

John Townsend [300]



Ruins of Rathcormac Church



Clonakilty



Extracts from Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary 1837

CLONAKILTY, or **CLOUGHNAKILTY**, an incorporated sea-port, market and post-town (formerly a parliamentary borough), in the parish of **KILGARRIFFE**, 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.

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 turbarry. 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.

Convent - Mount Shannon - Scartagh Cottage

We maintain our position and turn our sights left from Deasy's Quay and Shipyard and observe the mass of buildings on the hill. This is the Convent of Mercy built on the grounds of Scartagh Cottage. The Sisters of Mercy took up residence here on 30th April, 1856. Fr. Morgan Madden assembled eight hundred children in the old parish church, consecrated them to Mary Immaculate and led them to the convent for the opening of the new school on May 19th, 1856. Before this time the Clonakilty School of Industry for girls, run by Miss Catherine Donovan, catered for the poor of the town and district. Miss Donovan clashed with the Rev. Morgan Madden when she refused to have her multi denominational school turned into a Catholic school only. Following this altercation Fr. Madden invited the Sisters of Mercy from Kinsale to set up in the town.

The buildings you see today contain a chapel, convent, boarding school, day school for infants, primary and post primary girl students, a theatre and sports hall. This is all far removed from the days of **Scartagh Cottage**, and then known as **Mount Shannon**. It was once the residence of the **Townsend family** who were associated with the corporation. In 1783 the Townsends leased the property to a **Dr William Callanan** a well known doctor, prosperous merchant and noted United Irish leader in the 1798 period. A noted Protestant champion of Catholic emancipation, William Todd Jones spent eight months in this house in 1802/3 as a guest of Dr. Callanan. On the morning of Robert Emmets ill-fated rising in Dublin on 23rd July, 1803, Callanan and Todd Jones were arrested and conveyed to Cork jail along with a number of others.

Alfred Elmore, a noted artist was born in this house on 18th June 1815, his mother being Dr. Callanan's daughter and his father was Dr. John Richard Elmore, a surgeon who retired from the British Army to Clonakilty. Dr. Elmore did much to develop the linen industry in Clonakilty and his factory near Mill St was the largest in Munster.