

Kilmoganny

Aaira Gabbett

THE townland of Kilmoganny ends where Kyle Street begins and from there on it is Cottrelstown. On the other side it extends as far as the river, and up to just short of Duggan's cottage on the Carrick Road. Canon Carrigan states: "The townland of Kilmoganny belonged to the Butlers of Currahill Castle. Cottrelstown and half of old Rossenarra (the point of the corn) belonged to a branch of the same Currahill family."

I gather the original old name of Rossenarra was Ownemore but the new name was in use by 1558, when according to Carrigan "James FitzEdmond Butler of Rossenarowe was pardoned (in 1558). Thomas Butler of ditto was seized of Cottrelstown (otherwise Balleacottarella) and half of Rossenarra, and died May 1st, 1617. Theobald or Tibbet his son and heir, then 30 years old and married, forfeited under Cromwell in 1653 and was transplanted to Connaught in 1654."

Before every town and village got an Irish name, in the late 1940's, the late Con Harrington, the School Master, and I, had worked out, completely to our own satisfaction, the Irish origin of the name of Kilmoganny — Cill-mo-Eoghan — meaning "the church of our own dear Egan (Owen)." "mo" is quite a common surfix meaning my, with affection. After we had worked this out, I noticed on the Ordnance Survey map that the Catholic Church is marked as St. Owens Church and I was delighted because it seemed to prove we were right. I wrote to the late Owen Kelly about this when I found he had translated it as "the church of my beloved one." And went on to say that, according to the Irish Calendar of Saints, Mocheana was an early Christian virgin whose feast day was the 29th February. And that is how the Post Office got it, I suppose. But I think it is definitely wrong. There was a "pattern" of Kilmoganny which was brought to an end by the priest within my life time because of the awful fights that always took place with neighbouring parishes. Those who remembered the Pattern are not so long dead and they told me it was in the middle of summer and that no one could ever remember it being anything but a fine day. The feast day of St. Owen is 23rd of August — much more likely than the 29th February.

Tighe, in his famous Agricultural Survey, written in

1800, writes of the Walshs of Castlehale who marched against Cromwell "were defeated and many executed on the spot and buried there at the foot of the hill near Castlehale. While making the road Mr. G. Reade discovered the bones and caused a sweep to be formed to mark the place."

There is a very strong legend locally that after that Cromwell and his soldiers camped at a place now called the Merrydance before marching on to Callan. This is strongly believed but I have no proof of it.

I do not know where the Reades came from (there were Reades in County Meath since the 1100's). The first Reade may have been a Cromwellian soldier. Or he might, later, have bought himself into the place. Cromwell used to pay his soldiers with hunks of land, and though some of the officers held on, what use was empty land to mere soldiers and they exchanged their titles for money with Dublin money lenders, who later sold to men, sometimes Charles II's men, (as happened in the case of Ballaghtobin). Whoever he was, he definitely got Rossenarra, and presumably Readesbarn — formerly called Oowneybeg. (When I say Rossenarra I mean the old Rossenarra not the present Rossenarra Demesne.)

Anyway, the first Reade I can discover is George Reade, who died 3rd September, 1734, aged 73. This is on a marble tablet in the Protestant Church. I do not think the Church as it is now was in existence at that time, as the same tablet also commemorates his grandson (presumably) Richard Matthews Reade who died in 1816, aged 77.

Tighe was greatly interested in trees (in fact, all my life I have heard of how he mentioned in his great book the *svcamore* at Ballaghtobin and the ash at Westcourt gate. I have seen them both, but both are long dead now). He writes: "At Rossenarrow, the seat of Major Reade, is an avenue of fine elms planted in commemoration of King William's entertainment here, with his whole army, on his way to Carrick, on July 20th, 1690, by George Reade, Esq. A pavilion was built on the spot where the King's tent stood, in the form of an audience chamber, with two pairs of folding doors. But it was ruined afterwards and little of it now remains. The avenue led thence to the house."

