

Caherconlish.

Cathair Chinnlis

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“ One paper have I written ; I’ll venture a second.”

Translation from Old Play.

CAHERCONLISH is a small and not over thriving village, which has most decidedly seen better days. It is situated about seven miles from Limerick, on the edge of a great plain extending from the Shannon on the west, between Limerick and the Sliabh Phelim mountains, and following the line of these mountains far to the east.

Over this plain ages ago there flowed the ocean “ wide and wild,” for in the vicinity of Caherconlish there are certain lime stone quarries from which the quarrymen, to their great wonder and amazement, now and then disentomb certain stone shells, whose denizens once sported in the “ briny deep.”

Some of these fossil shells and plants have been occasionally handed to me for inspection, but I fear that the echoes of that geological lore which I once acquired in college, do not receive very much credence from the finders. Throughout this plain are scattered boulders of various kinds, some of very great weight. These I was taught to consider, in the days of my simplicity, were due to the action of icebergs, which once, geologists would have us believe, untold ages ago in the great Ice Age, dragged themselves slowly along over Erin, levelling her lofty mountains, scooping out her deep valleys, and playfully snatching from her jagged crags large masses of rock, carried them whither they would ; but I am wiser now, as I have been taught by our canny old folk to consider these scattered boulders simply as the casting or strength stones of the giants of olden time. Some little time ago. when conversing about these boulders with an old Scanachaidh, he directed my attention to the hill of Ard Gort, or High Park, a couple of miles to the west of Caherconlish, which he said was a very queer place, and so I thought it, too, when I visited it. Here are some hundreds of boulders of the same kind of formation as the rocky headland on which they lie, of all shapes and sizes, and arranged in the most varied ways, in lines, in circles, in heaps, and some despising the assembled company, reclining alone in solitary state. At the foot of this hill stretches the plain far to the east and north, and having just read then Mr. Kilbride’s graphic description of the rocky strand of Aran More, imagination, that ever forward faculty which leads men so often astray, assailed me, and methought I stood on the rocky strand of an old world ocean, whose raging and much resounding billows caught and hurled at my feet the time worn rocks on which I gazed.

But to return to Caherconlish, it was, as I have remarked, a place of some importance, and though there is not at present very much to stay any stray antiquary who may happen to come this way, and who would hold up his hands in wonder at my rushing to write a paper in the *Journal* on the antiquities of a place where so few visitors tread ; still a few moments conversation with the oldest inhabitant, who is now not far from his century, would undeceive him. The oldest inhabitant would probably inform him that Caherconlish was a very ancient city, next in the “ ould” times to Kilmallock, in those days when Limerick was said to be near Kilmallock ; and also our antiquary would possibly be told that “ Caherconlish was more

renowned for fighting than for fish.” In accordance with an old advice our friend looks around him, and seeing nothing but a decaying village, a roofless church (the pretty new church is outside the village) and a bare hill, doubtless considers that the oldest inhabitant may be renowned for something else beside fighting. Ah, my friend, be not so quick, that decaying village stands on ancient ground. There is very good reason for thinking, before St. Finbar built his little church beside the Marsh which men now call Cork, that bare hill was crowned by a city of the Gaeidhil, and long before, how long we cannot say, some warrior of our ancient race chose that hill on which to build his earthen fortress ; and when Donald O’Brien, the great king of Limerick slept—his long warfare with the Saxon o’er—William de Burgh came, and having dismantled the cathair, raised upon that hill his Anglo-Norman towers, and shortly after there grew up around these towers an English walled town. Now all is over, lios and cathair, and castle and walled town, and nought remains to tell the tale of ancient renown but a poor village, whose name [1] *Cathair Chinnlis*, means the “ circular stone fort built at the head of an earthen one.”

Who were the early inhabitants of this district ? The answer would give a reply to the much debated question as to who were the original inhabitants of Erin, for this district was evidently one of the earliest colonised, as it is one of the richest, lying as it is on the verge of the “ Golden Vale,” whose exceeding fertility is renowned ; and though an early race would not care much for richness of soil, the animals which they hunted would, and consequently an immigrant race would soon find their way to the densely wooded & and rich hunting districts of Caherconlish, where, even at the present day, horns of the *cervus (megaceros) Hibernicus*, or Irish elk, are found by the turf cutters in the bogs. If we are to believe Keating, Cesair, who is also known by the names of Berba and Eriu, had a dispute with Noah, and in consequence departed for Erin with several companions, the ladies of the company far outnumbering the gentlemen, and the same author gives long detailed accounts of different tribes who came hither from time to time—Fomorians, Partholians, Nemedians, Firbolgs, Tuatha de Danann, Cruithneans, or Picts, and finally the Milesians having wandered from Scythia to Egypt, and the land of Shinar and Spain, sailed to Erin and divided it among their twelve chiefs, a thousand years B.C. Now, these tales are all very silly, but nevertheless they were and are still firmly believed in by many writers on Irish history ; even such a great and clever writer on Irish affairs as the Rev. Dr. Todd tries to evade the force of the dictum enunciated by Tighernach, who died 1088, abbot of the monasteries of Clonmacnoise and Roscommon, *Omnia monumenta Scotorum usque Cimbaoth incerta erant*, “ All the historical accounts of the Irish prior to the reign of Cimbaoth are unreliable.” Cimbaoth was king of Eamhain, near Armagh, three hundred years B.C. Tighernach was the most learned man of his age, and had opportunities of forming an opinion from old documents and traditions which now no longer exist. O’Curry is quite savage at Tighernach’s ominous silence on the matter of Tara’s ancient glory. The simple truth seems to be, that instead of the harp shedding the soul of music through Tara’s halls twelve or fifteen hundred years B.C., Tara did not exist prior to the third century of the Christian era. There can, however, be no doubt that Ireland was peopled long anterior to the Christian era. I have already in the *Journal* quoted the words of *Tacitus*, the Roman historian, to prove what a well known country Ireland was in the first century. “ The ports of Erin more frequented by merchants than those of Britain.” I think, however, from the prevalence of the great woods, that the country was only sparsely populated for a long time. The people of Caherconlish have a tradition that at a time, not very long ago, the whole district from Caherconlish to Limerick was one big wood, and that a man could walk from here to Limerick on the tops of the trees ; the names of the hills, townlands, etc , between Caherconlish and Limerick, testify to the truth of the people’s tradition, for if the trees grew in the places where the Irish names tell us they once were, Caherconlish would be once again in her one wood. The scattered bands of hunters who roamed through those thick woods had no central form of government (if they had any government at all) ; in those days might was right, and the wandering Irishman enjoyed home rule to his heart’s content. Some

