

BALLINGARRY:

A market and post-town, and a parish, in the barony of Upper Connelloe, 16 miles (S.W. by S.) from Limerick, and 111 ½ miles (S.W. by W.) from Dublin; containing 8651 inhabitants, of which number, 1685 are in the town. Several religious houses appear to have been founded here at a very early period, and have been greatly confounded with each other by various writers. The earliest of which any account is preserved is one founded by Donough Carbrae O'Brien, for Conventual Franciscans, a little eastward of the town, but generally attributed to Fitzgerald, Lord of Clenlis; the walls, which are tolerably perfect, and a beautiful square tower, are still remaining. A preceptory of Knights Templars was founded in 1172, which, after the suppression of that order in 1304, was granted to the Knights Hospitallers; and in the immediate vicinity was a Cistercian abbey, founded by the Fitzgeralds, in 1198, and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, which afterwards became a cell to the abbey of Corcomroe; it was also called Kilson, and from the similarity of the name has often been mistaken for the abbey of Kilshane. There was also a convent for sisters of the order of St. Augustine, of which no vestiges can be traced. The town is situated on the road from Rathkeale to Charleville, and in a pleasing and sheltered valley which opens towards the west; it consists of one long irregular street and several smaller, and contains 276 houses, of which the greater number are small but tolerably well built. A building called the Turret was erected by a branch of the De Lacy family, and repaired by Colonel O'Dell in 1683, as appears by a stone in the chimney; it was lately the residence of Major O'Dell. Near the town are the Fort-William flour-mills, the property of Mrs. Graves; and three miles to the east are the Kilmore flour-mills, the property of John Tuthill, Esq., of Kilmore House, adjacent to which is a good bridge, built by his grandfather. The markets are on Tuesday and Friday, chiefly for the sale of vegetables; there is no market-house, and the public scales are in the open street. Fairs are held on Easter-Monday, Whit-Monday, 4 July, and 5 December, chiefly for the sale of horses, horned cattle, and pigs. Here is a station of the constabulary police; and petty sessions are held every Saturday.

The parish comprises 16,219 ½ statute acres, as apportioned under the tithe act, and valued at £16,013 per annum. About 100 acres are common lands; and of the remainder, a large proportion is good arable land under an improved state of agriculture, but the greater portion is pasture; there is scarcely any bog or waste land. The soil is very variable, in some parts remarkably fertile, and in others rocky, sterile, and cold; it is for the greater part based on a substratum of silicious grit rising from the limestone vales into hills of considerable elevation in three different parts of the parish. To the south-west of the town rises the hill of Kilnamona, on which is a lake, supposed to have been formed by the excavation of a coal mine, and called Lough-na-Gual, or 'the Lake of Coal'. Directly opposite is Knockfiernha, which commands a most extensive prospect. The principal seats are Ballyno Cox, the handsome residence of W. Cox, Esq.; Glenwilliam Castle, of W. H. Massey, Esq.; Ballino Kane, of W. Scanlan, Esq.; The Grove, of Major O'Dell; Odell Ville, of T.A. O'Dell, Esq.; Rossmore, of Captain J. W. Skelton; Mount Brown, of J. S. Brown, Esq.; Heathfield, of E. Lloyd, Esq.; Fort-William, of T. O'Dell, Esq.; Liskennett, of R. K. Sheehy, Esq.; Woodstock, of Richard D. Graves, Esq.; Ash Grove, of D. D. Power, Esq.; Frankfort, of R. Standish, Esq.; the Glebe, of the Rev. T. Gibbings; Ballynail, of J. Cox, Esq.; Kilbeg, of H. Scanlan, Esq.; and Spring Mount, of E. Fitzgerald, Esq.

There are many neat villas in the parish. The living is a rectory and vicarage, in the diocese of Limerick, and in the patronage of the Earl of Cork: the tithes amount to £900. The church, a small but very neat edifice in the early English style, with a lofty square tower, was built in 1820. The glebe-house was built by aid of a loan of £500 from the Board of First Fruits, in 182. The R.C. parish is co-extensive with that of the Established Church; there are three chapels, one in the town, one near Knockfiernha, and one near the south-eastern extremity of the parish. The parochial school for male and female children is aided by the rector, who provides the school-house rent-free; and there are eight pay schools, in which are about 420 children. A dispensary is supported by subscriptions. Adjoining the town are the remains of a very beautiful castle, of which the original name and the history are unknown; it is now called Parson's Castle, having been, previously to the erection of the glebe-house, the residence of the rector. About a mile to the north are the ruins of Lisamoota castle, and in the Grove demesne are those of Bonistoe (now commonly called Woodstock) castle. Within the limits of the parish are slight traces of other castles and of two small churches; on the summit of Lisduan hill are the remains of Jackson's Turret; and on Knockfiernha is a conical pile raised on the spot where stood the ancient temple of Stuahraicin.