

A Note on Three Castles Cemetery

MADGE BUGGY

A visit to the cemetery at Three Castles is an interesting and most rewarding experience. It is situated about 300 yards from Mrs. Campion's Licensed Premises and Post Office (Three Castles) down the Ardaloo Road.

A flight of steps leads up to this peaceful resting place which overlooks the River Nore and from which too a beautiful expanse of the rich countryside is to be seen.

Originally there were three Castles here quite close to each other, one stood where the Rectory House now stands (Rev Canon Purkiss, Rector of Odagh resided here for some years and now the occupants are Mr and Mrs P. B. Kelly). Another stood in the yard attached to Mrs Hennessy's residence. The third Castle still remains here in the Cemetery ivy covered and beautiful.

The Cemetery contains a large number of mounds indicating an ancient burial place. Two pieces of stone with inscribed crosses of ancient pattern are to be seen, also the end of an incised floriated cross (in two pieces) which appears to be 13th or 14th century.

A very interesting find, too (thanks to Mr Tom Hoyne), was a "Cadaver" — a small oblong stone 2' 1" x 1" with a perfectly inscribed outline of a skeleton on its face.

A large number of Altar Tombs and upright tomb stones were quite readable when cleaned and 66 of these were recorded.

Interesting (some Anglo Norman) names to be found here are Vass, Menchion, Whorohan, Sneyde, Ball, Butler, Clarke, Somerville, Wood, Strangeways, Ryan, Wright and Leathly.

The old Kilkenny names of Kelly, Birch, Brophy, Hennessy, Brennan and Lanigan are there too in large numbers.

It is interesting to note that the names Wright, Ryan and Leathly were connected with Foulksrath Castle—once a Purcell foundation. The Wrights and Ryans occupied Foulksrath at different times and an Altar tomb in Three Castles states that an Edward Forde Leathly, Esq., died at Foulksrath Castle in 1848. We know nothing about this gentleman but thanks again to Mr Hoyne discovered the name in Co Wexford — a

James Forde Leathly was a Curate in Enniscorthy in 1884 and may have been related to the above Edward.

The Ryans interred in Three Castles also came from Springhill (parish of Odagh) and Kilfera House, Kilkenny (now the residence of Capt M. and Mrs Stopford), they were also connected with the Strangways of Littlefield.

James Somerville of Scotland who died in 1820 was steward for 13 years to George Bryan Esq. of Jenkinstown, his son William of Castlecomer also lies here with other members of the family.

John Wood of Somerton was agent to the Webbsborough Estate. (Somerton is now in the possession of the Nolan family who came there from Leighlin Bridge). A Joseph Wood of the City of Kilkenny was presumably a son of John's. According to Shearman's Commercial Directors he was in 1839 a Woollen Draper in High street. Another son George was married to Isobel Wright (probably of Foulksrath Castle). Isobel evidently remarried as the inscription on this Altar tomb states that George was her first husband.

The Butlers, Balls and Clarkes all lived at different times in the house now occupied by Mrs Hennessy at Three Castles.

Interments are still carried on here in this old cemetery the most recent being that of a wonderful old Kilkenny lady—Mrs Bridget Cullen of Dean street, she died on July 24th (1968) on her 90th Birthday.

The Pattern of the Dinan is held annually underneath this hallowed spot, this is a relic of Pagan times and has no religious significance. A Bridge spanning the River Nore close to the Cemetery bears the following inscription—

“This Bridge built by Presentment and Subscription A.D. 1790.

—James Bryan, John Butler, Richard Ball, Esquires and Overseers.”

My thanks to Mrs. M. M. Phelan, Chairman, K.A.S., without whose help and encouragement these lines could not be written.

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