writers consider the earliest inhabitants to be akin to the Esquimaux, or Basque race, and distinguish between them and their successors by the shape of the skull, the earlier race being called dolicho-cephalic, or “ long-headed,” and the later brachy-cephalic, or “ round-headed ;” and the theory is that the long-headed fellows having not so much brains as the round-headed were circumvented by them, and expelled the country, just as the round-heads of England in historical times overcame the cavaliers, though I forget whether these last are stated to have long heads or not. Huxley’s authority, however, being against this fanciful theory ought to be sufficient to consign it to where it came from.

In this district two races stand sharply out, the Firbolgs and another race, or congeries of races, who, for convenience sake, may be called Milesians. Another set of beings is also remembered, the Tuatha de Danann. There was some little time ago living in Caherconlish a land surveyor named MacNamara, a good Irish scholar, and known as “ the Bright Star of Munster.” He used to discourse quite eloquently on the wonderful skill and craft of the de Danann. Many stars, brighter than the “ Bright Star of Munster,” have solemnly discoursed on the greatness of this race. Good need had they to be skilful, for they were gods before they became men ; but they were no more Irishmen and Irishwomen than that Jupiter was a Roman, and Juno a Roman lady, and the earlier the notices of the Tuatha de Danann in the old Irish documents, the more clearly does this appear.

The name of the Firbolgs is inseparably linked with these magnificent stone fortresses placed along our western sea board, variously called cathairs, duns, cashils, etc., and their position in the west seems to imply that they were erected by a race beaten in the east, and who built these gigantic despairing efforts, such as Dun Ænghuis in Aranmore, to protect themselves from the more powerful victorious tribes who had come to Ireland, most likely from Britain [3] In Ptolemy’s map of Ireland it will be seen that the powerful tribe of Brigantes from north England possessed the district now included under Wicklow and Wexford, and it is most likely also that the river Barrow is named from the Brigantes, as Ptolemy calls it Birgos. The legendary account of the Firbolgs is very curious. To take the lowest date, for authorities differ, they are represented as landing in Ireland something over 1300 years B.C. They only possessed Ireland thirty-six years when they were conquered by the Tuatha de Danann, who came from Scandinavia. Those of the Firbolgs who escaped from the battle of Moytura South, near Cong, are represented as embarking from the coasts of Eohuille, near Sligo, and sailing to the islands of Aran, Rachlin, Isla, Mann, Hebrides, etc. Twenty-seven years afterwards was fought the battle of Moytura North, between the Tuatha de Danann and the Fomorians, in which was slain the great de Danann king, Nuada Airgidlamh, or “ of the silver hand,” by Balor “ of the stiff blows.” *The Four Masters* give the date of this battle as A.M. 3330. Nothing, I think, shows more plainly the wide margin of years of which we may avail ourselves with respect to these legendary events than the fact that the writer of the article on Ireland in the *Encyclopædia-Britannica*, who, I think, was the late president of Queen’s College, Cork, Dr. Sullivan, is inclined to identify the Fomorians with the Romans. Sir William Wilde, in Lough Corrib, gives it as his opinion that it was after the battle of Moytura South those grand forts in Aran were erected by the Firbolgs ; and Dr. Todd also falls into the same error when he states that the Irish traditions derive the name of Magh Adhair, county Clare, from Adhar, son of Umor, a chieftain of the Firbolgs, who, he says, settled in the present counties of Clare and Galway before the arrival of the Milesians in Ireland, that is, 1000 years B.C. Dr. Todd has simply confused the date of the second coming of the Firbolgs to Ireland with that of their previous departure thirteen hundred years before (*Introd. to Wars G. G.* p. 113). The Irish traditions represent the Firbolgs as returning from the western islands of Scotland in the first century of the Christian era, having been expelled from those islands by the Picts, and obtaining settlements in Meath from the king.

Aengus mac Umoir Anall,
Do siden fa Mac conall,
Is do chonall do rad meadh,
Aidne aleind ni hinearb.

Lotur a tir chruthnech choir,
Tar in muir muintirub umoir,
Do saigid chairbri nia fer,
Co midi medon gaeidel.

“ Aengus, the son of Umór, from across the seas,
To him Conall was a son ;
To this Conall Meave granted
Delightful Aidhne for a certainty.

They came from the land of the cruel Picts,
Over the sea came Umor’s sons ;
They arrived at the seat of Carbry Niafer,
Situated in Meath, in the midst of the Gaeidhil.”

But the land question, about which we hear so much every day in the week, seems also to have existed at this early period. Carbry placed too high a rent upon his lands, and the Firbolgs fled from him to Oilíoll and Meave, king and queen of Connaught.

Is and conatacht cairbri,
Tar na Fearaib tar Fairrgi,
Fognam teamnach la cach tuaith,
Do threbfad erinn eachluaith.

“ It was then that Carbry demanded taxes
To be paid to Tara by those seafaring men, [4]
For such was the law with all tribes who lived
On the plains of Erin of swift steeds.”

