

(Mayo North)

2

FORM A.

I.T.A. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL SURVEY

NATURAL FEATURES, ANTIQUITIES,
HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS, ETC.

BARONY OF Tirawley.

TOWN OR VILLAGE _____ PARISH Ardagh _____ COUNTY Mayo (North)

TOPOGRAPHY

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

The parish of Ardagh, comprising 5,424 acres, lies to the south west of Ballina, the eastern extremity of the parish being only little more than one mile from the town. // The parish derives its name from the ancient townland of Ardagh (Ard Acha or High Field), situated in the western portion about three and a half miles from Ballina and referred to in MacFirbis's Topographical Poem of 1417 as "Ardagh of beautiful woods". Trees are now not so plentiful as to distinguish the district but the scenery ~~is amply compensated by the many and varied views~~ obtainable from any one of the many hillocks or other elevations. One magnificent view is that from the top of the ruined Deel Castle (four miles from Ballina); this elevation affords a splendid

GEOLOGY

(Continued on A2)

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

The district is of lower limestone formation and the parish contains extensive tracts of bogland.

MANSIONS, CASTLES AND ESTATES

OF IMPOSING CHARACTER

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

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)