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FORM A.

I.T.A. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL SURVEY

NATURAL FEATURES, ANTIQUITIES, HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS, ETC.

BARONY OF Tirawley

TOWN OR VILLAGE Ballycastle PARISH Ballycastle COUNTY Maye (North)

TOPOGRAPHY

Brief description of outstanding scenic views in the district, natural attractions, or unusual topographical features.

The little town of Ballycastle is built on the slope of one of the many low mountains on the north coast and is 17 miles from Ballina and 32 miles from Castlebar, via Crossmelina. The long, broad street which comprises the town stretches to within a short distance of the sea and from the street itself, several very pretty views are apparent.

Scenery, beautiful, wild and rugged, surprises the traveller on every turn of the North Coast Road and the sea, mountains, cliffs and fertile glens in glorious harmony and wild, discordant abandon are positively thrilling. That will be the reaction of the true lover of natural unspoiled scenery.

Dowpatrick Head, four miles to the north of the town possesses many attractions. This promontory juts far out to sea and the precipitous

GEOLOGY

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Brief notes on unusual geological features, such as caves, eskers, etc.

All round the coast line will be found caves of varying dimensions. Some of these are the dens of seals which are very numerous hereabouts. The majority of the caves however are not visible from land and they are mostly inaccessible. Other freaks of nature are the "Puffing Heles" at Dowpatrick Head and at Glenurra; Dun Briste, the massive rock, 300 feet high which has been separated from the mainland; the cliffs at Dowpatrick and Keadea and the arches formed in the rock on the cliffs near Glenurra. Most of these sights may be seen to best advantage and most enjoyably by engaging a boat at Ballycastle. Another interesting sight is the Marl rock at Ballinglen.

(or Ceide - pronounced Kayja)

MANSIONS, CASTLES AND ESTATES OF IMPOSING CHARACTER

Location and brief description. Owner. Past associations. Libraries or art collections? Gardens? Open to visitors? Admission charge?

None.

TOPOGRAPHY cont'd.

rocky cliffs and caves and the grim cavities on the face of the headland are such as to command respect from the most intrepid. Almost in the centre of the headland is a large gaping hole of oval shape which must be upwards of thirty yards long and twenty wide. This is the "Puffing Hole" bearing the local name of Pellnaseantenna and standing on the verge, or as near as one may dare to step or crawl, an awesome sight is beheld. Sheer cliffs descend on every side for perhaps a hundred feet, maybe more and down under, the waters rush with a loud roar through the channel that has been eaten right through the head for a distance of half a mile. One entrance to the channel will be found in an immense cavern at the southwest side of the headland and from here, the channel runs in a northeasterly direction, emerging at the far side half a mile away. There are two similar but much smaller cavities near the southwest entrance. ~~An early writer has described the height of the cliffs here as three hundred feet and this figure may quite possibly be correct - I could not procure a contradictory estimate although on the Ordnance map it looks more like 100-200 feet.~~

About one hundred yards out to sea from the neck of land which is Dewpatrick, a rough perpendicular mass of rock rises from the ocean to a height approximating that of the mainland. This is Duabriste of which legendary accounts are recited, one being that St. Patrick was tormented by a tyrant named Goedruing who lived on Duabriste (then attached to the mainland) and that one day the saint prayed earnestly to God that a barrier of separation might be placed between them; on the following day it was found that ~~from the point~~ ^{the point} ~~to the~~ ^{to the} Duabriste was divided from the mainland and Goedruing perforce remained there until he perished. Obviously, Duabriste was at some time joined to Dewpatrick for although the sides of the rock are absolutely inaccessible, the remains of a stone building may be clearly seen thereon.

Duabriste and the rocks and caves of Dewpatrick are the havens of thousands of wild birds of many and varied types and from the headland, a view of the coast for many miles on either side may be obtained. The Stags of Breadhaven, many miles westwards may be easily recognised.

