

SHANAGOLDEN:

A post-town and parish, in the Shanid Division of the barony of Lower Connello, 20 miles (W.) from Limerick, and 116 (W.S. W.) from Dublin, on the road from Rathkeale to Listowel; containing, in 1831, 3213 inhabitants, of which number, 847 were in the town, the population of which has since that time considerably increased. The parish comprises 3663 statute acres, as applotted under the tithe act; about two-thirds are under cultivation, producing abundant crops of corn, potatoes, and clover, the rest being rough pasture: the land is remarkably fertile, particularly near the town, and in some places tolerably well cultivated. The town consists of a long irregular street, comprising 150 houses, of which three only are slated, the remainder being thatched, and all are small and ill-built. It is a constabulary police station; and petty sessions are held on alternate Mondays. Fairs take place on the Wednesday after Trinity Sunday, and on 4 September, chiefly for cattle and pigs. A new line of road from the town joins the mail road on the banks of the Shannon, at Robertstown, opening a ready communication with the county of Kerry. The substratum in and around the town is limestone, of which blocks of a very large size are procured for cutting into gate-posts, pillars, slabs, etc., but are all sent away, as no attempt has been made to cut or work them on the spot. Black and grey marble of very superior quality are extensively found throughout the lower part of the parish, but are only worked for repairing the roads, or fencing the fields. The town and the surrounding lands are principally the property of the Rt Hon. T. Spring Rice, Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose seat is about three miles distant. Close adjoining the town is Shanagolden House, the elegant residence of the Rev. G. Vincent; and the glebe-house, more than a mile distant from the church, is at present occupied by J. Fitzgerald, Esq.

The living is a rectory and vicarage, in the diocese of Limerick; the rectory forms the corps of the precentorship of the cathedral of Limerick, and the vicarage is in the patronage of the precentor. The tithes amount to £200, one-third of which is payable to the vicar, and the remainder to the precentor. The glebe-house was erected by aid of a gift of £400 and a loan of £232, in 1813, from the late Board of First Fruits: the glebe comprises 11 ½ acres, being composed of three portions, one near the church, another near the little village called Barracks, and the third where the glebe-house stands; the last was purchased by the same Board. The church is a large and handsome edifice, apparently very old; the chancel being in ruins, the nave was fitted up for divine service, having been roofed and a lofty square tower built, in 1815, by aid of a loan of £450 from the before-mentioned Board; the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have recently granted £101 for its repair. In the R. C. divisions this parish is the head of a union or district, comprising the parishes of Shanagolden, Kilmoylan, and Robertstown; the chapel is a large plain edifice, situated on a hill to the east of the town. There are two mathematical male schools for adults, in which are about 25 pupils; and there are 4 private schools, in which are about 150 children. About a mile south from the town, in the parish of Kilmoylan, is Shanid castle, one of the most impregnable of those possessed by the Earls of Desmond, and from which they took their war cry of Shanid-a-boo: this castle, which gives name to a baronial division of the county, occupies the top of a steep hill, and is surrounded by a strong rampart and fosse. Not far distant is a very extensive circular fort, divided by earthworks into four compartments; but these subdivisions appear to

be of later date than the original formation of the fort. A mile north from the town is Knockpatrick, said to be the highest land in the county, whence the surrounding country is seen stretching in extensive perspective, with the majestic course of the Shannon through its numerous windings to the sea. On the summit are the remains, held in great veneration, of an old church, supposed to have been consecrated by St. Patrick, whose chair is shown in an adjoining field, composed of five rude unhewn stones; and not far distant is a well, dedicated to him, of which various legends are related: the side walls of this venerable edifice are nearly entire, though the east and west gables have entirely disappeared, and the space of the western wall is occupied by a large and curious tomb belonging to the families of Bourke and Griffin. From this hill are extensive and interesting views, embracing the high grounds of the counties of Tipperary, Galway, Cork, and Kerry, with the rich lands of Clare and Limerick in the foreground, and the towns of Limerick and Ennis rising beyond the expanded waters of the Shannon.