from the Fiant of Edward VI. that, in 1550, Rory O'Brien, clerk, was presented to the vicarage of St. Hugh of Rahue. Colgan tells us, in the seventeenth century, Rahue was still a parish church, though, according to Ussher, in 1621, it was but a chapelry attached to Ardnurcher; and in Dopping's Report of 1693, we are told the Chapel of Rahue was waste and in ruins since 1641 (*cf.* "Martyrology of Donegal," ed. Todd, Introd., p. xl). Kilbeggan was another ancient monastery with many traditions. Ballyboy, *alias* Frankford, *alias* Kilcormack, ten miles from Tullamore, towards Parsonstown, was the site of a Carmelite monastery, founded in 1454, by the Molloyes. This place has supplied Trinity College Library with the ms. called the Missal of Kilcormack, which shows that the tradition derived from Durrow and St. Columba, of producing elaborate mss., had not died out in the neighbourhood after 900 years had elapsed. This missal has a number of entries on its earlier pages which give a vivid glimpse into the social life of the district in the middle of the fifteenth century. These entries have been reproduced and discussed in one of the publications of the Irish Archaeological Society. They show that reverence for life, property, and sacred places had then vanished in the district we are now



visiting. Then again a journey of half an hour or so by train will bring a visitor to Banagher, or Athlone, whence Clonfert and Clonmacnoise, with their marvellous remains, may be reached by car or river in a short time. The west doorway of Clonfert is one of the most marvellous, and at the same time least known pieces of ancient work in Ireland, while the crosses, Round Towers, and churches of Clonmacnoise need no description from us. Clonfert and Clonmacnoise can be easily done on the one day, and still Dublin can be reached by ten o'clock at night. If three days be devoted to this excursion, the antiquities of this part of the diocese of Meath can be thoroughly explored, and at the same time some of the unknown and unvisited scenery of the Slieve Bloom Mountains can be traversed, including the Gap of Glandine, over which rises, on the south, the mountain called Arderin, 1733 feet high, the loftiest of the Slieve Bloom range. Lewis and Coote speak of a white obelisk, or Temple of the Sun, in these mountains as a curious monument of antiquity. I do not know where it is. Leap Castle was an ancient O'Carroll residence, which stood many a fierce attack in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from the Earls of Kildare. It has been now converted into the mansion of the Darby family, to whom much of the O'Carroll property was granted. Some of the ancient castellated features of the house are still carefully preserved.

The reader who wishes to collect all the ancient legends and stories concerning the ancient worthies mentioned in this Guide should consult Canon O'Hanlon's learned and interesting volumes, according to the days of the month on which they are commemorated.

---