

AGUSTINIAN CHURCH

Edmond Rice's younger brother Rev John Rice was a well known member of the Augustinian Friars. He was Prior at Callan for many years. The present Augustinian Church was built by his efforts. It was begun in 1810 and was completed in 1819 at a cost of £4,000. When he was celebrating Mass on St Stephen's Day, 1826, a false alarm that the gallery was collapsing sent the full congregation in panic through the exit; many were trampled; 14 died.

WESTCOURT PRESERVED

Westcourt continued to be occupied by the Rice family until 1888 when the last of the Westcourt family, Miss Bridget Rice died there. In 1950 a fine monument was unveiled by the late Bishop Collier in Green Street, Callan, to the memory of Edmond Rice. His finest monument is the world wide order of Christian Brothers which he founded. His mortal remains rest in a memorial chapel at Mount Sion, Waterford, where he died on 28th August, 1844.

Edmond Rice left his home here at Westcourt in 1779 at 17 years of age to carve out his career in life. Little did he think that in 1963 the cause for his beatification would be opened and that in 1965 the distinguished order which he founded would acquire for preserv



Kilkenny Archaeological Society ne. _____

Coon Evictions

BY MICHAEL DELANEY

Coon was once the scene of many evictions. The people here were rack-rented and many of them were unable to pay the rent. The landlord was a man named Humpries and besides being an owner of an estate he was also a major in the army and as a spare time job he was a minister of religion, being Canon of Knocktopher. He wanted to be minister in Coolcullen as he would be on the spot, so to speak. He was very exact in his demands from the tenants and if the rent was not paid

promptly in full he would evict straight away. He wouldn't accept 19/6 if £1 was due. So thorough were his operations that at one time there were only 4 Catholic families in the district. All the rest were banished. He then proceeded to farm the land himself and put workmen in the homes of the former occupiers. The evicted tenants erected a Land League shed at Shelly's Lane. They used it as headquarters and when they were put out of the shed they held meetings in a yard near the priests' house. The trouble continued for years — from sometime after 1881 to the passing of the land purchase act of 1903. The landlord took the tenants to court and the tenants took the landlord "up the steps" also, both parties to the dispute trying to get the best of the argument. In the meantime the tenants had great difficulty in eking out an existence. They tried planting corn on their former farms and when the corn was ripe they got plenty of help to cut it — probably in the moonlight —and it was drawn away in the night to have it threshed in some friends haggard, probably a couple of miles away. In order to mislead pursuers they used to carry sheaves along different roads and drop them at intervals so that it was impossible to tell which way they went. People came from far away places to help and they had the sympathy of the people in their distress.

All had been evicted — some because they couldn't pay and others because they would not pay. They struck on principle. The family longest out was Comerford's of the River— they were out 24½ years. If they had been out another 6 months they would not come under the restoration clause of the 1903 Land Act which stipulated 25 years as the limit.

There had been some curious arrangement by which the farmers were to get an adjustment of rent every 15 years. The last of these adjustments came into operation in 1896 and it seems that was the cause of the final clearance. It was the last straw that broke the horses back and gave a heart-ache to the Coon people that is not yet forgotten. However, the land purchase act of 1903 made provision for the reinstatement of the people and we can only imagine how glad they were to get back to their old homes once more. They got loans to purchase cattle and the price of these was to be added to the rent over a number of years.