Presumably "the house" was what is known as "Dr. Peel's house" now a ruin, but probably built by George — and the present graveyard was the walled-in garden and orchard belonging to it. I have spoken with people

who remembered the remains of the "pavilion," but there is now no trace whatever. However, the townland is registered as "Memory" and that will last.

I have been told that George Reade spent enormously on entertaining the King, and in fact was completely broke when it was over. He made an ornamental pond with boats on it among other things — and the bottom all paving stones. Only lately (1974 in fact) there was a bulldozer at work there and he drained the "pond" and afterwards he told how there was an island in the middle, and a huge slab with writing on it and dates — and he buried it all. There was no one near to watch what he was doing.

It is hard to piece things together but there is a tablet in the Church erected by Mrs. Reade of Rossenarra in memory of her husband Richard Reade of Rossenarra, Esq., who died 3rd May, 1742, in the 47th year of his age, which means he was born in 1696. George Reade was born in 1661 and was around 30 years old when he entertained King Billy — which means he could have been Richard's father, who was born when he was 35. But I can find nothing to say so, nor any record of Richard being the father of Richard Matthews Reade (esq. of Rossenarra) — born 1739, died 1816 — who was probably the Major Reade of Tighe's Survey. He was aged 77 when he died, and there are no more records of Reades that I have found.

George Reade had a sister Martha, who married William Morris of Waterford. The Morris's were very well known and rich. A descendant of theirs married into the Malcolmson family and lived in a "Malcolmson house" in Dunmore East (now the Haven Hotel) and were enormously rich (until Papa blew and drank it all away). Martha Reade's great-grandson (I think) William Morris Reade is described on his tablet in the church as being of Rossenarra, Rossduff (which is Belle Lake, Co. Waterford) and Marchington, Great Britain.

It was at that time a sign of great wealth to have a seat in Great Britain — the Floods of Flood Hall had such in 1920!

In 1817 William Morris Reade put up a huge marble tablet in the church to the memory of William Morris and his wife, Martha Reade, and their sons, Benjamin Morris of Lamogue and William Morris of Kildrummy and calls himself their grateful descendant. Had I been less lazy I would have gone scraping tombstones outside and might have discovered more — but I have no idea which of

those two sons is the father, or grandfather, of the man who built Rossenarra House and Demesne and inherited all the Reade estates. He was, I think, the first William Morris Reade. He was born in 1788 and was 29 years of age when he erected the tablet in the church to his ancestors in 1817.

He died in 1847 when his son, also William Morris Reade was only 12 years old. When in 1856 he attained his majority, for some reason the whole estate was put up for sale. Presumably, someone, probably a Morris relation, put up the money (nearly £4,400 — not including the Mansion House — for a total of over 6,000 acres statute). The description of the Mansion House is amusing — it runs: "This is a modern house, well built, in good order and free from damp. It is handsomely situated within reach of the Marquis of Waterford's and the Kilkenny Fox Hounds and requires merely the outlay of painting and papering to render it fit for the immediate reception of a gentleman's family. The farm offices are very extensive, substantial and new. The entire were erected by the late proprietor at an expense of from £10,000 to £12,000."

There is a tablet in the church to his older sister, Anna Maria Morris Reade, who was 5 years older, and who died in 1879 aged 49 years. But no tablet to the younger William Morris Reade. So I do not know when he died nor who or when he married. He had three children that I know of, 2 daughters (I've been told their names were Mary and Kate — but not very reliably) and a son called Frederick. There are still a few people who remember Freddy Morris Reade, though most of the things they remember are not complimentary, but I gather he was full of fun and good company.

Old Hanny Larkin had a story that I couldn't quite follow, of some girl in the village that he faithfully promised to marry, and according to her did marry on his death bed, in Waterford. But officially, he died unmarried and there is no tablet erected to him in the church. Whether the two sisters lived on in Rossenarra after Freddie's death I'm not sure. I have a notion they did until one died, and then the other went to live in Dublin.

At the auction, my grandmother, then living at Cahirleske, bought some beautifully embroidered (by the Misses Morris Reade) sofas and chairs, and the carpet and curtains from the drawing room at Rossenarra. The latter hang to-day in the drawing room at Longraigue in Co. Wexford, and I still have a sofa.