In Connaught they were kindly received, and settled westward along its pleasant coasts—Aengus, at Dun Aengus, in Aranmore ; Cime, at Lough Cime, now Lough Hackett, county Galway ; Cutru, at Cut Lough, now Lough Cooter, at Gort, county Galway ; Mil, at Murbech, in Aranmore, where his fortress may still be seen ; Beara, at Rinn Beara now Kinvarra, county Galway ; Irgas, at Ceann Boirne, now called Black Head, in county Clare, overhanging Galway Bay ; Cing, at Oigle, in county Mayo (Cruachan Oigle was the old name of Croagh Patrick) ; Concraid, at Inis Meadon, the mid island of the Aran group. One of the sons of Umór settled not far from Caherconlish. Asal, meaning “ noble,” having passed over the Shannon, settled at Drom-Asail, which is now known as Tory Hill, from *toiridhe*, a pursuer, an outlaw, but the old name still survives, for an old man named Punch, living beside Lough Gur, told me the Irish name of Tory Hill was Cnoc-droma-Asail, “ the hill of the long ridge of Asal.”

Carbry Niafear (“ heroic man”), when he heard of the flight of his tenants, was deeply incensed, and called upon the four chieftains who guaranteed the good conduct of the Firbolgs to punish them. These four were—Ceat mac Magach, Ros mac Deadad, Conall Cearnach, and the mighty Cuchulain. With these fought four great chiefs of the Firbolgs,

three brothers of Aenghus—Cing, Cimi Cethir-Cenn, Irgas, and his son Conall—who were all slain, and so was soothed the angry spirit of the “heroic man.”

This is the account of MacLiag, secretary to Brian Boroimhe. It seems to me to bear the impress of truth, and it is also very important to bear in mind that archæologists attribute such forts as Dun Aengus to the first century of the Christian era. That a battle was fought on Moytura plain, on the east side of Lough Corrib, there can be no doubt, but it is quite another matter when we are called upon to believe that this battle was fought 1300 B.C. It appears to me that the poets, in order to give themselves sufficient foundation for their gorgeous Milesian edifice, have antedated the Firbolgs by thirteen hundred years.

The Roman conquests in Spain, in Gaul, [5] and Britain disturbed the Celtic population of those countries very much, and many of them no doubt emigrated to Ireland. The races of Scandinavia were also pressing down from an early date, so that the shiftings of those tribes before the curtain was rung up in the theatre of Irish history, were no doubt like the movements in historical times.

In O’Heerin’s topographical poem, the race of O’Conaing is given as the predominant partner in the barony of Clanwilliam, and the old name of the district is given by him, *Ues trí muighe*, “the district of the three plains.” *Ues* or *Uor* more properly means the people inhabiting the district, but having been used with reference to the people, it came to be afterwards applied to the district inhabited by those people. Something of the same has occurred with regard to the present name of the district, Clanwilliam. This, of course, more properly means the children or race of William (de Burgh [6]), but now it means a large extent of country. The name Owney, of the barony north of Clanwilliam, shows the same change. [7] Owney is the Irish *Uaithni*, and being derived from *Ua*, “a grandson,” means properly “descendants or tribes,” and like the other two names has come in time to be applied to the district possessed by these tribes.

Here is O’Heerin’s description of Clanwilliam, or at least that part of the barony between Castle Connel, *recte* Castle O’Conaing, and Pallas-green, the bounds of the patrimony of O’Conaings, now Gunnings, of which name I do not think a single instance can now be given from the barony of Clanwilliam.

Ues trí muighe min gach Fuinn,
Duthaidh cochlach Uí Chonuing,
Clár braoingeal as saor snoídhe,
D’ár taobhléan craobh cumhsoidhe

“Aos-tri-Muighe, smoothest of plains,
Is the grassy district territory of O’Conaing,
A bright watered plain of noblest aspect,
By the meadowy side of Craobh Cumhraidhe.”

The O’Conaings derive from Cennedigh MacLorcan, king of the Dalcais, who died A.D. 950, through Donnchuan, who was his third son, the two elder brothers of Donnchuan being Mahon, king of Munster, and Brian Boroimhe, king of Erin. Donnchuan had five sons, two of whom were named Cennedigh; from one of these descend the O’Conaings, from the other the O’Kennedy’s, of whom there are many in Caherconlish, and who came here from the district on the east side of Lough Derg, which is given as their country in Speed’s map of 1610. The Ui Faircheallaigh must also have held possessions in Caherconlish parish, for, as I have shown in a recent note in the Journal, there is a rock in the parish named from them. The

name has now died out in the county Limerick, but here is the copy of an inquisition from the “ Black Book of Limerick,” in which it occurs :—

An Inquisition was held in the bishop's Court (John Mothel, Bishop of Limerick, 1426-1459), of Tullabrek (Tullybracky), on the 9th day of September, in the year of our Lord 1447, before our Lord John, Lord Bishop of Limerick, Robert Stancon, and many others ; item, Eoy. O’Cachane, jur. ; it. Sehan O’Pharrell, jur. ; it. Nichus. Fyn, jur. ; Richus. Mcjonyn, jur. ; Donaldus Mcjonyn, jur. ; Richus. Duff, jur. ; Thos. O’Morvie, jur. ; Thos. O’Bogane, jur. ; Cornelius O’Morio ; Willmus Blewet, jur. ; who being sworn as witnesses, on their oath depose, that in whatever way the tenants of Tullabrek did work by their horses and cattle for themselves, they would do in like manner for the Bishop of Limerick.”

A short distance from Caherconlish, on the road to Ballyneety, there is a little hill through which the road has been cut ; on this hill at the right hand side of the road there is an earthen fort, known to the people as Cnocaun O’Kinnealey. This name may be a survival of pre-English times, as the O’Kinnealeys held large possessions in the Barony of Lower Connello prior to the English invasion.

At the death of King Donald O’Brien, which occurred in the year 1195, and who, while he lived, was more than able to hold his own, William de Burgh got large grants from King John, and immediately proceeded to build castles throughout this district, and to early in the thirteenth century I attribute two at least of the Caherconlish castles. One of these was the castle which formerly stood on the hill of Caherconlish, and the other was a fine fortress which stood on a hill, Cnoc-a’-tsean-chaisleáin, “ the hill of the old castle,” about a mile outside the village, beside the new road to Limerick. I shall give a description of this later on when treating of the castles of Caherconlish.

