**Text Summary Balla**

* **Accommodation**

Just one hotel listed in the survey for Balla and Manulla, McEllin’s Hotel in Balla

* **Amenities and general information**

Three villages are included in the survey of Balla and Manulla parishes: Balla, Belcarra and Manulla.

The largest of these is Balla which had a population of 250 at the time. The amenities included a public library branch, one bank, the Arcadia Hall, churches, and schools including St. Louis Convent. There was no public water supply or sewerage system. Under the sub-heading of Important Public Buildings there is a reasonably detailed description of the Catholic and Protestant churches. Also, there is a description of the monument to P.W. Nally in which the surveyor transcribes the inscriptions on the monument.

Belcarra had a population of 100 in 1945. Again, there was no public water supply or sewerage system. There is a brief description of the Catholic and Protestant churches. At the time, the National School was housed in the hall as the original building had recently been burned.

Manulla is listed as having a population of 150 in 1945. The only amenities mentioned in the survey are the National School and the Post Office.

* **Antiquities**

This section section of the Balla and Manulla survey contains a comprehensive listing and description of the antiquities in the area. Included are:

* Doonamoona Castle: - The surveyor provides a detailed description of the castle ruins and also an account of the history of the castle from various sources. It is said to have been built by a member of the O’Kelly family around 1450/60. From there it passed to the de Burgo family. Others associated with the history of the castle included Richard Bingham, governor of Connaught, John Perrott, Lord Deputy and Tibbot na Long, son of Granuaile.
* Gweeshadan Castle: - Little known of history of this ruin. Some tradition says it was constructed by the de Burgos, other tradition by Bingham.
* Manulla Castle: - Nothing known of its history except tradition that it was owned by McEvilly until 1592
* Balla Round Tower: - Detailed physical description provided. No tradition associated with the tower.
* Church ruins in Elmhall: - Located in graveyard in Elmhal townland near Belcarra. Said to have been built by the Cuffe’s of Elmhall.
* Ruins of cruciform building in Belcarra: - ruins of former parish church
* Ruins of Elmhall: - once the residence of Lord Tyrawley. Brief history of the Cuffe family, (family name of Tyrawley), provided. Also mention of small house beside the Elmhall ruins, known locally as the “Naggin House” or the “Pleasure House”.
* Megalith at rear of priest’s house in Balla
* Prison ruins: - in Prison townland, hence the townland name. Said to have been the county jail in Elizabethan times before Bingham moved it to Castlebar. Tradition has it that Toby Burke or “Tibbot na Long” was governor of the prison for a time.
* Souterrains in Roslahan, Knockmore, Prison and Carrowjames.
* Caltragh in Drumadoon.
* **Curiosities and customs.**

Under the heading of “Curiosities” the surveyor includes the “Land League Cottage” in the townland of Drumnaslooeen near Balla; the “Fear Bréige” on top of a hill between Balla and Ballyvary; the castle-like dwelling on Balla main street and “Poll na Bacaille” or “hole of the Crozier”, also at Balla.

Under the heading of “Customs” there is a listing of superstitions, calendar customs and customs relating to marriages and funerals.

* **Historic sites**

There are four pages dedicated to descriptions of historic sites in Balla and Manulla. These include:

* Adam’s Well: - This is located in Manulla village and the surveyor recounts the traditions associating this site with St. Patrick. Other sites with Patrician associations are church ruins in Loona More townland, church site in Drum cemetery, Killerennan church remnants and Balla town itself was said to have been visited by the saint.
* Balla Abbey: - said to have been founded in the early 7th century by St. Cronan, locally known as St. Mochua. For hundreds of years it was a great centre of learning. It was plundered by Richard de Burgo in 1236. In the nineteenth century huge crowds used to attend a pattern to St. Mochua’s Well.
* Mr. J. Dempsey’s house in Loona More townland: - In 1879 this was the site where a proposed eviction of the then owner Anthony Dempsey was foiled by the Land League, which became a pivotal event in the land war.
* House of Dr. Murphy, Balla: - this house was used by Davitt and Parnell as a meeting place for the Land League.

Historical figures associated with Balla include P.W. Nally, Maxwell, author of “Wild sports of the West” who spent some time in Belcarra, and Dr. Dalton, author of “History of Ireland” who was C.C. for a time in Belcarra.

* **Mansions, castles, and estates.**

Sacred Heart College, Ballinafad. At the time of the survey this was run by the African Mission Fathers. It was built in 1827 and was the property of the Blake family until they donated it to the African Mission Fathers in 1908. The surveyor gives a brief account of the history of the Blake family from the early 17th century.

Lynch-Blosse estates: - the Lynch-Blosse family originally resided close to the St. Louis convent and when this was destroyed, the new residence formed part of the present convent. The history of the family is traced by the surveyor from their first arrival in the area until they left around 1912.

* **Natural features**

This section of the survey for Balla and Manulla describes the landscape of the area which according to the surveyor is “not one of scenic distinction”, apart from the views from the high ground between Ballyvary and Balla, the views from which are described in some detail. The only other physical features mentioned are a few small lakes and the Manulla river.

* **Sports and games**

Apart from angling on Carrowmore Lake and Lake Namindo the only sports or clubs listed in the survey are shooting, Balla G.A.A club, handball alleys at Balla and Belcarra, and interestingly, Balla Lawn Tennis Club.