Money came from America to one of the McEnery's — I think Jack McEnery's father — on condition that he bought a nice gentleman's residence and hunted with the Kilkenny hounds. So he bought Rossenarra House.

I think it was the father of William Morris Reade who died in 1847 who set up all his "natural" sons in farms — John Morris of Clune View, William Morris of Rogerstown and Morris of Newchurch, are the ones I know of. William Morris of Rogerstown had a son, Samuel, and he it was who started the coal business in Fiddown and Waterford. He died in 1911.

The 1856 map gives a list of all the people who lived in the village of Kilmoganny. The Old School was then a fever hospital — there was a school near where Mick Duncan now lives, but it could have been a private school. The parson who lived in the Glebe was the Rev. Jeremiah McCheane whose descendant lives near Freshford now. He rented all the land running under the Fever Hospital, and below that, both sides of the road, were nursery gardens, from which trees went to Abbeyleix and lots of other places. It was owned by a man called Adams. But of a priests house there is no sign that I can find. The answer may be in the legend of Ned Crowley, or rather I think, his father, evicting a priest from his house in Srughavadda — and the priest putting a curse on the house that there would be no marriage out of it. Srughavadda and Currahill plus Monaboul and Bawnreagh do not appear on the 1856 map because they belonged to Sir Henry Marsh and not to the Morris Reade estate. The Crowleys had a small house and a small haggard near the sheep-hole at the bottom of the Blue Hill road. And when Dreas were evicted from the farm at the northern end of Srughavadda, the Crowleys "acquired" it, including the farm house. Why or how there was a priest in the house I don't know. But for sure, there was no wedding from it since — Ned Crowley and his 2 (or 3) sisters died unmarried. The house is no longer lived in. This would account for there being no priests house in the village.

Across the river from Crowleys old house, there was a house — both are marked on the 1830 map as ruins — and there lived the parson — presumably before the present Rectory was built. The old road crossed the river by the ford (before the bridge was built) and went up straight; past the parson's house and across the main road (which is a famine road, I believe) after which it branched, one branch going down towards the village to

the left (traces of the road can be seen at the top of Leahy's $\frac{1}{2}$ acre) and the other went right, past two small houses, one of which was occupied in about 1940 by Bill Walsh (known as "The Schtool") and on up to Newchurch via Carrignamoe. I was told the parson rode a white pony from his house near the river up to Newchurch to visit parishioners there — there was a large Protestant community at Newchurch before they were evicted.

In the 1940's some people came from America looking for where their grandparents came from in Newchurch — but couldn't find it for certain.

In the second part of the 19th century Kilmoganny was an important place with the Petty Sessions held in the Court House. Old Gretta Crowley told me she remembered seeing my grandfather, Captain Knox, arriving at the Court House (he was a J.P.) driving a chestnut horse and two daughters sitting at the back of the trap with long hair the same colour as the horse. (One of the daughters being my mother for certain). She also told me how the crowds of villagers used to gather on a Sunday morning to see the carriage arrive from Castlemorres for church. That was in the old Archdeacon de Montmorency's time. He farmed his land in a good old fashioned way, with 40 workmen. The Archdeacon used to ride around the farm on horseback, and one day he jumped into a field where all the men were "having a breather" gathered together in one corner. One of the men immediately lay down in the midst of them, and they told the master he was ill or something. Probably overcome with the heat of the sun they thought. The Archdeacon told them to lift him into a wheelbarrow and one of the men to wheel him up to the house. When they got there he went into the house and came out with a glass of whiskey for the sick man, and handed it at the top of the steps to the man who had wheeled him in the barrow. Your man went down the steps — and drank the glass himself — "I need it worse, after wheeling you all that way" is what he said. The Archdeacon had gone back into the house by then of course.

I took afternoon tea in Castlemorres with my aunt when John de Montmorency and his first wife were living there. That was around 1921 I think — and I've been told since, and believe it to be true, that men on the run were living in the top storey at that time. There were three storeys plus the basement.