The following is an early reference [8] to the de Burghs :—

“ 1280, 8th year of Edw. I. The Sheriff of Lymeric valued 26 acres of land in Dromkeen belonging to Nicholas de Inteborge at 8 marks yearly, and the buildings on the ground at 80 marks for ever.”

Dromkeen, “ beautiful ridge,” is the next parish to Caherconlish at east side.

At the year 1304, *Annals of Inisfallen*, occurs the following : “ Torlogh O’Brien proceeded with an army to Cathair Cinnlis, and attacked the English of that town, of whom he made great slaughter ; he demolished the castle, and burned the town from the inner citadel to the outer walls.” Early in this century some heavy iron swords and a large quantity of human bones were found in a field just beside the present village at west side. These may have been relics of the year 1304. Lewis says that “ Caherconlish was formerly incorporated, as appears from a grant made in the 32nd of Edward III. and dated November 9th, 1358, conferring murage for 20 years on the Provost, Bailiff, and Commonalty of the town of Catherkenlyshe.” This money was obtained in tolls and customs from Limerick and Waterford merchants, who had to pass through Caherconlish. The memory of the “ mayor” of Caherconlish has been well preserved by the people. About fifty years ago there died an old man in Caherconlish, named John Doyle, in his youth he had been connected with a lawless body of men dubbed in the district, “ Sovereign Pickers.” They visited people’s houses by night, and demanded money for “ powder and balls.” If the people did not yield to the demands of the Sovereign Pickers they were tried, and if convicted, punished, and John Doyle being one of the presidents of these self-constituted tribunals was called the “ Mayor” of Caherconlish.

I HAVE referred to the Limerick and Waterford traffic having to pass through Caherconlish. The old road, and the only road between these two cities, ran through the town, and as the traffic in early days between Limerick and the eastern counties was very considerable, the Burkes of Caherconlish, “with their feet on their native heath,” who very often slightly tapped this traffic, obtained for themselves no small advantage from it. It was done by other chiefs, and why should the lords of Clanwilliam not turn an honest penny when it came their way. Ships sailing up the Shannon with rich cargoes for the port of Limerick, had their burdens considerably lightened by the chieftains who dwelt along the banks of the Shannon. Many a barrel of good wine in this manner found its way to the cellars of O’Bryen, of Carrigogunnel ; O’Conor, of Carrigfoyle , O’Cahaine, of Keilruish ; MacMahon, of Balliolman ; and MacMorrough, of Finies ; and Tibbott Burke, of Caherconlish, was nothing loth to follow such good exemplars. A very good old rule prevailed in those days which quite met the requirements of those practically-minded chieftains. Wordsworth has tersely explained the “good old rule”—

The good old rule sufficeth them—the simple plan
That those may take who have the power, and those may keep who can.

So at the “inquisition taken before the king’s commissioners at Lymerick, the Thursday next before Shroft Tuesday, which was the 13th day of Februarii in the 33 yeare of our Sovereign Lord, King Henry the Eight, . . . we do find . . . that Donogh O’Bryen, [9] of Ballytarsna Castle, near Drumkeen, and his neighbour, Tibbott Bourke, of Caherkinlish, in the county of Lymerick, Gentl., do take, the former, of every pack that passeth from Lymerick to Waterfourd, 20d., and of every horse load of wares coming from Waterfourd to Lymerick 5d., and that the saith Donogh the 15th day of Januarii last past tooke from John Harold, Nicholas Harold, Patrick Rochfort, and Richard Verdon, for packs, eleaven ducats, and soe of divers others ; the latter is found to have taken the 10th day of Januarii, to 33rd year of Henry VIII., and divers before and after, of one William Young of Lymerick, merchant, for seaven loads of oaths, 7d., and soe divers others of the sayd cittie daylie. And of James Fox of the same for ten barrells of wyne departinge out of the same cittye into the countrie 2d. in extortion.”

In the Carew MSS. Richard Burck, of Cahirconlish, is named as one of the leading freeholders and gentlemen of county Limerick in 1570.

In the *Calendar of Patent and Close Rolls*, 38 Elizabeth, 1596, there is a list of the possessions of Peter Walshe, of Abbey Owney, now Abington, in which it is mentioned that he held the tithes and appurtenances of Karkenlyshe, Ballynelye (*qv.* Carrickparson), Riordan (Rath-jordan) and Charelley) Caherelly).

In Speede’s Map of Munster (1610) Caherconlish is marked B. Liskin, a case of putting the car before the horse.

In the year 1600 there was a Theobald Burke living in Caherconlish Castle. Sir George Carew gives in *Pacata Hibernia* a description of the ignominious way in which he treated him, causing him to crawl on his hands and knees to beg pardon. ’Twas other times with the Burkes then. When I come to deal with his brother, John Burke, of Brittas Castle. I shall give the quotation from *Pacata Hibernia*.

In 1645 the Burkes having taken part in that rebellion bid goodbye to Caherconlish, and the estate was granted to Sir Ralph Wilson, knight, who held Limerick as governor at Cromwell’s death, and was one of the signatories to the document signed by the governors of Limerick, Cork, Waterford, Galway, and other places, in which they said they would hold the towns, etc., for King Charles II., if he came back. Sir Ralph Wilson was succeeded in the

governorship of Limerick by the Earl of Orrery, who remarks in a letter dated May 25th, 1666, that the pay is £10 a year, together with the profits of the king's part of the island. Sir Ralph Wilson received extensive grants of forfeited estates in the counties of Limerick and Clare. He was four times mayor of Limerick, in 1663, 1664, 1667 and 1668. The property passed out of the hands of the Wilson family in 1866, having been purchased by Mr. Daniel F. Gabbett, the present owner. Mr. Charles Monck Wilson, the late owner, now resides at Kingstown, county Dublin. William Wilson, of Caherconlish, was high sheriff of Limerick County in 1721, and was representative in Parliament for Limerick City in 1739.

