

# THE MONUMENTS IN ST. CANICE'S CATHEDRAL

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**T**HE monuments in the Cathedral date from the closing years of the 13th century to the present day, the oldest bearing a date is a floor slab to the memory of the son of Henry of Lyra, the date being 1285.

The monuments of the 13th and 14th century are mainly floor slabs with graceful interlaced crosses, all of them of different design, the 13th century in relief and the 14th century incised crosses, the script being usually Lombardic characters. The most notable 14th century monument is that of Bishop de Ledred, which occupies a sepulchral niche in the north wall of the choir. The tomb is surmounted by the boldly carved figure of a Bishop in full episcopal robes, whose identity was for long disputed, but is now universally agreed to be Bishop de Ledred, the only Franciscan Bishop of Ossory.

Of the 15th century there are very scanty remains indeed, and to this century only one tomb can positively be assigned, that of Richard Talbot, who died in 1408.

The 16th century, on the contrary, is rich in monumental art, and the Cathedral abounds in effigial and crucially ornamented tombs of this period. The 16th century effigies were all designed for altar tombs, the sides being supported by slabs carved into canopied niches filled with figures of the Apostles, or else bearing the arms of the Passion.

At the West end or head of the tomb a panel carved with the Crucifixion is generally found and, at the foot, a shield with the arms of the deceased. Among the altar tombs of this period are: (1) the Hackett tomb, a plain altar tomb, erected by a Nicholas Hackett in 1528; it commemorates Bishop David Hackett, who built the vault of the belfry and died in 1479. (2) The tomb of Honoria Grace, daughter of John Grace, Knight, and formerly wife of Oliver Shortall of Ballylarkin, who died in 1596. (3)

Tomb of an unknown woman supposed to be of the humbler classes. (4) Richard Butler, first Viscount Mountgarret, son of Piers, 8th Earl of Ormonde. The tomb contains a representation of the Butler arms, with a crescent for difference and the letter R.B. (5) Baron John Grace of Courtstown and his wife, Onorina Brenach, A.D. 1552. The inscription says that the tomb was made by Rory O'Tunny.

Baron John Grace was known as the Great Grace. He greatly enlarged and strengthened the Castle at Courtstown, where he entertained lavishly.

His wife was a daughter of Walter Walsh of Castlehoel. (6) James Shortal, Lord of Ballylarkin and Ballykeef, and Katherine White, his wife, 1508. (7) Piers Butler, Earl of Ormonde and Ossory, and the Countess Margaret Fitzgerald, his wife, A.D. 1539. (8) An uninscribed tomb, said to be that of James, 9th Earl of Ormonde,

Piers Butler, who was known as the Red Earl, took a prominent part in Irish history and was ably supported by his wife, the famous Mairead Gearoid or Countess of Granny. They took much interest in improving the conditions of the people, and brought from Flanders weavers and other workers who made tapestry, Turkey carpets, cushions, at Kilkenny Castle.

The Earl kept a pack of sixty deerhounds of the famous Irish greyhound class, besides separate packs of dogs to hunt the hare and the marten: his studs of horses were also numerous.

Despite the prominent part which he played in Irish history, the Earl is to-day forgotten, but his wife, the famous Countess of Granny lives on in the traditions and stories of the countryside.

The 17th century is distinguished by elaborate mural monuments in the Jacobean or Renaissance style which were originally richly painted and gilded. Monuments of this style are the Branchville monument, the tomb of the Reverend Fathers Shee, the Rothe monument, and the monument to the third Viscount Mounegarret. The inscription on the tomb of Bishop Rothe, which is situated in the South choir aisle, is as follows:—Deo Opt. Max., and "To the memory of David Bishop of Ossory who this

Cathedral Church, sacred to St. Canice (did restore to its pristine worship, cleansing it from heresy and schism).” The words in brackets are erased and are supplied by tradition.

The tomb of Richard Viscount Mounegarret was restored for the then Lord Mountgarret in 1763 by Mr. William Colles of Kilkenny. The base, the panel on which the inscription is cut and a small portion of the frieze are the original work.

He fought with O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, against Queen Elizabeth, but was reconciled through the influence of his cousin, Thomas Earl of Ormonde. He became leader of the Confederate Catholics, General of their forces, and President of the Supreme Council, and died in 1651, aged 73.

In Graves and Prim’s ‘History of the Cathedral Church of St. Canice,’ which is the principal authority for these notes, comment is made on the deterioration of monumental art in the 18th and first half of the 19th century. “Pagan emblems such as the inverted torch and cinerary urn usurped the place of the insignia of Christianity and inflated encomiums of the deceased superceded the simple ‘Hic Jacet’ of our fathers.”

The hope is expressed that the erection, then promised, of a monument to the second Marquis of Ormonde would inaugurate a new era of good taste. This monument now dominates the South transept. It is carried out in Caen Stone on a plinth of grey limestone and is highly ornamented with the armorial bearings of the family.

The monument is surmounted by a beautifully carved figure of the deceased dressed in the robes and wearing the collar of the Order of St. Patrick.

Later monuments take the form either of mural tablets or of stained glass windows.

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#### 1855

#### RAIL JUNCTION

The bill establishing a Railway communication between Mountrath and Kilkenny and for forming a junction between the Waterford and Kilkenny and the Irish South Eastern Extension line, with the Great Southern and Western in a southerly direction has met the approval of the Committee of the House of Commons. It is confidently anticipated that an alteration will be made in the Bill making Maryborough, instead of Mountrath the junction point.

K. J.