

(Mayo North)

12

I.T.A. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL SURVEY

NATURAL FEATURES, ANTIQUITIES, HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS, ETC.

BARONY OF Erris

TOWN OR VILLAGE Binghamstown is... PARISH Kilmore-Erris COUNTY Mayo (North).
the most important village in the parish but Belmullet is post and market town.

TOPOGRAPHY

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

The parish of Kilmore-Erris comprises the entire Mullet Peninsula, or, as it should now be called, by virtue of the canal which joins the Bays of Broadhaven and Blacksod at Belmullet, the Mullet Island. This 18,000 acres of beautiful views, silver strands, curious relics of a forgotten history, this happy hunting ground for the fisherman and sportsman has so often been described in passing reference as a "bleak, wind-swept peninsula" that the natural charm and attractiveness of the place and the absorbing pastimes which it offers, are as yet, fresh and unspoiled.

The peculiarly shaped Mullet is bounded ~~on the north~~ by the Atlantic Ocean and Broadhaven Bay, ~~on the northeast~~ by Broadhaven, ~~southeast and south~~ by Blacksod Bay and ~~on the west~~ by the Atlantic. The scenery and various objects of interest are such as will, in themselves, occupy many days of pleasant, in sightseeing and exploring.

GEOLOGY

Continued Page 2.

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

Enjoyment

Close to Doonamoo Point and about seven miles from Belmullet, is a "puffing hole", similar to those on Downpatrick Head, near Ballycastle but of smaller dimensions and lesser depth. This also is named Pollnaseantonna.

MANSIONS, CASTLES AND ESTATES

OF IMPOSING CHARACTER

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

Bingham Castle, described under "Antiquities" is now in ruin and there is nothing else of importance under the above heading.

TOPOGRAPHY Cont'd.

The southern portion of the peninsula is much better known because it holds more prominent attractions and is far more accessible than the more rugged northern portion which is served by very bad roads. In that section north of Belmullet, Broadhaven holds the greatest interest for the sightseer. Branching right after passing the imposing new hospital on its elevated site just outside the town, the road takes another sharp right turn at Barhauve church and at the end of another few miles the broad, calm expanse of Broadhaven Bay comes into view. To the left on this road, the ruin of the old watch tower, erected as a precautionary measure during the Napoleonic Wars, stands aloft on the tallest hill of the peninsula, 434 feet in height. A short distance past the tower is Blind Harbour, a long narrow creek which, at low tide, reveals an immense stretch of sand.

Turning left at the little village of Knocknalina, locally known as Broadhaven, a one and a half miles long passage leads to Ballyglass Lighthouse. This little road runs parallel to the shore and all the way, the mainland, on the opposite side of the bay, is in sight. Reaching the trim, white lighthouse on the rocky point, a most magnificent view is unfolded. This is surely one of the best views obtainable of the entire bay and of the massive rock cliffs which stretch from Rinroe Point to Kid Island and beyond that even, to towering Benwee Head, on the opposite shore. It is a scene of wild, majestic grandeur. The return trip is fifteen miles.

Glenlara and Erris Head should also be visited. ~~by the lover of wild, beautiful scenery.~~ The road to these places is that which branches left a little way past Barhauve church and the distance to Glenlara is seven miles. From the land, the entrance to the little fishing harbour leads down a steep, narrow slope flanked on either side by a high, natural wall of slate-like rock. Currachs may be engaged at Glenlara for fishing or exploring and viewing the picturesque creek and the outside bay which bears the curious name, Danish Cellar. Erris Head is but a two-mile tramp along the edge of the tall cliffs and from here, a wonderful view of the cliff scenery, of Benwee and other surrounding precipices and the Stags of Broadhaven, is obtainable.

Frenchport and Scotchport, two pretty fishing harbours, are about six miles from Belmullet in a northwesterly direction. Scotchport is noted for the huge mass of rock, Scotchport Rock, which guards the mouth of the creek and Frenchport for its fine strands and sandhills.

North of Scotchport about a mile, the bleak, stony headland, Doonamoo Point with its remnants of ancient fortifications, overlooks the Eagle Island Lighthouse which stands less than one and a half miles out to sea. The southern portion of the peninsula is narrow and much indented by inlets and bays on the eastern or Blacksod Bay side. Two miles west of Binghamstown the ruined abbey of Cross stands on the verge of the sea overlooking the holy island, Inishglora, of legendary fame. Southwards from Cross, several fine strands are found on this western coastline which commands such a splendid view of the many islands offshore which, in addition to Inishglora, include Inishkea North and South Islands and the Duvillaun Islands. Blackrock, the conical shaped lighthouse rock ~~on which the keepers remained besieged recently by the elements for a record period,~~ is about twelve miles distant and is clearly visible from the southern coast of the Mullet.

Fallmore, at the southwest shore, is a true Gaeltacht district and there is no prettier spot within the Mullet. Here is a splendid strand, the ruin of St. Derible's 6th century church and some really beautiful scenery. The summit of the long steep hill which connects Fallmore with Blacksod village commands a view that will hold the visitor spellbound in its sheer magnificence. Across at the other side of the broad mouth of Blacksod Bay the purple-hued, towering bulk that is Slievemore on Achill Island, descends precipitously to the blue waters of the bay and the entire northern range of the Achill Mountains as well as those of Ballycroy are a most impressive sight. Achill is but a few miles away across the water. Westward, Blackrock, Duvillaun, Inishkea and the other islands and rocks are well within range of the ~~naked~~ eye whilst closer to hand, the neat, new houses of Fallmore, the fine strands and

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TOPOGRAPHY cont'd.

the wave-washed pier at Surgeview present a charming sight. The small village of Blacksod is almost two miles from Fallmore and is thirteen miles from Belmullet. A couple of hundred yards from the village, an imposing lighthouse stands on the extremity of the rocky point. From here one has a good view of the Achill hills and coastline and of the Doohoma and Dooyork strands and sandhills on the mainland with the pleasing background of tall mountains, ranged in semi-circular fashion.

About five miles from Blacksod, on the return journey to Belmullet, the ruin of Bingham Castle will be seen, a few hundred yards off the road to the right and overlooking Elly Bay. Here, the peninsula is at its narrowest, being but a few hundred yards wide and the road runs in narrow confinement between sea and sandhills.

At the other side of the bay (Elly Bay) and facing Bingham Castle, is the modern Toy Factory which is operated by the Gaeltacht Industries Branch of the Department of Industry and Commerce. About 130 girls are employed in this model factory which must be among the most pleasantly situated factories in the country.

Approaching Binghamstown, the ruins of the demolished Workhouse will be seen at Saleen Pier. From Saleen Harbour, the Emigrant Ships sailed for America a century ago when our country was passing through one of the saddest phases of her history.

Blacksod Bay has many sound claims for preference in the establishment of another seaplane base and an emergency landing place has already been surveyed and approved on Elly Bay. The Bell Telephone Company of America spent a considerable sum in surveying and cable-laying at Frenchport some ten years ago with a view to laying a trans-Atlantic cable but so far, nothing has come of this and some forty miles of cable still lie on the ocean bed and the Company's hut may still be seen ~~there~~ at Frenchport.

Broadhaven Bay covers an area of some ten square miles, excluding inlets and Blacksod Bay, 45 square miles and it is said that the largest naval fleets of the world could find safe anchorage in either bay.

Binghamstown is three miles from Belmullet and forty three miles from Ballina.

C. Brien
Surveyor
4/9/45