

Francis Townsend [125]



Clonakilty



Extract from Samuel Lewis' Topographical Directory 1837

CLONAKILTY, or **CLOUGHNAKILTY**, an incorporated sea-port, market and post-town (formerly a parliamentary borough), in the parish of KILGARIFF, East Division of the barony of EAST CARBERY, county of CORK, and province of MUNSTER, 25 1/2 miles (S. W. by S.) from Cork, and 151 1/2 miles (S. W.) from Dublin; containing 3807 inhabitants. The town is situated on the Gorar or Farla River, which falls into the bay close to the principal street, and in a pleasant fertile valley environed by hills of moderate elevation, which descend to the harbour. It consists of four principal streets diverging at right angles from the centre, and is well supplied with water from two public pumps erected by the Earl of Shannon. It has been much improved recently by the erection of several good houses and a spacious square, the centre of which is planted and laid out in walks, so as to form an agreeable promenade. Some excellent roads have also been made in the neighbourhood. A public library was established by a body of shareholders, in 1825: there are also three news-rooms and a lending library for the poor. Balls are occasionally given in the rooms over the market-house, during the sessions week. There are commodious infantry barracks for 4 officers and 68 privates. The staple trade of the town is the linen manufacture, which furnishes employment to 400 looms and 1000 persons, who manufacture to the amount of £250 or £300 weekly, but when the trade was in the height of its prosperity, the weekly sales were frequently £1000. The cotton-manufacture also employs about 40 looms. A spacious linen-hall was built some years since by the Earl of Shannon: it is attended by a sworn salesman and three deputies, by whom all the cloth brought to the hall is measured and marked. The corn trade is carried on chiefly by agents for the Cork merchants, who ship it here and receive coal as a return cargo. There are 14 lighters of 17 tons burden each regularly employed in raising and conveying sand to be used in the neighbourhood as manure. The harbour is only fit for small vessels, the channel being extremely narrow and dangerous, and having at the entrance a bar, over which vessels above 100 tons can only pass at high spring tides: large vessels, therefore, discharge their cargoes at Ring, about a mile below the town. It is much used as a safety harbour by the small craft for several miles along the coast. The market is held on Friday, and is amply supplied with good and cheap provisions; and three fairs are held under the charter on April 5th, Oct. 10th, and Nov. 12th, and two subsequently established on June 1st and Aug. 1st, all for cattle, sheep, and pigs; the Oct. and Nov. fairs are noted for a large supply of turkeys and fowls. A spacious market-house has been built, at an expense of £600; and shambles were erected in 1833, by the corporation, on ground let rent-free by the Earl of Shannon, who is proprietor of the borough. A chief constabulary police force has been stationed here.

By the charter of Jas. I. the inhabitants were incorporated under the designation of the "Sovereign, Free Burgesses, and Commonalty of the Borough of Cloughnakilty;" and Sir Richard Boyle was constituted lord of the town, with power to appoint several of the officers, and to a certain extent to superintend the affairs of the corporation, which was to consist of a sovereign and not less than 13 nor more than 24 burgesses, assisted by a serjeant-at-mace, three constables, a toll-collector, and weighmaster. The sovereign is annually elected by the lord of the town out of three burgesses chosen by the corporation, and the recorder is also appointed by him. Vacancies among the burgesses are filled up by themselves from among the freemen, who are admitted solely by favour of the corporation. The sovereign and recorder are justices of the peace within the borough, the limits of which extend for a mile and a half in every direction from a point nearly in the centre of the town, called the Old Chapel. The charter conferred the right of sending two members to the Irish parliament, which it continued to exercise till the Union, when the £15,000 awarded as compensation for its disfranchisement was paid to the Earl of Shannon, a descendant of Sir Richard Boyle. The sovereign and recorder were empowered to hold a court of record, for the recovery of debts and the determination of all pleas to the amount of £20 late currency; but since the passing of the act limiting the power of arrest to sums exceeding £20, it has been discontinued. A manorial court is held every third Wednesday by a seneschal appointed by the Earl of Shannon, which takes cognizance of debts and pleas not exceeding 40s.; and the sovereign and recorder hold courts of petty session in the market-house, every Monday. Petty sessions are also held every Thursday by the county magistrates; and the general quarter sessions for the West Riding of the county are held here in July. The county court-house is a neat edifice of hewn stone, ornamented with a pediment and cornice supported by two broad pilasters, between which is a handsome Venetian window. Connected with it is a bridewell, and both were erected at the expense of the county.

The parish church of Kilgariff is situated in the town, on an eminence to the north of the main street: it is a plain edifice, with a square tower at the west end, and was rebuilt in 1818, at an expense of £1300, of which £500 was a loan from the late Board of First Fruits, and the remainder was contributed by the Earl of Shannon and the Rev. H. Townsend (*Rev Horatio Townsend [5D00]*). A classical school was established in 1808, under the patronage of the Earl of Shannon, who has assigned a large and handsome house, with land, for the residence of the master: there are more than 60 boys on the establishment. A dispensary, a house of industry, and a benevolent society have been established, which have been found highly beneficial, and are liberally supported by the Earl of Shannon and the inhabitants generally. The late Michael Collins, D. D., R. C. Bishop of Cloyne and Ross, who was author of several tracts on the state of Ireland, and was examined before a committee of the House of Commons, in 1825, was a native of this place. About a mile north of the town is a tolerably perfect druidical temple, some of the stones of which are nearly as large as those of Stonehenge; the centre stone of the circle is very large, and is composed of one mass of white quartz.