It is very satisfactory to know that the ancient city of Caherconlish always held its own, and sometimes took more than its own from its modern neighbour, Limerick. We are well acquainted with what our representative, Tibbott Burke, did to the Limerick merchants in the sixteenth century, and when Limerick in the eighteenth century tried to turn the tables, Caherconlish sturdily protested. On the 22nd of June, 1749, Joseph Gabbett, esq., of Doons-town, in a letter addressed to Ambrose Wilson, esq., of Caherconlish, gives an account of a dispute he had with the Limerick Corporation, who took from him market toll "just three times as much as they had a right to," and he proceeds to encourage Mr. Wilson, who had a case at law with the corporation concerning these excessive charges.

Branches of the Wilson family settled also at Boher, near Caherconlish, and at Bilboa, in the parish of Doon. The last male of the Bilboa branch was Edward Warter Wilson, who married Frances Anne, daughter of the second Lord Carbery, and had issue one daughter, who married Sir John Rouse, but had no family. Bilboa Court was attacked by the rebels in 1798.

The name Wilson is said to be derived from Wolf Son ; a Saxon bishop, Wulfsin, is mentioned in the time of Edward the Confessor. Most families of the name of Wilson [10] retain the wolf, or wolf's head, sometimes along with three stars, which in heraldry are stated to be "the emblems of prudence, the rule of all virtues, enlightening us through the darkness of this world."

The Gabbett family has been connected with Caherconlish district since the year 1664, when the Caherline property was purchased by William Gabbett, whose descendant and chief of Clangabbett is Mr. Richard J. Gabbett, of Caherline, near Castle Connel, which was named from the old family place in Caherconlish. Several branches of this family were at one time residing in Caherconlish district, at Ballyvorreen (purchased from the Maunsells), at Caherline, at Rathjordan, at High Park, and Mount Minnitt.

Ballyvorreen Castle, [11] about two miles to the east of Caherconlish, in the time of Charles I. belonged to MacClancy. We may form an idea how powerful the Clan William was then, when it is stated that in a district studded with castles from Cahirelly to O'Brien's Bridge, there was not a gentleman whose name was not Burke, save MacClancy, of Ballyvorreen, and O'Heyne, [12] of Cahirelly.

The MacClancys were a branch of the MacNamaras, of Clare, and were hereditary Brehons to the O'Brien's, of Thomond, and they also acted in the same capacity to the earls of Desmond.

John Maunsell, who came direct from England and raised a regiment for Cromwell, got large grants of lands, including Ballyvorreen, from him. The Maunsell family is descended from the celebrated John Maunsell, Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor of England in the time of Henry III. The present representative of the Ballyvorreen Maunsells is Colonel Robert Maunsell, Limerick City, and it is interesting to note that his niece, formerly Miss Gwendolen

Maunsell, now resides in Caherconlish parish, having been married a few years ago to Mr. Charles M. Courtney, whose mother was a Miss Gabbett, of the Mount Minnitt branch.

The late owner of Ballyvorreen was the Rev. Robert J. Gabbett, who resided at Kilkee, where he died a few years ago, leaving Ballyvorreen to his nephew, Mr. Robert Donogh O'Brien, second son to Mr. William Smith O'Brien, sometime M.P. for the county Limerick. Mr. O'Brien's blood is the bluest of blue. He, with his eldest brother, Mr. Edward William O'Brien, Cahirmoyle ; and Rev. Canon Lucius O'Brien, rector of Adare ; can trace back through a long line of noble ancestors—earls and kings of Thomond—to Brian Boroimhe, king of Erin, and through him to Oilioll Oluim, king of Munster in the third century, and to Fionn MacCumhaill, whose daughter, Samhair, was married to Cormac Cas, son to Oilioll Oluim, and also king of Munster.

I have referred to a roofless church in the village. This was the parish church until 1871, when a handsome little church was built, the Rev. James Carson being then incumbent. The old church was unroofed and the walls, which are over six feet thick, left standing. Attached to this old church is a high tower and spire, the later surmounted by iron rods denoting the cardinal points, and a brazen fish moving with the wind. One of the fins of this fish is pierced by a hole, caused by a bullet from a rifle fired by Dr. Seward, who was dispensary doctor of Caherconlish from 1838 to 1863. About three years ago the spire was struck by lightning, and the glory of our village was in danger of coming down, when the Limerick Board of Guardians nobly came to the rescue and saved the fish. The tower was built about a hundred years ago and the church somewhat earlier in the century. To the east there are still standing some portion of the walls of an older church, the church of which Dineley took a sketch when he visited Caherconlish in 1680. This church again has incorporated in its walls portion of the walls of a pre-Reformation church. The old people say this church was served by friars. In the south wall of the chancel there is a monument to the Burke family. I referred to this some months ago in the *Journal*, and gave the inscription upon it, at least so much as I could make out, as it is partly concealed by the tomb of the Wilson family, which lies alongside. Mr. Monck Wilson has informed me that one of his ancestors married a Miss Maunsell, whose mother was daughter to the last Burke of Caherconlish. The arms of the Burke family are on the slab, and Fitzgerald gives the date 1441. Two figures are on either side of the inscription, and probably represent Theobald Burke and his wife Slany.

Crossing a little stream, the Groodic, [13] which flows beside the village, and walking along the road which runs near Boskill House for a couple of hundred yards, one may notice at the left hand side, just inside the fence, a small mound. This is Temple Michael graveyard. No stranger would ever take, it for a burial-ground, and no interments have been made even within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. Not a trace of the old "Temple" is left, and but for the name, it would not be known that there had ever been a church there. The people call it "Ginckle's Grave," and insist that the celebrated general of that name is buried there. Having closely questioned several of the old people, I find that many of General Ginckle's soldiers were buried there. The people say that a number of Ginckle's men died from a plague which broke out in his army when encamped in Caherconlish.