Starting again from Ballycastle, the road to the left at the bottom of the town is the Glen Road which leads for about four miles through a most pleasant valley, Ballinglen. Here, on the bank of the Ballinglen River, we find the ruin of an old Anglo-Norman castle and on the road side opposite the castle, a huge rock which towers over the road is discovered, on closer observation, to be of Marl composition. Under the rock is the house of Mr Neene, the landowner in whose front garden will be seen larger-than-life 'geese' and 'dogs' which have been made from the marl clay. Nearer Ballycastle, a giant boulder hangs dangerously over the road and seems as though it might topple over and on to the road at any moment. This is known as the "White Horse" and an old legend describes how St. Patrick threw this tremendous stone from the summit of Nephin mountain. The boulder must weigh a few tons.

A road which leads to the right below the town brings us to the strand. The strand is but three hundred yards or so in width, still it is a nice little bathing beach and with the surrounding rocks, presents quite a pretty scene. Crossing the strand, one may return by the road which leads further on to the old coastguard station, now converted into a convent for the Irish Sisters of Mercy, and the little stone pier.

One day will hardly be sufficient for even the most cursory examination of the many places of interest on the coast road between Ballycastle and Beldarg; the latter does not deserve to be described as a hamlet, comprising merely the post office, tavern, church and a few scattered farmhouses.

Opposite Glenurle School, four miles northwest, is another and even larger and more impressive "Puffing Hole", known as Pellnsearoidh (pronounced Powladarky). This is reached by a track leading seawards before the school is reached. This cavity is very extensive and a tunnel leads underground at the bottom, the water which flows through being discernible at the bottom of a second smaller hole, Pellnseithe. On the cliffs not far from here are remarkable arches formed in the rock and under which a man may pass with ease.

Two miles further on, the road winds dangerously close to the

TOPOGRAPHY CONT'D.

dangerous dark cliffs of Keedea. Needless to say, the best view of the cliffs will be had from a boat on the water outside but even from the brink, the sight is really surprising, especially since no indication of the presence of so rugged a scene will be found until this sharp turn is reached. Far below, probably well over two hundred feet down, the sea pounds madly against perpendicular walls of dark hard stone.

Continuing on this road, the next place of interest is Glenlessers, the prettiest little glen ~~of the many glens~~ in this district. Resembling Glenulra in some physical features, Glenlessers however is well wooded and planted with shrubs in great density. Here too, a little river flows onwards to the sea and most beautiful of all is the lovely reddish flower blossoming on the scrubbery throughout the glen. The road descends steeply and the sudden and unexpected view of the glen comes as a very pleasant surprise after the rough, uninteresting mile or so just passed through. At the little bridge in the hollow, the road curves in a hairpin bend and climbing the steep gradient, Glenlessers Lodge, well equipped and moderately appointed summer residence of Mr King, an English businessman, earns the approval of the critical eye.

Less than two miles further and we reach Belderg, which considering its prominent marking on the map, is disappointingly small; the village is made up of one large house which is the general store, public house and post office and probably the centre for other businesses as well, the Catholic church and a few other houses scattered about.

But Belderg is an important fishing centre and at the little harbour, reached at the end of a mile by the road turning right, the curraghs will be found drawn up out of the water and the nets spread out to dry.

Returning to the main road, we follow this far about three miles of the same peerly surfaced road and then turn left for Glencalry and Sralaghy. The former, another charmingly peaceful glen set in the heart of the mountains merits the few extra miles of travel but there is better to come for the waterfall of which so few knew, is well worthy of a more arduous journey. Pellaneas they call it and it may be reached by following the mountain road that winds upwards for another mile; to the right at the summit a huge rock has been cut in twain, probably by the action of the mountain stream which dashes through here, dropping in a wild cascade a height of over twenty feet. Pellaneas, Hele, or, in this case, pool of the cascade, may also be reached by following the banks of the stream, commencing at Glencalry Ledge (Guest House). This route, although a very charming one, is more difficult but the magnificent view that is missed by not climbing the mountain is compensated for by the start of pleased excitement which will be brought forth by the unexpected beauty of this scene in the midst of the bleak wild mountains. And then one may return by the mountain road. Turning a sharp angle of the river giant rocks tower to a height of eighty to one hundred feet on either side and in the centre the cascade tumbles impetuously on its way.

*Col'Brien
30/6/13.*