Ballyragget Lodge
Sister M. Paschal

The connection between the Mountgarret branch of the Butlers and the castle and town of Ballyragget is documented in Canon Carrigan’s History of Ossory (Vol. II, pp 94-101). Ballyragget Lodge was built in 1788 by Robert Butler and the family, who had previously lived in the neighbouring castle, then took up residence.

The most remarkable member of the family to occupy the Lodge was Arthur MacMorrough Kavanagh, born limbless, who triumphantly overcame his handicap. His story is told by Donal McCormick in “The Incredible Mr. Kavanagh”. He was a progressive landlord, very kind and good to his tenants, and spent much time and money in reconstructing Ballyragget Lodge. His mother, Lady Harriet Kavanagh, lived in this house for twenty-five years, and died here in 1885 and was buried in Borris.

Ballyragget Lodge and lands were put up for sale in 1946. Our Reverend Mother at the time was interested in getting at least the house and a convenient site for a school. At the time the Sisters lived in the house beside the O’Gorman Home in Ballyragget. A new school was needed as the Infant School was in an old house on the Green, while the Senior School lay beyond the bridge. When the house and lands went on the market, the purchaser was Mr. Carey. The nuns acquired the house and ten surrounding acres from him. In 1948 a new primary school was built to cater for 120 pupils; an extension was made in 1986 to cope with an extra hundred pupils.

The orchard was sold to Kilkenny County Council to build houses.

In 1985 a Mr. Kavanagh, an English-man, called to see the house. He said he was a descendant of the family and had been studying the family archives in Borris House with a view to writing a life of Lady Harriet. (This summarises a paper read by the writer on the occasion of a visit by the Society in June 1986).