

## ANTIQUITIES.

*Abbeys, Castles, Fortresses, Round Towers, Early Churches, Sculptured Crosses, Stone Circles, Ogham Stones, Cairns, Souterrams, Pillar Stones, Cromlechs, Forts, Raths, Moats, Tumuli or ancient monuments of any kind. Exact location of each with short description, noting condition, etc. Relate local legend or tradition associated with building or object. State if in charge of Office of Public Works. Right of way to public? Admission charge (if any). Name and address of caretaker, or where key is kept.*

### Errew Abbey.

Errew Abbey, on the northern tip of the T shaped peninsula which juts out into Lough Conn on the western shore, was at one time a most important centre of learning, <sup>and</sup> students from all over Europe to the number of 1400 are said to have studied here, ~~at one time, many ages ago.~~

It is known that the institution was founded in the sixth century by St. Tiernan, patron saint of Crossmolina parish and a man of noble stock who was closely related to several other Irish saints and princes of the period. For a thousand years Errew occupied a high place among the institutions of learning and piety and was afforded the protection of the native kings and chieftains of the neighbourhood.

About the end of the twelfth century it would appear that a new building was erected, probably by the O'Lachtina clan or perhaps by the O'Dowdas-for the Canons of St. Augustine.

H.T. Knox in his "History of the Dioceses of Tuam etc" of 1904, says "The architecture is very coarse and rough. Though the windows generally are pointed they are very few and very small for a church of this class. In the N. wall close to E. end is a small window with a round top hollowed out of stone, looking very early, as if it might have been taken from an earlier church. A similar narrow slit is opposite in the S. wall but with a pointed top. The cloisters were very low and very dark, lighted only by a few narrow slits, and might more properly be called vaults."

A rather contradictory impression is gained from the observations of Rev. J.F. Lavelle, who, in a lecture delivered a few years ago, described the ruin as follows :- "In the days when the chant of its monks resounded beneath its roof-tree it must have been a worthy product of the builder's art. The doorway was curved in the low-apex style, approaching Romanesque while the narrow Gothic lights and the large orient-window were fashioned into splendid specimens of pointed architecture. On a stone fronting the altar was carved a realistic representation of a human head, now hidden behind a mantle of matted ivy from the eye of the casual visitor."

Since the occasion of Fr. Lavelle's lecture, the ruin has been taken in charge by the Office of Public Works, the walls stripped of the injurious ivy and partially restored.

During the period of cruel religious persecutions conducted by the English in this country, the Cromwellian settlers of the locality reduced the noble abbey to ruins. Not satisfied with this "anti-Papish" blackguardism, they crowned their barbarous efforts by harnessing the innocent and defenceless monks to wild horses which, dragging their human burdens along the ground, literally tore them to pieces.

Close by the abbey is the enclosed foundation of a small ancient church or convent. It is believed that this was originally a church built by St. Tiernan and converted into a convent in later years.

Tiernan died and was interred at Errew and a precious relic known as Mias Thighernain (Tiernan's Dish or Paten), a copper vessel used for washing the bishop's or abbot's hands, existed for many years. The Paten remained with a local family named O'Flynn until purchased by the Knoxes of Rappa Castle who are believed to have offered it for sale at a London auction some few years ago.

The O.P.W. have established a public right of way to the abbey along the shore of the lake and the public have free access to the ruin.

Errew is a little over five miles from Crossmolina, branching to the left past Inniscoe when three miles on the southward Pontoon road; after a distance of about another three quarters of a mile, the road to the left is taken and this, passing Errew Hotel, leads directly to the farmhouse of Mr Flannery, on whose land the ruin is situated; the right of way will be found here.

*(Plain sheets of foolscap paper to be used, if necessary, for recording additional information).*

*Antiquities continued on A 3.*

Antiquities, continued.Abbey of the Blessed Virgin.

Abbeytown, a townland on the outskirts of Crossmolina, takes its name from the ancient Franciscan institution founded there about the year 1300, A.D.. It is possible but not definite that the abbey was built by the De Barry family.

No record is locally available as to the activities of this community but it is known that a family of Cromwellian settlers tore down the walls of the abbey to provide stones for the building of their mansion nearby.

The present landowners, who live in the modernised house, have tidied the meagre remnants of the building and have done much to preserve what little is left of it. A pretty altar has been erected in front and a large rectangular baptismal or holy water font which was found among the rubble of masonry, has been placed alongside.

The abbey is only a quarter mile from the village and the owners, the Misses Carolan, will be pleased to point out the abbey to visitors.

Ancient church at Kildavarogue.

Within the boundaries of Inniscoe demesne and about 2½ miles from Crossmolina, may be seen some scattered stonework of what seems to have been a very ancient and small church.