About three months ago a remarkable stone was found by Mr. Patrick Ryan, of Caherconlish, when repairing the fence near "Ginckle's Grave." I had been told by a man in the village that a cat's head was found in Temple Michael, and really this gives a very good idea of the stone. Imagine a cat's head and neck with a little of the body attached, and one has a fair representation of the stone. Consider the cat's head again with a flattened circular crown, and the picture will rival a photograph from Messrs. Guy. When one stands a little distance from it, a human face may clearly be discerned imprinted on the crown of the cat's head. The other end of the stone does not seem to have been touched, being quite rough. The stone is a

foot in length. It has occurred to me that it may be a stone from an ornamental arch over the doorway of Temple Michael.

This old churchyard is on the property of Mrs. Minchin, Busherstown, Roscrea, and Mrs. de Ros Rose, Ardhu, Limerick, daughters of the late Mr. Benjamin Frend, of Boskill. Perhaps from *Bos*, “the palm of the hand, or level spot”; and *Coill*, “a wood.” The Frend family have been settled here since Cromwell’s time, when Captain John Frend got a slice of Burke’s territory. The late Mrs. Frend, a dear old lady, and a very kind friend to the writer, was daughter to Dean Bagwell, of Clogher diocese, who married a Miss Croker, of Ballinagarde, and whose father was a member of the Irish House of Commons, being a representative for Tipperary. Sir Jonah Barrington placed him in his “Black List,” as he voted for the Union. One of his sons and brother were also members of the Irish House of Commons. Mrs. Minchin is married to George J. Minchin, esq., and a deputy lieutenant for King’s County. One of Mr. Minchin’s sisters is married to Mr. Gabbett, of Caherline. Mrs. de Ros Rose is married to Robert de Ros Rose, esq., who has an old family residence in Caherconlish district, Ahabeg, which is the Irish *an faithche beag*, “the little exercise green.” Mr. de Ros Rose’s penchant for coaching is well known in the county, but it is not so well known, perhaps, that his ancestor, Mr. Thomas Rose, of Ahabeg, was the first gentleman in the county who drove a coach; this gentleman was also the first to have Limerick lighted with lamps, having provided them at his own expense. Mr. Thomas Rose was attainted by the Parliament of King James in 1689, and was twice mayor of Limerick, in 1695-6. Mr. Henry Rose, his eldest son, was M.P. for Ardfert, 1703 and 1713, and was Lord Chief Justice of King’s Bench in the time of George II.

At Ahabeg there is an old gateway called Gathanree, or King’s Gate, so named, it is said, from King William, who visited Ahabeg when his troops were encamped at the castle of Tooreen, “little bleaching ground.” The ruins of this castle are still visible, standing to the south-west of Ahabeg, on the banks of the Groodie. I do not know anything of the history of the castle. We may safely ascribe it to the Burkes, and I think it may be the castle which is called Straghan in Speede’s map.

From the bridge over the Groodie in Caherconlish to beyond Temple Michael at right hand side of road, were formerly a number of little cottages, and these were known by the name of Ea Dook. This name may mean “the houses of the black ford,” Ea being the Irish *aidhe*, “house,” and Dook, a contraction of *dubhath*, “black ford.” The adjective “black” might well be applied to the Groodie flowing through a bog. Near Innishannon, county Cork, there is a parish, Templemichael de Duagh.

There is a high hill above Boskill House which is tastefully planted, and known by the name of Beenvult, “the gable-like peak of the sheep.” A little beyond Dromkeen there is a “been,” in the name of which the shepherd is remembered—Beenawry, “the peak of the shepherd” (*aodhaire*). Near Beenvult two shells, with the powder in them, were found by the caretaker of Boskill about thirty years ago, and sent to one of the museums in Dublin. At the foot of Beenvult there was a very fine earthen fort, but the earth was removed from it many years ago for top-dressing, by one of the tenants on the Boskill property, and, of course, he went to the bad for interfering with the fort. How strange it is that the people so zealously refrain from injuring those earthen forts, while they have not the slightest compunction in pulling the stone cathairs, or duns, to pieces.

A very old man recently told me a story relating to the destruction of one of the most ancient and interesting raths in Ireland, Rath Arda Suid, about five miles to the west of Caherconlish, and situated on a hill about half-a-mile to the north-west of the old church of

Donaghmore. This fort was one of the seats of the king of Cashel in Minister, and is given in the list contained in the *Book of Rights*. It is said to have been erected shortly after the Milesians took possession of Ireland, 1000 B.C., having come hither from Spain.

Tangatar meic milith molaim,
U nerainn a hespain uill,
U longaib go lar illachta,
Ina congaib catha chruint.

“The sons of Milidh arrived, I praise them,
In Erinn from the far-famed Spain,
In their ships well trimmed for fighting,
By which they fought victorious battles.”

These sons of Milidh were under the command of two brothers who divided Erinn equally between them, Eibear and five sub-chiefs taking the southern half, Erimon and five sub-chiefs taking the northern half, and from that day to this the north and south of Erinn have been at daggers drawn unceasingly. All those chiefs are said to have built forts for themselves in their various portions, and Fulman it was, one of the five chiefs of Eibear, who erected Rath Arda Suird.

Raith arda suird clas le Fulman.

“Rath Arda Suird was erected by Fulman.”

Clas means a trench or furrow, and refers to the mode in which this old chief constructed his fortress and surrounded it with a trench.

I have quoted from translation of a poem of Cinnfaela, who died A.D. 679, by Professor Connellan.

