

ABBAYFEALE:

A parish, in the Glenquin Division of the barony of Upper Connello, 10 miles (W. by S.) from Newcastle, on the mail coach road from Limerick to Tralee; containing 4242 inhabitants, of which number, 607 are in the village. This place obviously derives its name from a Cistercian abbey founded here, in 1188, by Brien O'Brien, and from its situation on the river Feale: the abbey, in 1209, became a cell to that of Monasternanagh, or Nenay, in the barony of Pubblebrien. The village, situated in a wild mountainous district, was almost inaccessible, but since the construction of the new lines of road, great alterations have taken place; great improvements in the condition of the people has resulted from the facilities thus afforded of taking their little produce to market; and the inhabitants are now industriously and profitably employed. Here is a large and commodious hotel, and some respectable houses, but the greater number are thatched cabins. The village has a penny post dependent on Newcastle, and is a constabulary police station. Fairs are held on 29 June and 24 September, chiefly for cattle, sheep, and pigs. The parish comprises 17,659 statute acres, as apportioned under the tithe act, of which 1620 acres are arable, 12,800 pasture, and about 3,500 waste land and bog; a considerable portion of the waste land is gradually being brought into cultivation, and the system of agriculture is steadily improving. From long previous neglect, the lands in many parts have become marshy and cold, and in some places are covered to the depth of several feet with a loose turbary, which, in the total absence of timber, affords excellent fuel, of which great quantities are sent to Newcastle, whence limestone is brought in return and is burnt with coal of indifferent quality procured here for that purpose only. The farms have generally large dairies, and a considerable quantity of butter is sent to Cork and Limerick. On the great line of road from Limerick to Tralee is Wellesley bridge, a handsome structure, about a mile and a half to the west of the village; and at the same distance to the east is Goulburn bridge. The new line of road leading through the heart of the mountains from Abbeyfeale to Glin, a distance of 12 miles, was opened after the spring assizes of 1836, previously to which there was scarcely any possibility of access to this secluded district, which for that reason was, in the year 1822, selected as their head-quarters by the Rockites, who dated their proclamations 'From our camp in Abbeyfeale'. The living is a vicarage, in the diocese of Limerick, and in the patronage of Lord Southwell, during whose legal incapacity the Crown presents; the rectory is impropriate in Richard Ellis and Thomas G. Bateman, Esqrs. The tithes amount to £320, payable to the impropiators; the clerical duties of the parish are performed by the curate of an adjoining parish, who is paid by Lord Southwell. The church, a small edifice in the early English style, with a lofty square tower, was erected near the village in 1812, for which the late Board of First Fruits gave £800. There is neither glebe-house nor glebe. The R.C. parish is co-extensive with that of the Established Church; the chapel, situated in the village was erected on the site of the ancient monastery, a small portion of which is incorporated with it. There are four pay schools, in which are about 100 boys and 50 girls. On the bank of the river, one mile from the village, are the ruins of Purt Castle, built by a branch of the Geraldine family, to command the pass of the Feale; it is strongly built, and occupies a bold situation.