Local opinion is that this church, known as Kildavarogue, owes its origin to St. Mochua who died in A.D. 637.

Permission to enter the grounds may be obtained from the proprietor, Major Pratt. The ruin is not in charge of the O.P.W.

Castle at Inniscoe.

Some portions of the walls of an old castle may be seen on the edge of Lough Conn. It is likely that this was a stronghold of the Burkes or in fact, to a branch of that family who Gaelicised their name, assuming that of the Clan MacWilliam and became essentially Irish in habit and custom, wearing the native garb and speaking the Gaelic tongue.

*belonged* The walls of the old castle are in a very dangerous condition and the ruin, which is on the property of Major Pratt, is not in charge of the O.P.W.

Crossmolina Castle.

In Crossmolina, at the commencement of the Killala road, stands the crumbling ruin of Crossmolina Castle. I have not been able to ascertain definitely whether it was a Burke or a Barrett stronghold. It is however recorded in the Annals of Lough Ce, that O'Donnell, the Tirconnail chief-tain, captured the castles of Crossmolina and Castlehill (in neighbouring parish of Addergoole) in A.D. 1526. He razed the buildings, having found hostages and spoils of war.

This ruin, the remaining walls of which are four feet thick in parts, is not in charge of the O.P.W. and may be inspected without difficulty.

Continued on A4.

*Canon of Binn Sannagor  
Sept. 24 & 25 1962.*

Antiquities, Continued.Castle Island, Lough Conn.

There are some slight remains of a small castle on this island which lies opposite Inniscoe House and a few ~~yards~~<sup>yards</sup> from the mainland.

Here, it is said that a man named Lynott was imprisoned, having first had his eyes removed from their sockets, this punishment being meted out by a vindictive enemy for what reason it is hard to learn. Information is very scarce and vague and it is not at all definite that the man was Lynott.

The remains are not in charge of the O.P.W. and visitors are free to inspect them, the shortest approach being that from Errew.

A Pillar Stone at Eskeragh.

At Eskeragh, about six miles from Crossmolina on the main Belmullet road, a stone, straight and slightly tapering, stands almost six feet high in a shallow circular depression.

The stone, which I considered a possible Pillar Stone, is plainly visible from the roadside and is situated in a commonage or bog at the rere of the schoolhouse. It is referred to locally as the "big stone" but I could trace no legend or tradition connected with it.

The stone is within easy access of the road and does not appear to have ever been excavated.

Forts and raths are very numerous in the parish but I have not heard or found record of any of particular importance or in any way worth mention.

Canon O'Brien, Surveyor  
Sept. 24 1842.

Report submitted September 24th; please note following corrections.

Antiquities - Abbey of the Blessed Virgin at Abbeytown, Crossmolina.

An article appears in the Journal of the <sup>CORK</sup> Historical and Archaeological Society, Vol. XLVI (1941), in which Rev. <sup>^</sup>John Ryan M.A., deals at some length with this institution, its origin and connection with the priory of St. Thomas the Martyr, at Ballybeg, near Buttevant, Co. Cork.

Fr. Ryan, who is an authority on such matters, asserts that the priory at Crossmolina was founded by the Anglo-Normans for the Canons Regular of the Order of St. Augustine, that it was entirely dependent upon the mother house at Ballybeg and that proof has been found of its existence in the year 1306 A.D. Both houses were dissolved under Henry VIII.

Errew Abbey.

X Fr. Ryan has also compiled much authentic information in connection with this foundation. Reliable information is practically unobtainable in this quarter and since considerable importance is attached to Errew, I would respectfully suggest that Fr. Ryan be approached for the necessary particulars.

Historic Sites.

Much credence has been given to the opinion expressed in some popular books to the effect that the French under General Humbert, passed through Crossmolina en route for Castlebar, during the Insurrection of '98. I have it now on reliable authority that the troops did not pass through the village but that they kept to the old road along the shores of Lough Conn, thus avoiding Crossmolina although passing within a mile or so of the village.

The alleged hanging of the man Walsh at the Deel Bridge, although generally accepted as true, I now believe to be caused by a twisting of the truth since the man was hanged in Ballina.

My informant is Rev. Fr. Harte who heard the facts from the late Rev. Dean Kelly, a native of the district who died several years ago at the age of ninety five; the Dean was well acquainted with all the local occurrences of '98 and had first hand information from an uncle of his.

Mansions, Castles and Estates.

Mention should be made of Gortnor Abbey Convent, run by the Sisters of Jesus and Mary.

Situated in one of the most pretty spots on the shore of Lough Conn, one mile from Crossmolina, the old residence of the Ormes family has largely improved and many additions and alterations have been made.

Cause Officer  
Surveyor 27/9/42.