

## **NEWCASTLE:**

A market and post-town, and a parish, in the Glenquin Division of the barony of Upper Connello, 20 miles (S.W.) from Limerick, on the mail road to Killarney and Tralee, and 114 (S.W.) from Dublin; containing 4436 inhabitants, of which number, 2908 are in the town. This place, anciently called Castle-Roe, derived both its origin and name from the erection of a castle here by the Knights Templars, in 1184, round which, in process of time, a town was formed that was fortified, and ultimately obtained a charter of incorporation. After the suppression of the order, it lapsed to the crown, and afterwards became the property of the Geraldines, and suffered severely in the numerous vicissitudes of fortune which that powerful family underwent. During the reign of Elizabeth three battles were fought near the town. On the death of the great Earl of Desmond, the castle with the surrounding lands escheated to the Queen, who, by patent, dated 1591, granted it to Sir William Courtenay, with instructions to plant English settlers on it. It is probably that this condition was not fulfilled, as Sir William and his son were afterwards dispossessed, and a regrant of the property was made, in 1638, to Sir George Courtenay, from whom the estates have descended to the Earl of Devon, the present proprietor. The town is situated on a small stream called the Arra, which falls into the Deel about a mile eastward. It comprises four principal streets and a spacious square, the north side of which is chiefly occupied by an infantry barrack; on the south are the parish church and the castle, and the east and west sides are formed by lines of large and handsome houses. On the south side of the river, which here separates the parish from that of Monegay, are the shambles, a neat and commodious structure. A fever hospital and dispensary, which stands on an eminence near the town, has accommodations for 15 intern patients. Courts leet and baron are held by the seneschal of the manor, and petty sessions for the district are held every Friday. The bridewell contains two day-rooms, two airing-yards, and four cells. The town is a chief constabulary police station. The patent under which markets are held names Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday; but the last only is in use. Fairs are held on 1 April, 3 May, 12 July, 20 August, 1 October, and 10 December, for the sale of cattle, agricultural implements, and linen and woollen cloth. There are several establishments in the town for dyeing woollens, also a large ale and beer brewery, and a great number of shoe and brogue makers, all in full employment, as is also a bleaching establishment in the immediate vicinity, which occupies 8 acres and gives work to a number of men. Several new lines of road, recently opened, have tended greatly to improve the entrances into the town, and other proposed improvements are expected to advance its increasing prosperity. A canal from the town to the Shannon, a distance of 14 miles, could be cut at a small expense, and would tend much to its commercial advantage, as its distance from any great market is upwards of 20 miles.

The parish comprises 5008 statute acres, as apportioned under the tithe act. The soil is extremely fertile, with the exception of about 300 acres of mountain, which afford excellent pasture for young cattle. The land is in a high state of cultivation, producing abundant crops chiefly of wheat, oats, and potatoes, with some barley and clover: much of it is occupied in dairy farms and in the pasturing of large numbers of cattle. The fertile part is based on limestone, and the mountain contains coal in great abundance. Of five strata in which this mineral is found, the two upper only are worked; the lower three, which are said to be much the best, seeming to be but little

known: the culm which is raised is chiefly used for burning lime; turf, drawn from the mountains on the west, being generally preferred for fuel. Excellent silicious grit, used for the roads, is found on the mountain. Iron-stone and fire-clay are also abundant, but not used. Coarse linen and woollen cloths, stuffs and friezes are manufactured to some extent in the surrounding district. The scenery throughout the parish is rich, varied, extremely picturesque, and embellished with numerous elegant mansions and villas: the principal of these in the vicinity of the town are Courtenay Castle, the property of the Earl of Devon; Springfield Castle, the residence of Lord Muskerry; Glanduff Castle, of R. J. Stevelly, Esq.; Knockaderry House, of T. D'Arcy Evans, Esq.; Cahirmoyle, of W. S. O'Brien, Esq.; Mount Plummer, of B. Plummer, Esq.; Chesterfield, of Major Sullivan; Heathfield, of Edward Lloyd, Esq.; Courtenay Castle, of A. Furlong, Esq.; Castleview, of Thomas Locke, Esq.; Ringwood Lodge, of Joseph Furlong, Esq.; Churchtown, of N. D'Arcy, Esq.; Ashgrove, of J. W. Upton, Esq.; and Glanaster, of J. U. Upton, Esq.

The living is a rectory and vicarage, in the diocese of Limerick, episcopally united from time immemorial to the rectory and vicarage of Monegay, and in the patronage of the Earl of Devon: the tithes amount to £225, and of the whole union to £725. The glebe of this parish comprises 33 acres, in three detached portions; that of Monegay is 53 acres, all excellent land. The church, built in 1777 at the sole expense of William, second Viscount Courtenay, is situated in the square adjoining the Templars' Castle, and is a handsome structure, in the early English style, with a square embattled tower, surmounted by pinnacles: in it are two handsome monuments of the Locke family: the burial-ground, which is at a short distance from the town, has the remains of the old church within its enclosure. In the R. C. divisions the parish is the head of a union or district, comprising also parts of Monegay and Killeedy; the chapel, a handsome building of hewn stone, was erected in 1828, by subscription, towards which the Earl of Devon, who also gave the ground for its site, contributed £400: it is situated in the parish of Monegay. The Courtenay school, immediately adjoining the town, is of ancient foundation, but the house was rebuilt in 1826; it now affords accommodation for 260 boys and an equal number of girls, with a residence for the master and mistress. The Earl of Devon contributed two-thirds of the outlay for building, and the institution is maintained wholly at his expense: it is free for all the poor children of the town and neighbourhood. There are other schools in the parish, supported by subscription, and 11 private schools, in which are about 200 boys and 100 girls. The ruins of the old castle are very extensive, and two of its towers, one square, the other round, are in a good state of preservation, as are the tower and banqueting-house near the church; many parts of its extensive range of arched vaults are also perfect. In the Castle demesne is a chalybeate spring, formerly in considerable repute, and protected by a covered building which still exists. Shells and other marine deposits are frequently found in the limestone rocks, some of them in a very perfect state.