What has particularly struck me is that none of these forts—except one, Dun Sobairce, now Dunseverick, Antrim—are named from their Milesian builders, so that I am beginning to suspect the sons of Milidh of fort-grabbing, and that this fort of Rath Arda Suird belonged to or was originally erected by a chief named Sord, whom Fulman despoiled of house and land. It would simplify matters very much if we could assign Sord to the Mairtini branch of the Firbolg race, who possessed Clanwilliam in the first century and onward, until they were conquered by those British tribes who have been glorified under the name of Milesians. The Irish form of Swords, the name of a town near Dublin, is Sord. Suardeh is the name of a place in the Soudan where the English recently defeated the Dervishes. Rath Arda Suird was dug out a great many years ago ; the people of the district took it into their heads that there was untold gold concealed in the fort, but at the same time it was made known by some occult means that whoever dug the first sod of the fort would lose his life. No man in the place being magnanimous enough to sacrifice himself for the good of the neighbours, the first sod lay undug a long time, for though they loved gold they loved life more. But at last a brilliant idea occurred to one of them, and this was to get a gunner from Limerick, who loved Irish sherry not wisely but too well, treat him to copious draughts, and then get him to dig the first sod. This was done, and Rath Arda Suird was dug out ; no gold was found, but my informant told me that the searchers came upon a passage leading in the direction of the castle, which is close by. This was one of those subterranean chambers or passages to be found in the interior of many forts constructed both for habitation and defensive purposes, and to which the term souterrain is generally applied. Duaid MacFirbis terms these soileur, *no Teaghass fa thalmhain*, “cellars, or closets underground.” “When they got into this,” the old chap said,

“ they considered they had the world of gold, but they got nothing, and served them right,” said he, “ for interfering with the fort.” “ But what happened to the gunner from Limerick ?” I asked him ; but he did not know. And there is the story of the old fort of Rath Arda Suird from which the townland is called Rathurd, and the old castle Rathurd Castle. The people consider that the word “ sord” means soldier or warrior, and tell some legend about this soldier. In *Cogadh Gaedhel Re Gallaibh*, xl. 17, the word “ suartleach” occurs, which Dr. Todd renders soldier. As the meaning of “ sord” has been lost the peoples’ explanation of the word will be of interest.

Now it is time to return to Caherconlish. The field south of “ Ea Dook” was where William III. and General Ginckle encamped when they visited Caherconlish. Through the middle of this field there is the track of an old road, now hardly distinguishable, called “ the King’s Road.” The field south of this is named “ Park Aphroinnse” (the prince’s field), and in this field still stand the walls of an old house, [14] the former residence of the Frend family, in which King William slept during his two nights’ stay in Caherconlish.

Early in August, 1690, the English army, 20,000 strong, arrived at Golden Bridge, in county Tipperary. While here Mr. Robert Frankland arrived and informed the king that Mr. Wilson and Lieutenant Croker had fortified themselves in Caherconlish Castle against the Rapparees. On the 7th of August, 1690, King William came to Caherconlish, where he was joined by the forces of Douglas from Athlone. On the evening of the 8th King William, accompanied by Prince George and General Ginckle, went to reconnoitre the position of the enemy in Limerick. That night a council of war was held, and it was decided to begin the march at once to Limerick. At five o’clock the following morning the camp at Caherconlish was broken up, and the army marched toward the city, proceeded by a vanguard of one thousand foot and two hundred horse over ground intersected with hedges and ditches which the pioneers levelled. Those ditches were lined with Irish infantry, who slowly retired as the English army advanced. And so ended King William’s visit to Caherconlish.

[1] Cathair is evidently connected with the Latin words *castra*, a “ camp,” and *castellum*, “ a fort or castle.” The British form is *caer*, which occurs in many names of places. Caer, Chester ; Caerodon, Bristol ; Caerludd, London (in Irish Longdun, “ fort of ships”) ; Caerrefrawg, York (in Irish Caer Ebroc) ; Caerloyw, Gloster ; Caergraiont, Cambridge ; Strumble Head, near St. David’s, on Welsh coast, Pencar ; Gelligaer, in the county of Glamorgan, from Gell, “ seclusion ;” Celli, “ a bower.” Yr wyff yn Myned I Gaerdydd, “ I am going to Caerdiff” Caer in Welsh, a “ wall, a fort ;” Caered, “ the wall of a city ;” Caerawg, “ fenced, fortified ;” Caerfa, “ a stronghold ;” Caerwaith, “ a fortification.”

[2] On the glebe land there is a high whitethorn tree, which is a most beautiful sight in spring, being one sheet of blossoms which perfume the air afar. This “ sceach” reminds one of the time when the glebe land was covered by a thick wood of these trees, as the townland on the west side is named Skahard, “ high whitethorn trees.” We call the whitethorn a bush in these degenerate days, but the white thorns of Skahard were high trees ; an old man informed me that he was told by his father, who saw the last three whitethorns of this wood, that they were in height and girth equal to ash trees of good size. So that if Arthur Young had visited Ireland earlier than he did, he would not have made the remark, “ What a figure would Ireland make on a comparison with its present state, if one tree stood by every cabin.”

[3] The Gangani, from ganga, “ a river,” who held lands north of the Vellebori, between the rivers Dur and Iernus, had a cape named from them in Wales, Cape of the Gangani. The Manapii were also a tribe common to Belgie Gaul, and Erinn. Between them and the Brigantes were the Coriondi, these probably the Cruithneans or Picts. O’Curry quotes from the Dinnseanchus to the effect that the Cruithneans on their arrival in Ireland 1000 years B.C. helped Crimthann Sciath-bel, one of Erimon’s chiefs, to expel a British tribe from

Wexford. And it is interesting to find the British tribe Brigantes and the Picts side by side in Ptolemy's map compiled in the second century of the Christian era. My idea is that the Picts and Milesians were one and the same. See Dr. Joyce's *Irish Names* for many places in Ireland, named from the Picts who came from Pictones in Gaul. Milesian means "warrior," the Latin *miles*. Tara is not marked in Ptolemy's map.

