

Barony – Clare
Parish – Annaghdown
Village – Currandulla
Co. Galway

By W. C Kenny, Surveyor, For “The Irish Tourist Association” 14.9.1942.

Location:

The village of Currandulla just off the main Galway Headford road is 10m. from Galway and 7m. from Headford. It is a typical country village.

Topography:

This is level country with no high hills. In its W. is L. Corrib – whose shores at this point are well wooded, and contain, in ruined Abbeys and Castles, traces of their former habitation and history. There are a number of islands which add to the scenic attractiveness of the lake and afford scope for interesting boating excursions. Illaunaneel, Boghilmore and Rabbit islands are quite close to the mainland. The Cregg river flows into the lake here, and there are many pleasant walks by its banks. A particularly pretty scene is that of the Cregg at Cregg Castle. The road from Shankill to Grange borders and affords many fine views of the lake. Strewn throughout the county are many ruins of the castles of the Galway “tribes”.

Annaghdown – Eanachduin, fort of the marsh:

The most prominent ruin is that of the Old Norman Annaghdown Castle. It stands on the margin of L. Corrib, on an inlet of the lake. It is about 40’ by 36’ and is well built of limestone. It was well fortified and has the usual opening in the allure, through which stones etc. were dropped on the enemy. There is a square tube in the wall which was probably used as a garderobe shaft.

Nearby is St. Brendan’s Well, now walled in. The Castle belongs to Miss Molly O’Rourke, M.F.H. Galway Blazers.

Annaghdown Abbey and Nunnery:

Not far from the Castle in the village of Annaghdown, is a more or less modern graveyard, are the ruins of the ancient Abbey of St. Mary de Portu Patrum, a monastery of White Nuns of the Praemonstratensian Order. It was founded at an early period by White Praemonstratensian Canons. The nave of the Abbey Church measures 91’ in length and 21’ wide. The chancel is 17’ x 14’. The arch separating the nave from the choir has fallen. The W. gable is standing and also the N. side wall of the church. The Cloister quadrangle can be traced. The church occupies the N. side, the ranges of buildings on the remaining three sides form the enclosure. In the range E. of the cloister a small sacristy and the remains of the chapter room are visible. The foundation was probably prior to the Norman Invasion. Adjoining the Abbey is a church which is built in the Gothic style. It is recorded that the church of Annaghdown was built by Hugh Mór

O Flaherty in 1400 and that it was burned eleven years afterwards.

Here, too was a Franciscan Friary, the head of a custody to which the monasteries of Connaught and Ulster were subordinate. There was also another religious house called the College of St. Brendan, in which four Priests or Vicars were supported and which were not subject to royal inquisition until the death of Elizabeth.

N. of the Abbey Church are the nunnery ruins. St. Brendan of Clonfert built this nunnery under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin for his sister Briga. It was confirmed in 1195 by Pope Celestine III to nuns of the Arroasian Order. At the suppression of the monasteries it was given to the Earl of Clanricarde.

Nearby is the nunnery church. There are here the remains of a building 90' long with a doorway having a pointed arch in the N. wall, near the W. end of the structure. A little to the S. are other walls covered with growth.

Also in the graveyard are the ruins of a comparatively modern C. of E. church, in which the only important feature is a very fine window removed from the ancient cathedral church. This window is deeply splayed, circular-headed, 8' high in the clear and 12' high internally. It is a beautifully carved specimen, one of the best in the country. There are 62 floral ornaments, each different from the others.

All these ruins are in the charge of the O.P.W.

At Kilcoonagh, in the vicinity, was an Abbey which Tipraid, Prince of Hy Fiacria, granted to St. Columb, who placed over it St. Cuannan, from whom it derived its name.

The Four Masters mention a round tower here in the year 1238. If so, this would have been the last round tower in Ireland. No trace of the tower exists now. Annaghdown was the seat of an early Irish bishopric, but in 1324 the diocese merged into that of Tuam.

N.W. of Currandulla are the ruins of Craobh Castle. Portions of two circular towers remain at the corners. Craoibh Burca and her husband George once lived here and there are many legends about them.

About 50 yds. off the main road 1m. short of Currandulla is Cloonboo Castle, a fairly well preserved castle said to have been built by the Skerrets or the Burkes of Clanricarde.

Mansions, Castles & Estates

About 1 m. from the main road, and 2m. from Curandulla is the imposing Cregg Castle. This is said to be an old Irish castle built by the Kirwans and remodelled in its present form in the 17th century. This castle came into the hands of the Blakes through non-payment of a debt. It is presently occupied by Mrs. C. Kerrins (nee Blake). There is a fine oratory in the castle, and some fine old pictures. The owner has no objection to visitors inspecting the castle.

Curiosities

E. of the nunnery ruins is St. Columbcille's tree – there is a legend that it jumped miraculously from one place to its present stand.

Signed by C. W. Kenny,

Surveyor,

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