



Ruins of Rathcormac Church



Extracts from Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary 1837

RATHCORMAC, a market and post-town, (formerly a parliamentary borough), and a parish, in the barony of BARRYMORE, county of CORK, and province of MUNSTER, 14 miles (N. E.) from Cork, and 111 (S. W.) from Dublin; containing 5143 inhabitants, of which number, 1574 are in the town, which is situated on the river Bride, and on the mail road from Cork to Dublin. It comprises one principal street with some smaller diverging from it, and consists of 244 houses, several of which are well built of stone. At the entrance from Cork are several picturesque cottages, erected by the Hon. Chas. L. Tonson. It is a constabulary police station, and the depot for the staff of the South Cork militia. The only manufacture carried on is that of leather by Mr. Wm. O'Connell, in whose tannery upwards of 10,000 hides, 32,500 calf-skins and 500 horse-skins are annually prepared for the markets of London, Bristol, Liverpool and Leeds. The manor mill, under the patent of Chas. II., has been rebuilt at an expense of £1500 by Mr. D. Cummins, and is capable of grinding 5000 bags of flour annually. A small market is held in the market-house on Saturday; and there are fairs, which are small and not well attended, on Aug. 12th, and Oct. 31st. Petty sessions are held on alternate Tuesdays, and the seneschal occasionally holds a manor court for the recovery of debts under 40s. The town was erected into a free borough by Chas. II., in 1682, and obtained the right of returning two members to the Irish parliament, the elective franchise being vested in the freeholders and inhabitants: it was disfranchised at the Union.

The parish comprises 12,984 statute acres, of which about one-sixth is mountain and bog. The soil is very varied in character; in the lower parts it is good and under an excellent system of cultivation, but not more than half of the parish is under tillage: upwards of 2000 acres are rough mountain pasture, moor or turbary. The uplands form part of the hilly tract called Nagle's mountains, which originate here and extend westward to the Bogra range. The eastern extremity of Nagle's mountains, about three miles north of Rathcormac, is very lofty and appears as if it had been cut down vertically from the summit to the base: on its highest point is a large conical pile of stones, called Cairn-Thierna, "The Lord's cairn or pile," so named, according to some, from having been the place where the Tierna or chieftain assembled his followers and chose their leaders; or, according to others, from having been a place of pagan worship to the sun. This range is entirely of clay-slate: in the lower grounds limestone is very abundant, particularly at Ballyvarry; much of the mountain tract, hitherto uncultivated, is reclaimable; and the bog, from which the turf has been entirely cut away in many places, might be brought into a profitable state at a small expense, as it lies remarkably well for drainage. There are several large and handsome seats: the principal are **Lisnagar** (*formerly owned by the Barry Family*), the elegant mansion of the Rt. Hon. Lord Riversdale, in the midst of a small but highly improved demesne, comprising a great variety of rural scenery within a limited compass; Kilshannick, the ancient mansion and winter residence of Edm. Roche, of Trabolgan, Esq.; Ballyglissane, of F. G. Reeves, Esq.; Shanbally, of John Welsh, Esq.; Bushy Park, of R. G. Campion, Esq.; Kildinon, the highly improved property of Edm. Roche, Esq.; the glebe, the residence of the Rev. W. Bourne; Ballinahina House, of Gerard Barry, Esq.; and Ballinahina Cottage, of the Rev. Dr. Barry, the parish priest of Fermoy for half a century, and for a long period the R. C. vicar-general of Cloyne. The living is a rectory, in the diocese of Cloyne, and in the patronage of the Rev. Percy Smith, of Headborough, county of Waterford: the tithes amount to £842, and there is a glebe-house, with a glebe of 31a. 1r. 34p. The church, an ancient building, was much enlarged and improved in 1828, by a loan of £250 from the late Board of First Fruits. There are nine schools in the parish: the parochial schools are supported by the rector and by a subscription of £10 per ann. from the Hon. George Colley; there is a school at Kildinan in connection with the Board of National Education, and another at Rathcormac, with accommodations for 400 pupils, built at a cost of £250; a Sunday school is under the superintendence of the Protestant clergymen: the remainder are private schools. The total number of children in the day schools is 320, of whom 197 are boys and 123 girls.