

## ANTIQUITIES

*Abbeys, Castles, Fortresses, Round Towers, Early Churches, Sculptured Crosses, Stone Circles, Ogham Stones, Cairns, Souterrans, Pillar Stones, Cromlechs, Forts, Raths, Moats, Tumuli or ancient monuments of any kind. Exact location of each with short description, noting condition, etc. Relate local legend or tradition associated with building or object. State if in charge of Office of Public Works. Right of way to public? Admission charge (if any). Name and address of caretaker, or where key is kept.*

### Old church at Ardagh.

The ruins of an old stone church occupy a very conspicuous site in the graveyard at Ardagh; situated on a hilltop in the southern end of the parish, the ruins are visible for some miles around.

The earliest record of the ancient church, to which Saint Suanagh gave his name, is to be found in an epistle issued by Pope Innocent III on March 30th, 1193, confirming the churches of the diocese to the then Bishop of Killala, Donnchada O Seoda and in which it is described as "Ardachad Suanagh". It was next ~~first~~ mentioned in an ecclesiastical taxation dated 27th August 1306. It is thought that this was a chapel of ease to some local monastery or Abbey.

The church appears to have been about forty feet long, but of the walls, only the southern gable remains standing. The church, being within the graveyard, is in the charge of the Board of Health and the caretaker, Mr Patrick Walsh, lives in the vicinity. There is a right of way for the public and the more simple route from Ballina is that by the Crossmolina road as far as Ardagh National Schools (three miles), turning left here, the graveyard is about one and a half miles distant. This route, though somewhat roundabout, is the least complicated.

### Old church at Castle Gore.

Just inside the main entrance gate of the demesne are to be seen the roofless walls of a pretentious Episcopal church which was never completed and in which, according to local tradition, but one service was ever held. It is said that during the struggle for Catholic emancipation this church was erected by the then occupant of the castle, Colonel Caffe, who, aspiring to parliamentary honours, was publicly taunted by Daniel O'Connell as to his questionable parentage. Smarting under the insult, Caffe cut himself off from social intercourse, went into retirement and had this church erected for private use. The public are free to inspect the church which is about one and a half miles distant from Ardagh graveyard and may be reached from there by a by-road or from Ballina by turning right when half way between Ardagh N.S. and graveyard.

### Gortogher old church.

At Gortogher, townland adjoining Ardagh, were the ruins of another ancient church. I failed to trace the ruin, concerning which there is no local knowledge or tradition.

Within a few hundred yards of the old church at Ardagh, are some peculiar groupings of stones, locally referred to as "Diarmuid and Grainne's Bed" and similarly described in the old Ordnance Survey Sheet.

One group which covers an area of approximately ten feet by eight, consists of about a dozen big stones arranged in rough rectangular fashion, almost in the shape of a grave and resembling a bed. There is a gap in one side and it is possible that some stones were removed from here. On the opposite side, a flat boulder rests on the wall of the "bed", giving an impression of a cromlech and again, at what might be termed the head of the "bed", another larger stone rests on several smaller stones and this seems a likely cromlech.

A few feet off is a huge, flat stone slab resting upon some smaller stones; this is of rectangular shape and may be a tombstone.

No thorough explorations or excavations have been made here nor does any historical or legendary account now survive. Mr Joseph Hughes, Ardagh, is the proprietor of the lands on which these strange formations are situated and he will allow visitors to inspect them. Mr Hughes's farmhouse is less than one hundred yards distant.

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prospect of the surrounding country, including the nearby River Deel and the isolated waters of Lough Conn, with the Nephin Mountains to the south.

From the hilltop at Ardagh, whereon is situated the old cemetery and ruins of the church of St. O'Suanaigh, a remarkably fine view is obtainable; to the west may be seen the church spires of Ballina, nearby are the tall impressive mountains and Lough Conn, with its calm, pleasant waters and charming wooded islands, is delightful to the eye.

The different districts of the parish are well linked up by roads, although, with the exception of the main Ballina/Crossmolina road which runs through the centre of the parish, the by-roads are only moderate and not tarred.

Ballina is four miles distant from the centre of the parish, Castlebar twenty four and Sligo forty one miles.

### Antiquities.

#### Deel Castle.

Lying on the south side of the Ballina/Crossmolina road, was the one time extensive and lordly Deel Castle Demesne. The demesne has now been divided by the Land Commission but the old Deel Castle, now in ruins, still remains as an outstanding landmark. The castle was erected, a formidable stronghold, by the Burkes in the sixteenth century and was occupied by that family until the middle of the seventeenth century when it was besieged by Cromwell's forces, battered by cannon (the traces of the marks left by the cannon balls may still be seen) and its defender killed.

Sir Arthur Gore, ancestor of the Earls of Arran, came into possession of the castle and lands following the Cromwellian confiscations and the demesne remained in the hands of that family for many years.

The castle proper is now in the holding of Mrs Gibson who lives at the rear of the castle from which the roof was recklessly removed only a few years ago. Measuring about twenty six feet square, the castle may still be described as well preserved in some respects. Some ingeniously contrived hidden chambers and secret passages are concealed in the massive thickness of its walls and in the floors. A winding stone staircase leads to the top of the castle and from here is presented an exceedingly picturesque and interesting prospect. Visitors are allowed inspect the castle without charge.

#### Castle Gore.

Near the ruins of Deel Castle was the handsome palatial residence of the Earl of Arran, until destroyed by Republican forces during the internal strife of 1922/23. Castle Gore was erected in 1791 by James Guffe of Ballinrobe who later became Lord Tirawley and who was a cousin to the then Earl of Arran. After the death of another James Guffe, the castle reverted to the Earl of Arran and was periodically occupied by him for many years. The four walls of the building, which was really a mansion and not a castle, are still standing but otherwise it is in ruin. This portion of the demesne is now owned by Mr Hogan who does not object to visitors inspecting the castle.

#### Rappa Castle.

About a mile and a half north of Deel Castle and about four miles from Ballina, off the Crossmolina road and to the right, was the Rappa Demesne, once the home of the Croftons but for many years the family seat of the Knox family. Rappa Castle was said to have been built by the Burkes in the fifteenth century and subsequently seized by the Barretts. The castle and lands were granted to John Crofton after the Cromwellian confiscations and later passed into the hands of Francis Knox. It is stated that while occupied by the Burkes, it withstood a siege of six months by the Barretts and was eventually forced to surrender. Its defender, Burke was supposed to have been put to death and buried in a nearby bog, where during drainage operations centuries later, it was unearthed in a state of perfect preservation and encased in a coat of mail. Francis Knox retained the coat at Rappa until it was carried off during the Uprising of 1798.

Some members of the Knox family resided at Rappa until about fifteen years ago. Since then the lands have been divided and the castle is now on the farm of Mr Gillespie who will allow visitors to view the ruin. It appears that the castle was rebuilt in the form of a mansion.

Coburn Surveyor 11/8/42.

(SEE OVER)

Antiquities.Cloonagh Lake.

Cloonagh Lake is a little over four miles from Ballina and is reached by a narrow bad road which branches off to the right at Gurteens Cross on the Ballina/Crossmolina road about a mile outside the town. It is said locally that on the island in the centre of the lake, are ruins of a small ancient church. No more is known about it and though the lake is quite a small one, I could find no means of crossing to the island.

*Copple, Surveyor*

11/8/42.