- [4] Muirtini, the name of the old Firbolg inhabitants of Aes-tri-muighe, comes from Muir, "the sea"; Latin, *mare*. And so they were men of the sea, buccaneers in fact, and knew very well what they were doing when they built along the pleasant western coast those grand fortresses in the first century, issuing from which they ploughed the ocean and reaped harvests richer by far than any they could obtain from the lands of the "heroic man."
- [5] Samar, the old name of the Morning Star river a few miles south of Caherconlish, was also the name of a river in Gallia Belgica, of which the modern name Somme is a contraction.
- [6] William de Burgh was son of Adelm, son of Robert, Earl of Cornwall, son of Harlowen de Burgo, by Harlotta, mother to William the Conqueror. William de Burgh married Isabella, natural daughter to Richard I. and widow of Llewellyn, prince of Wales. He was deputy of Ireland but was recalled in 1179. He received the greater part of Connaught, lands also in Limerick and Tipperary. He died in 1204 and was buried in Athassel Abbey, founded by himself. Clanwilliam and Clanricarde are descended from him.
- [7] Dal Riada is another example; properly it means the tribe of Cairbre Riada, but it was also the name of an ancient territory in Antrim inhabited by this tribe. O'Connor, quoted by O'Donovan in *Book of Rights*, observes that "Dal properly signifies posterity or descent by blood, and in an enlarged and figurative sense it signifies a district, that is, the division or part allotted to such posterity." Mr. Kilbride writes to me: "The word Dal is a very curious one, and one connected with some of the most ancient tribes of Ireland. Now, certainly, Dal is connected with the Cruithneans and not with the Milesians in any sense. Dal bears with it the old lineage of ancient Ireland. It is one of the appellations of tribes distinct, just as Clan, Tir Connacht, etc. These tribal names must for the present guide us. Look at and consider all the tribal appellations, and see what they teach us. We do not observe them in the least until they are on the point of vanishing or have vanished. Yet they are all landmarks of a peculiar kind."
- [8] This is an earlier reference:—"Iter. Roll 45th Henry 3rd, 1260. Essoignes Pleas held at Lymeric before the King's Justices Itinerant. The Abbot of Weheny (Owney now Abington) impleads Hugh de Burgelagh."
- [9] The O'Briens, of Ballytarsna, "thwart townland," were descended from Donnchadh, or Donogh, second son of Brien Boromhe. Sir George Carew says it "neere a great Fastnesse," the Knockgrean range, and remarks it was a very strong castle, and "not to be wonne but by the Cannon," the Rebels quitted it at his approach, "and therein was found great plenty of Graine." Not a stone of the castle is now left, but the site is known, and from the numerous ghost stories told by the people, it must be a very eerie place. Further on, at the east side of old Pallas, the O'Briens had another castle built on the top of a fine moat, situated in the townland of Cloghadreen, "castle of the blackthorns" (*draeighean*). The last stones of this castle were removed very early in the century. This moat is haunted, any amount of ghostly visitants hold high revel there. O'Donovan says that this moat is "supposed to be the object originally called Pailis," but might not the castle have been the Pailis; there were castles as Pallasmore, county Tipperary, and Pallaskenry, county Limerick. The moat of course was there before the castle, but whether it was called Pailis or not cannot be now known, the name is applied to many forts as being fairy palaces. The moat is like an inverted bason, and the people say it is hollow, and that a passage runs from it and opens on the public road a couple of hundred yards north of the moat. An earthen fence, five feet high and fifteen feet from the moat, partly surrounds it. The moat is one hundred and seventy paces in circumference at bottom, and eighty paces at top. Its oblique height is thirty-four feet, it was formerly much higher, but earth was taken for top dressing

until dread of the fairies' displeasure put a stop to the work of destruction. A number of terraces encircle the moat from bottom to top. I counted eight at distances of about four feet apart. This moat may perhaps be a burial mound and the Carn-Conaill of the legend. (For legend see Dr. Joyce's *Irish Names of Places*, vol. ii., p. 242.)

- [10] The Caherconlish Wilsons have the wolf with stars, and their motto is Vigilate.
- [11] Near Ballyvorneen Castle there are cross roads called the Proctor's Cross, so named from a man named Ryan, a proctor, who was murdered here in 1824 by his wife and servant man, and for which they were hung in Limerick.
- [12] I have been told a strange tale relating to O'Heyne, of Cahirelly, "Cathair of the aileach or stone fort." O'Heyne having refused to give up possession of his castle to the undertaker, the castle was taken by storm, and O'Heyne was hung from one of the windows, and that his grandson was afterwards butler to the undertaker's grandson. I should not fancy such a butler, nor is the story credible ; but " so the legend runneth, so the old man tells."
- [13] The Groodie takes its rise from a pool, Poll Groodie, near Ballybrood, " townland of the height" (braid), and falls into the Shannon about a mile north of Limerick. The people say that there is a great deal of coal in Ballybrood, and a coal mine was worked there a great many years ago, but abandoned after a little expense, it being considered that the coal would not pay the cost of working. The old people however, allege that this enterprise was conducted in a very unbusinesslike manner and the search not properly made, and still hold strongly to their opinion that coal there is in Ballybrood, and in sufficient quantity to yield a handsome profit for the working. Lewis says with regard to Ballybrood parish that " basalt forms the principal substratum, and rises to a considerable elevation, forming the hill of Ballybrood ; it assumes in some places a shivery slaty appearance, and in others is tabular and compact, but is suddenly terminated by a small rivulet between the church and house (now the residence of Mr. Courtney) where the limestone formation commences." A branch of the Maunsell family lived until about the year 1850 at Ballybrood House; it is now occupied by Mr. E B. Fenessy, to whom I am indebted for various scraps of information. Lewis mentions that " oxide of iron and iron clay are found in great quantities at the foot of the hills, and near Bohermore, Caherconlish, are procured specimens containing shells with an appearance of partial calcination." " Near Abington," he says, " specimens of very pure copper ore have been collected."
- [14] A short distance to the south-east of this old house, and in Boskill townland, there is a hill, Carrigafepera, or " the Piper's Rock," so called because a fairy piper is often heard there. In the Comeragh Mountains there is a Piper's Rock, thus named, it is said, from a piper who lost his way and played his pipes on this rock to bring the help which never came, and oft may still be heard, the people say, the sound of pipes from Carrigafepera.

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