

House of Mountgarret

BY E. R. PURDON

AN interesting talk on the history of the old Mountgarret House, former seat of the Butlers, was delivered by Mr. E. R. Purdon, Lodge Park, Freshford, at the site of the ruins, which are situated at the rere of Lodge Park.

This is the gable-end of the old house which, I understand, was built about the year 1595. It was owned by the Mountgarrets, who possessed numerous other properties in the district, including castles at Urlingford, Ballyragget, Clomantagh and Balleen (half mile from here). At that time this estate was called Balleen Park (not Lodge Park), and this house is mentioned as being one of the largest in the county. The fact that the house was rated at 35/- in 1664 in respect of the Hearth Tax verifies this, as it means that there were 18 fireplaces in it.

In order to get things in the right perspective, we will take a brief look at the local history of that time. On the death of the 8th Earl of Ormonde (Pierce Ruadh) in 1542. the estates and castles of Ballyragget and Balleen fell to his younger surviving son, who became 1st Viscount Mountgarret in 1550 and died in 1571. His elder brother, Thomas, incidentally, had been murdered ten years before his father's death near Aharney just outside Lisdowney, when returning from a conference with the Fitzpatricks in Ballykealy. Until the year 1600, Ballyragget Castle was the chief residence of the Mountgarret family. The 2nd Viscount died in 1602, and it is likely that, having just built this house, he spent the last few years of his life in it. There is a legend that Balleen Castle was never occupied.

His son, Richard, the 3rd Viscount Mountgarret, preferred Balleen to Ballyragget, and Ballyragget Castle was abandoned till about 1660, when the Mountgarret family returned and lived there till 1788. They built Ballyconra House in 1724, and over the door is an inscription "This frontispiece was set up at Balleen by Viscount Mountgarret 1647 and removed by his great-grandson 1724." Edmund the 6th Viscount was the first to live at Ballyconra. In 1647, a building adjoining the Castle at Balleen was commenced

but was never completed, possibly owing to the unsettled state of the country. Richard, the 3rd Viscount, was figuring very prominently at this time both as a soldier and politician. When the Catholic Confederacy of Kilkenny was formed in October, 1642, he was elected President of the Supreme Council. Cromwell arrived in Dublin in August, 1649; in March, 1650, Kilkenny surrendered, and the Confederacy was dissolved. Viscount Mountgarret took refuge in Galway, where he died two years later.

The Protestant Dean of Ossory from 1626, till his death about 1660, was the Revd. Edmund Warren; he was also Rector of Aharney. He had two sons, Abel and Edward, both were officers in Cromwell's army—the former, aged 30, a Major, and the latter a Colonel. The Dean had been turned out of the Rectory of Aharney by Mountgarret's soldiers in 1641, and his sons appear to have been out to get their own back with interest. In 1651, Major Abel Warren succeeded in obtaining possession of this place, and the Colonel of the Mountgarret Castle in Ballyragget.

In the following year Viscount Mountgarret's son, Edward, who had been living in Urlingford Castle for 20 years, was arrested and taken before the High Court of Justice in Dublin, accused of being connected ten years previously with the murder in Ballyragget of some people from Freshford, though he was believed to have known nothing of the crime and to have had nothing to do with it; on the testimony of Major Warren and others he was found guilty and executed. The Major and the Colonel eventually did go a bit too far, and one of them met with the same fate himself. Like many of the Cromwellian officers, they were what in those days were termed "adventurers."

Major Warren was Mayor of Kilkenny, 1656/'57, and Member of Parliament, 1661/'63. Cromwell died September, 1658, and Charles II was proclaimed King; he was anxious to undo some of the wrongs of the Cromwell regime.

The Duke of Ormonde, a first cousin of Viscount Mountgarret, was made Lord Lieutenant. Major Warren was a member of the Committee which was formed to prepare a Bill of Settlement, which was eventually passed into an Act.

A number of Cromwell's officers were not satisfied with what they were getting under the Act. They entered into a plot and were determined to hold on to all the lands they had grabbed (at all costs). In addition to Major Warren and six other M.P.'s, the chief conspirators were Colonel Warren, Captain Standford and Colonel Thomas Blood, who afterwards distinguished himself by trying to carry off the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London! Part of the plan was to surprise Dublin Castle and make a prisoner of the Lord Lieutenant, this was to be carried out in May, 1663, but before then the plot was discovered; several of the prisoners were arrested and Colonel Edward Warren was executed. The Major escaped and a reward of £100 was offered on May 26th for his apprehension. In November, he and the other six M.P.'s were expelled from the House. He died four years later at the age of 47.

ALL GOOD CITIZENS

Ebenezer Warren, the eldest son from Major Warren's second marriage, became the next owner of the estate; he and the future members of the family were all good citizens and many of them took prominent parts in the affairs of the city and county. Ebenezer was Mayor, 1684/1696, and was High Sheriff in 1694. He had five sons and seven daughters; three of the sons were educated at Kilkenny College, and the eldest, Edward, was High Sheriff in 1720 (The year of his father's death). He was M.P. from 1721 to 1727 and Mayor three times. Another son, Algernon, was Mayor, 1736/'37.

Folliott Warren, the elder of Edward's two sons, was High Sheriff in 1753, and, finally, in 1861, Edward Lewis Warren was High Sheriff. He lived here until the end of the century, and the place was unoccupied for 45 years until we came here 54 years ago from Westmeath.

Edward Lewis Warren's father was Pooley A. Warren . . . We are told by an inscription on a stone in the bridge over the river that the bridge was erected by him in September, 1831, as he entered Trinity College at the age of 17 in 1823; he was only 25 when the bridge was built. I have not found any record of when the present house was built,

but should think probably it was built about 1700 by Pooley's father.

John Bourke O'Flaherty, Castlefield

A limestone plaque, bearing a coat-of-arms and the name,

John Bourke O'Flaherty, M.P., LL.D., Castlefield, was found in an outhouse at the rear of Mr. M. Lanigan's garage in Upper Patrick Street, Kilkenny, some time ago. The plaque, circular in shape, is 24 inches in diameter and is 5 inches thick. It is in a very good state of preservation, and the name and Latin inscription are clearly discernible. It was discovered when Mr. Lanigan was demolishing a row of outhouses. It was not buried, but was on the floor in a corner. Mrs. Kate Blanchfield, who owned the buildings before they were acquired by the garage proprietor, has never seen the plaque before and has no idea how it got there.

According to Burtchaell's "Members of Parliament for the County and City of Kilkenny," John Bourke O'Flaherty of Castlefield was son of Thomas Bourke O'Flaherty and a great grandson of Theobald, sixth Viscount Mayo. His grand-uncle Theobald, seventh Viscount Mayo, had married Ellis, afterwards Countess of Bandon, eldest daughter of James Agar, M.P. for Gowran. As Castlefield belonged to the Agar Estates, this explains O'Flaherty's residence here.

He was M.P. for Callan from 1783 to 1790. In 1789, he was made LL.D., *honoris causa*, by Trinity College, Dublin. He served as High Sheriff of the county in 1790 and married in 1793 Elizabeth Wheeler Cuffe of Lyrath. The O'Flaherty coat-of-arms is given in McLysaght's "Irish Families" as: Argent two lions rampant combatant supporting a dexter hand couped at the wrists all gules, in base a boat with eight oars sable. Crest a lizard passant ppr. This would comply with the design on the plaque, while the family motto, "Fortuna favit fortibus" (Fortune favours the brave), also appears on it.

Castlefield House is about three quarters of a mile from Tullaherin Church along the road parallel to the Dungarvan road. The Castlefield townland was part of the Gowran Estate.