

CROOM:

A post-town and parish, partly in the barony of Pubblebrien, but chiefly in that of Coshma, 9 miles (S. by W.) from Limerick, and 105 1/4 (S.W.) from Dublin; containing 6978 inhabitants, of which number, 1268 are in the town. The origin of the town is involved in mystery: it is supposed to have been a place of considerable importance from a very remote period, but the earliest intimation of it is the erection of a castle by Dermot O'Donovan, in the reign of King John, to protect the ford or pass of the river, and also to secure that portion of the present barony of Coshma which the O'Donovans had then lately taken from the Mac Eneirys, and which King John, when Earl of Morton, is said to have confirmed to O'Donovan. The O'Donovans having been driven hence into the western district of the county of Cork, this castle became the property of the Earl of Kildare, who rebuilt it in a superior manner, and flanked it by four circular towers, making it his chief seat and stronghold; and from it derived the war cry of 'Crom-a-boo', which is still the motto of the Dukes of Leinster, the descendents of the Earls of Kildare. During successive wars it was several times attacked by the English. In the reign of Elizabeth, the Geraldines were three times besieged in the castle of Croom; the last time was in 1600, when the Lord-President Carew, at the head of 1500 men, attacked the castle, which had a powerful garrison under its constable, the celebrated Pierce Lacy, who made his escape in the night, and in the morning the fortress was surrendered. In 1610, the castle and manor of Croom were restored by James 1st. to the Fitzgeralds, who, however, again forfeited it by joining in the insurrection of 1641; in 1678, Charles 2nd. granted both to the Duke of Richmond, who resided in the castle for several years. In 1691, it was garrisoned by the adherents of James 2nd., but on the approach of the forces of William 3rd. they abandoned the fortress, and took refuge in Limerick: after which it remained unoccupied till recently rebuilt by John Croker, Esq., its present proprietor. The town is situated on the eastern bank of the River Mague over which is a handsome bridge of six arches, and on the new road from Limerick to Charleville, which, when completed, will be the most advantageous line from Limerick to Cork: it comprises two principal streets with smaller ones branching from them, and contains 213 houses. This is a constabulary police station; petty sessions are held in the town every Monday; and fairs on 3 May, 22 June, 1 September, and 8 December.

The parish contains 13, 003 statute acres, as apportioned under the tithe act, the estimated rental being £15, 872: the land is in general remarkably good, and under excellent cultivation. The soil is based on a substratum of limestone, and Tory hill affords one of the best specimens of disintegration to be found in Ireland. At Carass, on the River Mague, is a very powerful flour-mill, fitted up in a superior style, with machinery of the most improved construction, the property of D. Roche, Esq.; and close adjoining the bridge of Croom is another large mill, belonging to H. Lyons, Esq. In addition to the interesting castle, the residences of the gentry in the parish are Carass, of D. Roche, Esq.; Toureen, of J. D. Lyons, Esq., D. L.; Croom House, the property of Mr. Lyons; Carass Court, of Jeffrey Browning, Esq.; Glen-Bevan, of J. Bevan, Esq.; Cherry Grove, of J. Barry, Esq.; Bellevue, of Massy Yielding, Esq.; Clorane, a fine old house belonging to the Hunt family; Newborough, of C. Wilson, Esq.; the glebe-house, of the Rev. E. Croker, rector of the parish; and Tory Hill, of the Rev. L. Harnett; besides several villas, cottages, and substantial farm-houses.

The living is a rectory and vicarage, in the diocese of Limerick, and in the patronage of J. Croker, Esq., of Ballynagard. It is called one parish, but appears to embrace the old parishes of Croom, Dunaman, Dunkip, and Dullas, all of which are contiguous to Croom and near Patrick's Well: five miles distant are the townlands of Clonana, Clonduff, Lorriga, Ballycurrane, and Lisaleen, which anciently formed the parish of Clonana, though now considered part of that of Croom. The tithes amount to £1200. The glebe-house is a handsome edifice, erected on the new glebe, in 1813, by aid of a gift of £100 and a loan of £800 from the late Board of First Fruits. The glebe comprises ten acres of excellent land, half a mile from the church; it was given by Mr. Lyons in lieu of the old glebe adjoining the church, now part of the demesne of Croom House. The church stands on the western bank of the River Maigue, and is a small neat edifice, in the early English style of architecture, with a square tower: it appears to have been erected on the site of a larger building, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have recently granted £151.2.1. for its repair. In the R.C. divisions the parish is the head of a union or district, comprising the parishes of Croom, Anhid, Dunaman, Carrigran, and Dysert; and containing two chapels one at Croom, the other at Ballynabannogue; the former, situated near the church, is a spacious plain cruciform edifice. There is a small place of worship for Wesleyan Methodists; also a dispensary. There are four private schools, in which about 280 boys and 120 girls are educated. Close to the town are extensive remains of the castle of the O'Donovans; and not far distant are fragments of the old church. Within the parish are ruins of the churches of Dunaman, Dunkip, and Clonana, also of the castle of Tullyvin; besides the ruins of a chapel in the grounds of Carass, built by Lord Carbery as a domestic place of worship, and situated close on the bank of the river, at the foot of a rustic bridge. The beautiful round tower of Carrigreen, is a mile north-west from Croom, in the parish of Dysert; and the ruins of the abbey of Nenagh or Maig, generally called Monasternenagh, stands two miles eastward: a more detailed description of each will be found in the articles on those places.