The ground and first floor were connected by a

beautiful staircase in the middle, and at each end there were service staircases going from the basement to the top floor with baize doors opening into the ground floor and first floor. One could go from the basement to the top floor and down again the other side of the house without going into the family's quarters at all. All the family bedrooms were on the first floor; on the top floor there was a billiard room, but all the rest of it was staff bedrooms. I got the impression that the whole floor had a cement floor — certainly the passage had — so there could be no noise in the family bedrooms below. When the house had been empty for some time, one day the hounds (Kilmoganny Harriers) ran a fox into the pleasure gardens — and then up the steps and through the french windows, across the drawing room and hall and up the beautiful staircase — out into the servants wing and up a chimney where they had to leave him. I will always remember the echo of their "music" through the empty house, and then Jack McEnergy's head coming out through a window in the wing to tell us what had happened.

Years later, the Forestry Commission acquired it all. (I am not dwelling on the period when the Broy Harriers used the yard, on the opposite side to the servants wing to hold the cattle that they seized). When they thought to demolish the dwelling house they found it was all lined with brick. They got off the cut stone outside, and until the trees grew up you could see the red brick ruin sticking up. Apparently red brick is not easy to blow up.

There are a lot of gaps in what I have been able to find out about the village. For instance, what truth in the story of the graveyard being cut in half when Mill Street was made? and that the Protestant Church stands on the site of the old church? I think myself it is more likely that the old church stood more or less in what is now Calnan's yard, with the adjoining graveyard. Of course it may have stood where the present Catholic church is, with the graveyard across the road — but it is hard to imagine the graveyard being higher than the church. There definitely was a line of dwellings along where the wall is now, between the graveyard and Mill Street, lived in at the turn of the century. (The old postcards show where they were, and trees, but of course the road at the cross was smaller. As far as I know, all the graves in the Protestant graveyard are anti-Reformation, including the graves of the R.I.C. who were killed in the Battle of Carrickshock. I think it was William Morris Reade who was "boy-cotted" for allowing

the Royal Irish Constabulary to borrow a farm horse and cart to bring the bodies from Carrickshock to the Fever Hospital and afterwards to their burial.

And what about Moorefield?

There were houses all along from Moore's pub to the Alley field — and again, in Cottrelstown, from Moore's house all along to Hurley's cottage. I remember all these as ruins, but I know a man who remembers them all lived in, and who it was who lived in each of them.

In another few years no one will remember any of all this, so much is Kilmoganny changed.

Butler Information

Re the two Butler tombs sketched by Mai McElroy in last year's "Old Kilkenny Review 1978" our member, Lord Dunboyne writes:

"The two Butler doctors were of the Neigham branch of the family, descended from a base elder brother of Piers, 8th Earl of Ormonde, whose tomb is in St. Canice's Cathedral.

"Michael Butler, the printer, is more difficult to place but I feel he is the same family as William Butler of Irishtown whose will of 1779 is No. 110 in Father Clare's Butler Testimonies and Records which shows he had a grandson, Michael Butler (there were few Michael Butlers).

"Catharine Finn, nee Butler, was sister of John Butler of Sheastown whose administration was refused by her in 1802 (B.T.R. No. 412).

"I expect this William of Sheastown and John of Sheastown were brothers."

. . . letter to Margaret Phelan from Lord Dunboyne.

When I received Lord Dunboyne's letter, I read again Banim's notes and introduction to the Felches where the information on Dr. Butler (in O.K.R. for 1978) was drawn. Lord Dunboyne pins this family to the Butlers of Neigham. This is the root of W. B. Yeats family, his ancestor Mary Butler from Neigham, having married Benjamin Yeats in 1777.

Now re-reading the introduction to the Felches I find that John Banim bases his tale on notes left by Dr. Butler on a true and real felch history that came Banim's way through a female branch of that Butler family. Is it possible that the great poet's interest in the occult came from his far off Butler ancestry in the Co. Kilkenny? This is an intriguing thought and is offered to all students of the great poet.

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