

I.T.A. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL SURVEY

NATURAL FEATURES, ANTIQUITIES,
HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS, ETC.BARONY OF ClannoreTOWN OR VILLAGE Balla PARISH Balla a Manulla COUNTY Mayo

TOPOGRAPHY

Brief description of outstanding scenic views in the district, natural attractions, or unusual topographical features.

This is a large parish. Its area is 29 sq. miles, 618 acres, 2 woods and 18 up-patches, of which 557 ac. 35 patches are under water. It is situated some 11 miles from Castlebar (W.S.W.), 4 from Rallyway (N), 5 from Kiltinagh (E), and 6 from Cleenacree (S.E.).

In general, the area is not one of scenic distinction, being mainly featured by grass lands, timbered belts, lakelets, and village - the terrain is rolling - low level - except to the north where there is a semi-mountain stretch running N/S for a few miles and roughly bisecting the north-west end of the parish.

GEOLOGY

(CONTD. ON PAGE 2.)

Brief notes on unusual geological features, such as caves, eskers, etc.

The area is completely of limestone except for a small hill range to the north (highest point 648') which is of the millstone, grit and shale (carboniferous) series. The land is suited, for the most part, to cultivation and the parish is almost fully an agricultural one.

MANSIONS, CASTLES AND ESTATES

OF IMPOSING CHARACTER

Location and brief description. Owner. Past associations. Libraries or art collections? Gardens? Open to visitors? Admission charge?

Sacred Heart College at Ballinacree situated some 3 1/2 M. (by road) S.W. of Balla. College is conducted by the African Mission Fathers. Houses annually about 40 students who, having obtained their Intermediate Certs., are sent to main local house for educational and religious completion before entering the mission fields of Nigeria and Liberia.

The building is a rectangular, three-story edifice. Apart from a modern wing added in 1932 the construction is of brown stone. No ornamental featuring. Total size of college now is perhaps 90' x 40'.

With the house goes about 400 acres of grass lands, village, and timbered belts. There are no libraries, art collections etc.

This was the residence of the Blake family from the year 1827 to 1908 in which year it was donated to the African Mission by its last owner General Blake. Later a Count of the Holy See. The Blake family is a noble one.

Highest peak of this pseudo mountain range is that of the hill known as "Yeas bridge", 648 ft., and deriving its name from an effigy of a man set up in rough fashion with stones, on its crest. The hill lies not far distant from the main Ballyvaughan/Balla road on its western side. From its top there is a west-ward view of (N) the Neptun range with Neptun head predominant, Lough Cullen, the Mayo Valley and the Foxford Hills; (N.W.) the Yough hills (and mountains beyond in their outline) their slopes speckled with the white of limestone - in between are many small water stretches, wooded patches, and undulating country. (W) the conical head of Coagh Patrick dominates not only its immediate peaks but the whole vista; (S.W) the Partay mountains (S) the woods of Balla, and beyond, the plains of Mayo - the view goes to the horizon. (S.E.) Kelling country; (E) in near view the ^{western} slopes of Slieve Haven with the Lough namino (in parish) in the valley below. Just beneath the "Yeas bridge" to the west is Loughnamore lake - the hills beside the vantage point slope steeply to the water's edge and the tilled fields when viewed from the Manulla side, appear to be standing on edge.

The straggling village of Manulla lies to the south-west of "Yeas bridge" the Manulla River flows ^{to the west of the village} north to the Carlebar River. Two and a half miles south is the tiny village of Belcassa on the Manulla R. banks. Walshpool Lough is to the east. A few miles further south-west the woods of Ballinfad and Bridgemount and a few older castle ruins in the vicinity, lend pleasant contrast to the local scene. A pair of lakes, Meekham's L. and Lillmore L., smallish, lie between Ballinfad and Balla, north east of it.

Balla is always pronounced 'bal' (a as in 'pal'). Officially its Irish equivalent is 'ball Shuinn' = "beautiful spot" and while the adjective may overstate somewhat - the town, with its western background of fine timber forming its town park, is the most attractive local scene in the area. Its fine open street gave rise to the colloquialism "as broad as Balla". Seen from the top of the hill to the east at Ballynacoughlin - it presents a pleasant picture - woods meet opening the street - the Round Tower and next church and houses give scenic contrast.